

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

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In This Issue...

We are confident that you'll appreciate in this issue the contribution from the hand of Mr. John Veldman. He and his wife played a leading role in securing a place in this country for a Romanian refugee family; and in this article he tells us how all of that came about (see "From Oppression to Freedom"). The concern of the Veldmans was from the beginning not first of all for the economic plight of a disadvantaged family. Certainly it was not to come to the aid of those who might be chafing under Communism as a political system. Their concern was for the spiritual welfare of a family suffering persecution for Christ's sake.

What form did that persecution take? Mr. Veldman informed me some time after his article had already been submitted for printing that he had just received new insights on the answer to that question. In his article he had noted that the communist government of Romania applied not very subtle pressure on Christians by making it difficult for them to hold weekday meetings for Bible study or for other religious purposes. In a recent conversation with a Hungarian/Rumanian minister, Mr. Veldman learned that that interference was hardly limited to weekdays, as he had at first thought. It involved also Sunday worship services — to the point where Christians found themselves able to keep the Lord's Day by attending to the preaching of the Word, only about 50% of the time. Thus was the Ceausescu regime trying to destroy Christianity by "abolishing Sunday" (à la Voltaire).

How serious are we, Mr. Veldman wondered aloud, about our own use of the Lord's Day while we yet have freedom of choice in that matter? Seems to me that "From Oppression to Freedom" gives pause also in another respect. How zealous are we in furthering the proclamation of the gospel among those who have suffered long from a famine...of the Word? See also, in this issue, "Our Mission Work."

—D.D.

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Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

Dwelling in the House of the Lord

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

The house of the Lord!

One place we easily take for granted.

That was on the mind of David when he penned these words. He was denied dwelling in that house and his soul cried in anguish.

"One thing have I desired of Jehovah, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life."

The context indicates that David was in distress. In verses 2 and 3 he speaks of his enemies who come against him; in verse 4 he implies that he is separated from Jerusalem; in verse 10 he mentions family conflicts; and in verse 12 his enemies slander him with their lies. Any one of those problems would precipitate distress, but the accumulation became overwhelming.

There were two incidents in the life of David that seem to fit this description.

The first is recorded in I Samuel 22, where David is being pursued by Saul. David came to the city of

Nob in great hunger and Ahimelech the priest gave him the halloved bread to eat. David took with him also the sword of Goliath. Doeg, the chief herdsman of Saul, saw this take place and reported it to Saul, who in anger slew 85 priests and all the inhabitants of Nob — men, women, and even children. This caused anguish of soul for David and he longed to be in Shiloh where he could commune with his God.

The other incident occurred later. Recorded in II Samuel 15 is the rebellion of Absalom, when David was forced to flee Jerusalem and dwell in the wilderness as a wild beast hunted in sport. This involved his own son rising against him, and his friends turning traitor. By this time the ark of the covenant had been brought to Jerusalem and dwelt in a tent there.

Both events brought separation from the house of God, along with personal strife and seeming victory by the enemy. And David cried, "One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah!"

Have you ever been separated from Jehovah's house? Was there a time when you were prevented from worshiping with the people of God and your heart longed to be there? Then you know something of the cry, "One thing have I desired of the Lord."

It is true that David had a different house of the Lord in mind than we do. The people of Israel took the tabernacle with them from the wilderness sojourn. They erected a tent in Shiloh and later transported it to Jerusalem. David longed to build a suitable house of God; but

he was denied that and was restricted to assembling the supplies, since he was a man of war and bloodshed. His son Solomon built a beautiful temple which typified a house worthy of Jehovah's residency. That too, however, was destroyed; and later, upon the return of the captives, a lesser house was built, and still later the temple of Herod the Great. Those Old Testament houses of God took on the character of the old covenant. Blood was shed within their walls. They had the stench of burning flesh which typified the wrath of God in death. Only after the sacrifice of blood could the incense fill the temple, which indicated that God's people were made sweet by the blood of the lamb.

The great change came in the fulfillment of the typical by the completed work of THE High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus Christ. When His blood was shed upon the cross, God struck with His hand and tore the veil of separation from the top to the bottom. As Jesus so aptly said to the Samaritan woman, "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21-24).

The house has undergone change because the worship has changed. We now have the pulpit in the center, the preaching of the gospel. The pulpit is surrounded by the baptismal font and the communion table, the holy sacraments. We have the collection plates as means to receive our offerings. We have the instruments of music to accompany our songs of praise. The pews and entire building are

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so constructed to enhance our activity of worship.

Even though the form of worship has undergone change, it is still the house of Jehovah. God is the same! The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of David and Solomon, of Peter and the apostles, is our God. As David so aptly said, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (vs. 1).

His house of worship reflects His presence. No, He is not confined to a church building. Solomon correctly said, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built" (1 Kings 8:27). It is His house because He comes to that place in the moment of worship in a very special way. By the preaching of the gospel, He speaks! By the sacraments, He seals! He feeds us with the bread of life and washes away our sins and invigorates us with the body and blood of Jesus. In His house the Heavenly Father gathers and preserves His dear family.

David knew this. It motivated him to cry out, one thing have I desired of the Lord...to dwell in that house forever!

Obviously, David did not have in mind to live full time in that humble tent, whether in Shiloh or in Jerusalem. No one lived there, not even the priests. He desired to live in close proximity to it that he could visit it regularly and have the benefit of that typical worship. He expressed it thus in Psalm 84:10, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand, I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." And we do the same. To desire to dwell in the house of the Lord means that, as long as we live on this earth, we pray that it may please God that we can enter into His house for worship.

The Holy Spirit gives us a twofold incentive.

The first is, "to behold the beauty of Jehovah." He is indeed beautiful, literally, gracious. Consider the beauty of His own Being,

the three Persons of the Godhead, the infinite and glorious attributes. We behold the graciousness of His eternal good pleasure expressed in His decrees, and in the works of His hand from creation, through the cross, all the way to the crown of victory. He has given to us His Word as the revelation of His beauty; and even that cannot compare to the wonder of gazing by faith upon His dear Son, our Savior, the grace of God incarnate. In the house of God this is unfolded before our eyes in the Scripture reading, the singing, the preaching, and the sacraments. We behold this by faith. We stare at it in rapt attention and contemplate that beauty of Jehovah.

Further, we inquire in His temple. The word inquire has the connotation of examining, reflecting upon, considering, hence meditating. You see, our activity of worship is not a passing experience, a fleeting moment. Rather it forces us to do some deep thinking. The Holy Spirit calls us to give serious consideration to what we hear and see in order that we may take it to heart. Such meditation produces from our lips the cry of repentance, the joy of forgiveness, and the hope of the abiding presence of Jehovah in our lives.

Such spiritual benefit of worship is heaven sent. The Psalmist recognizes this as he adds, "One thing have I desired of Jehovah."

Only Jehovah can so arrange our lives that we are able to enter the house of God. David experienced that as he wrote the Psalm. He was forbidden that joy as he was chased either by Saul or by Absalom. How he lifted his prayer to Jehovah: O, that Thou wilt arrange my life that I may dwell in Thy house all the days of my life! We admit the same. In Jehovah's great wisdom, He sends sickness, infirmities of old age, persecution, all of which prevents us from coming to God's house. It is our comfort that, at such times, His grace is sufficient for us even when we cannot worship. Our desire, however, is to be able to be there.

In addition, only Jehovah can bring to His house those whom He

wills. When there is spiritual neglect of the house of God, by loved ones or fellow members of the church, or even by neighbors to whom we witness, we are reminded that only Jehovah can draw them in.

Finally, we also confess with David, that the proper effect of worship is in the hands of our great Jehovah. Some people come to His house, and we wonder what they are doing there, for they seem to bear so little evidence of its blessings. The ability of a pastor to set forth the beauty of Jehovah is also heaven sent, as is also the ability of the people to rejoice in it. Hence we desire this of Jehovah, that He will work by His Holy Spirit to accomplish it.

One thing! So precious that David gave it top priority! His heart is right with God, His will is sanctified. I desire one thing, not just to be in church, but to dwell in the house of Jehovah to behold His beauty and meditate upon it.

One thing! I will seek after it. That includes arranging our lives that we are physically and spiritually fit for worship. Saturday night, Sunday morning, we do well to make this our prayer and act accordingly.

Our best worship in God's house now can be only a foretaste of heaven. Hence this desire ultimately takes us to Father's house of many mansions to see the beauty of Jehovah in the face of Jesus.

May our time spent now in the house of God comfort us, instruct us, encourage us, as we press onward and upward. □

ABSOLVO TE

One Priest alone can pardon me,
Or bid me "Go in peace";
Can breathe that word "Absolvo
te,"

And make these heart-throbs
cease:

My soul has heard His priestly
voice;

It said, "I bore thy sins –
Rejoice!"

S.B., 1929

■ The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers (4)

■ Moonshine Blasphemy

■ The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers (4)

But what then does the Reformed faith mean by the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant of God?

There are three possible explanations of the inclusion of children in the covenant. All are proposed by various Reformed churches.

The first explanation is that because of their privileged position in a Christian home and in the environment of the church these children are more likely to be converted than the children of unbelievers. In fact, the children are unsaved, and must be regarded as unsaved until such time as they give evidence of faith, but they are in a better position to be saved than other children. This was the view of some Puritans and of Jonathan Edwards. It is the view of certain Reformed churches today, including the Free Reformed Churches of North America and the Netherlands Reformed Congregations of the United States and Canada.

This view must be rejected. First, it does not do justice to the language of the Bible or of the Reformed creeds. God does not merely put the children of believers in a more advantageous position, so as to make it likelier that they will be saved; but He establishes His covenant with them, so as to be their God. God gives to the children the promise of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the church does not and may not regard them as heathens with an edge over other heathens. Rather, the Reformed church regards them,

and must regard them, as those "sanctified in Christ." Second, it is not true that our children, considered now strictly from the point of view of their natural condition, are in any better position than the heathens of the world. Our children are by nature dead in sin. A dead person in a Christian home and in the sphere of the church has no advantage over a dead person outside a Christian home and the church.

The second possible explanation of the place of children in the covenant can be more persuasively argued. All the children of believers without exception are in the covenant in this sense, that God promises them all salvation and extends to them all His covenant grace in Christ. However, the actual fulfillment of the promise, the actual reception of covenant grace, and the actual realization of the covenant with them personally depend upon their believing in Christ and thus taking hold of the covenant when they grow up. The covenant consists of promise and demand, which demand is a condition that the children must fulfill. The promise from God is for all without exception. But if the child should not fulfill the demand that he believe, he forfeits the promise. This is the view of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands ("Liberated"), of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and of the American Reformed Churches.

The appeal of this view is that it puts all our children without exception in the covenant. This is naturally pleasing to the parents (although the implication of this view is that not only some but also all of the children can fall out of the

covenant, which is not so pleasing). Also, it seems to do justice to the language of Scripture and of the creeds. God said to Abraham, "...and to your seed," not, "...and to some of your seed." The Heidelberg Catechism says that the infants are included in the covenant, not some of the infants. In the form for baptism, we confess that our children are sanctified in Christ, not some of them.

Are not all the children of believers baptized? Are not all the children required to be baptized?

Nevertheless, this view conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God, doctrines which are precious to every Reformed man and woman. For one thing, the promise and covenant grace of God now depend upon the work and will of the sinful child. The covenant and its salvation are conditional, dependent upon the faith of the child. But this stands in diametrical opposition to the teaching of Scripture, with specific reference to this very matter of the salvation of the children of believers: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Also, the Reformed faith has creedally rejected the notion that faith is a condition unto salvation: in I/9, 10 the Canons of Dordt deny that faith is a "prerequisite, cause or condition" upon which election and salvation depend, asserting rather that "men are chosen to faith" (cf. also I/Rejection of Errors, 3; III, IV/14; III, IV/Rejection of Errors, 6).

For another thing, this explanation of the inclusion of the children in the covenant definitely implies that Christ's death for some per-

sons fails to secure their redemption. At baptism God promises to all the children that He will give them His covenant and its blessings *on the basis that Christ washed them all in His blood*. But the fact is that some of these children perish. Thus is denied the doctrine of limited, efficacious atonement, at least within the sphere of the covenant. As regards the children of believers, there is universal atonement.

Yet another objectionable element in this view is its teaching that the promise of God fails in many cases. God promises salvation to every baptized child of believing parents, but many of them do not receive salvation. The word and promise of God have failed in all these cases. They have failed because the children have refused to fulfill the condition of faith; but the fact remains that they have failed.

The basic objection to this covenant-view — and it is a deadly serious objection — is that it conflicts with the Reformed gospel of salvation by sovereign grace.

The third explanation we believe to be that of Scripture itself. Although all our children are in the sphere of the covenant and therefore receive the sign of the covenant and are reared as covenant members, the covenant of God, the relationship of friendship in Jesus Christ, is established with the elect children only. The promise does not depend upon the faith of the child, but the promise itself works the faith by which the child receives the grace of the covenant in every child to whom God makes the promise. It is the elect children among our physical offspring who constitute our true children, even as the seed of Abraham was not all his physical descendants, but only Christ and those who are Christ's according to election (cf. Gal. 3:7, 16, 29).

Our grounds for this explanation of the inclusion of children in the covenant are the following. First, only this view harmonizes with the rule of faith in Scripture. God's saving, covenant mercy is particular, i.e., for the elect alone (Rom. 9:15). Predestination makes dis-

tinction not only between visible church and world but also within the visible church itself (Rom. 9:10-13). God's salvation never depends upon the will or action of the sinner (Rom. 9:16). Christ's death is efficacious (Rom. 5:6-11). The promise of God is sure to all the seed (Rom. 4:16).

Second, Scripture itself gives exactly this explanation of the precise matter under discussion. It does this in Romans 9:1ff. The concern of Paul is that so many physical children of Abraham perish in light of God's promise to Abraham to establish His covenant with Abraham's seed (vss. 1-5). The chief difficulty of the apostle is not that dear relatives perish (although he could wish himself accursed for these brothers — vs. 3), but that it might seem that "the word of God hath taken none effect," that is, that the promise of God has failed to establish the covenant with many to whom the promise was given (vs. 6). But it is not the case that the promise has proved to be a powerless failure in even one instance. Why not? Because the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was given, never was all the physical children of Abraham. "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (vss. 6b-8). There is a distinction between two kinds of children of believing Abraham: children of the flesh and children of the promise. And this distinction is determined by election and reprobation, illustrated plainly by the history of Jacob and Esau (vss. 9-23).

Paul's difficulty is exactly our problem. By promise, God includes our children in His covenant of salvation; but not all of our children are saved.

Scripture's solution of the apostle's difficulty solves our problem as well. The children of believers to whom God graciously promises membership in the covenant are not all the physical offspring of be-

lievers. They are rather the "children of God" among our offspring. And the children of God are those who are chosen in Christ. These are the ones whom God counts for the seed when He says, "I will be the God of your seed." These, and these only, are "the children of the promise." To them, and to them only, is the promise given. In every one of them is the promise effectual to work faith in Jesus Christ. □

—DJE

■ Moonshine Blasphemy

As the great apostasy that precedes the coming of Christ intensifies, believers are witness to the wildest of religious teachings and the weirdest of religious practices. All is in the name of Christ. This was foretold. False doctrines and evil practices in the churches are part of the coming of "antichrist." The mystery of iniquity is always working. And antichrist opposes the Christ of Scripture by taking His place. The Greek word "*anti*" in I John 2:18 ("as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time") combines the meaning of antagonism and replacement.

Believers tend to get used to the superstitious nonsense that parades as Christianity. We "roll with the punches." We are no longer horrified by the boldest affronts to the majesty of God. We no longer know how to be angry at the profaning of the holiest things of the kingdom of God. We become calloused. Or we are battle-weary. This is a weakness. It bodes ill for the future. But this is not now my concern. Occasionally, something is done that outrages even the most calloused and battle-weary of Reformed believers, alerting them to the deep penetration of the apostasy into the Reformed churches..

Such a thing took place in Grand Rapids last month in celebration of the suffering of Jesus. A religious organization with a name something like Moonshine Ministry Center crucified the Son of God again. It decked some actor up as

Jesus, the eternal Son of God in human flesh, and hanged him on a cross to die. There, according to his own testimony in the public press, he experienced something of what Christ endured in His final hours. He suffered something of the humiliation of the sin-bearer under the wrath of God. All this was done at a public gathering on a main highway just outside "Jerusalem" for the religious edification of the audience, for the spread of the witness to Jesus in the world, and in remembrance of Jesus' death until He comes. Admission was free.

Merely drama?

Moonshine blasphemy rather.

A mere man, and sinful, impersonated the eternal Son of God, Mary's holy Child. Moonshine staged a reincarnation of the Incarnate Word of God. It replayed the unique, unrepeatable atonement of the only Savior.

God was represented by a creature. A mortal man played God.

Dumb images — the pageant, rather than the lively preaching of the Word, were used to teach the people the very heart of the mystery of salvation.

Other actors screamed, "Crucify him," playing at the sin of crucifying the Lord of glory. These knew what they were doing.

Men, women, and children gathered to remember the crucifixion of

their Redeemer and to worship the Lamb Who was slain by gazing on this monstrous farce and horrendous lie.

What did a father say, I wonder, to the little child who asked, in some terror at the spectacle, "Daddy, who is that on the cross?" Did he say, "That is Jesus dying for our sins"? Or did he say, "That is a man playing the part of Jesus dying for our sins"? It makes no difference. In either case, he said, "That is a replacement-Jesus, an antichrist."

But the show was spiritually enriching. The actor himself testified in the press that taking the place of the crucified Jesus strengthened and deepened his faith.

Blasphemous moonshine rather.

The Holy Spirit of the exalted Christ works faith in Jesus Christ by the preaching of the gospel and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments, as the Reformed Christian confesses in question 65 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The Spirit does not use transgression of the second commandment to strengthen faith or to give the benefits of the cross of Christ. For He is holy.

The best that might be said of the superstitious shenanigans is that the sponsoring organization is, by its own seemingly proud advertisement, no church, but only a "ministry center." The church, estab-

lished by Jesus Christ and serving Him, preaches the cross as the sacrifice of Himself by Jesus, once for all. She worships Jesus as the One Who is now in heaven according to His human nature, and not on earth where He can be crucified yearly for the entertainment of Grand Rapids. Religious ministry centers, man-made and catering to the people, do whatever it takes to attract and amuse the people.

But everyone knows that in very small print Moonshine Ministry Center is a member church of the Christian Reformed denomination. The Christian Reformed Church, and every man, woman, and child in her, becomes responsible for the Moonshine blasphemy. If the CRC did the denominational discipline that Christ calls her to do, she would set Moonshine outside the fellowship so fast the heads of the music/drama/entertainment/blasphemy department would spin.

I suspect that the arena in which replacement-Jesus suffered on the cross this past Lent was full. I would be surprised if most of the spectators did not leave the mock-crucifixion testifying, like the replacement-Jesus, to a religious experience, even a strong religious experience.

I do not doubt it.

A moonshine experience. □

—DJE

Letters

■ Your March 15 issue has me listed as a speaker for the Psalmody Conference which is set for this August. I have no such assignment. Perhaps you would want to find out who does have this assignment and give proper credit for this to your readers.

— (Rev.) Duncan Lowe
Pittsburgh, PA

Response:

The confirmed list of speakers at the Psalmody Conference consists of Rev. G.I. Williamson; Rev. Frank J. Smith; Dr. William Young; Rev. David Compton; Dr. Randall T. Ruble; Prof. Herman Hanko; and Dr. Charles J. Butler. The conference is scheduled for August 1-3, 1990 at Flat Rock, North Carolina. In-

quiries may be directed to Arthur Lamoureux, 209 Tanner Ave., Warwick, RI 02886-4410 (telephone: 401-739-1699). — Ed.

■ Congratulations with your interesting article about some aspects of life in beautiful South Africa today (*The SB*, March 15, 1990, "The

Church, Theology, and Violence in South Africa"). That country is a key supplier of resources like manganese, chrome, gold, and diamonds — crucial to Western industry. If it were taken over by the Communists it would really spell disaster.

See what has happened in Communist-conquered territories world wide.... This tyrannical ideology, which began in 1903 with but 17 revolutionaries, took Russia, a nation of 120 million in 1917, with only 40,000 followers. Calculations now are that Communism controls some 1.7 billion people — 38% of the world's population. For these people, the Marxian promise of a worker's paradise has turned into a nightmare of permanent scarcity, economic stagnation, underground churches and chronic crisis.

That party, in its various guises and in its various countries, has compiled a catalogue of crimes

unique in human history.

A partial rendering would include the murder of sixty million people in slave labor camps, prisons, and psychiatric institutions; destruction of thousands of churches; the forgotten Holocaust of the Ukraine; the forced famine of the 1930s; the Hitler-Stalin Pact, with the rape of the Baltic states; the Katyn massacre of the Polish officers; the deception of Yalta; the crushing of the Hungarian Freedom fighters; the war of genocide against the Afghan people; the even greater genocide by Red China; the enslavement of Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.

The number of deaths attributable to Communism worldwide since 1917 is estimated to total 180-million.

What cannot be questioned is that in its search for a "New Society," the creation of a "New Man,"

Communist doctrine (including the A.N.C. in South Africa) demands the use of terror, particularly the liquidation of the bourgeoisie and the Bible-believing Christians. As Lenin wrote in 1908, "it is necessary to institute the sort of real, nationwide terror which reinvigorates a country and through which the Great French Revolution achieves glory."

Always Communism has produced its inevitable and identical fruit. Always the religious, social, political, and economical life of a victim nation has been disfigured beyond recognition.

Despite all the hype and hoopla we now get from the media, there is no change. It is already the fifth time that Moscow has a "perestroika!"

Communist ideology is incapable of producing anything good.

— J.P. deKlerk

Ashhurst, New Zealand □

In His Fear Rev. Arie denHartog

Fear God and Not Man

How easy it is for us to fear man more than we fear God. We often are so blind and foolish. We imagine that, since man can be seen and God cannot be seen, man is therefore more to be feared. Yet we know that there is so much more reason to fear God than man. When we fear God there is no reason to fear man. Everywhere Scripture exhorts us not to fear man but to fear God. The child of God born again by the Spirit of God must al-

ways be motivated only by the fear of God.

To fear God means that we know that the Lord is the absolutely sovereign God, infinite in power and greatness, awesome in majesty and holiness, terrible in righteousness and judgment. This God is enthroned in the heavens. He rules sovereignly over all. He is at once everywhere present in the world. We cannot escape His all-seeing eye and His all-knowing knowledge. He is the judge of the nations. He rules over His ungodly enemies, laughing them to scorn because He holds them in derision. When He has finished His purpose with them He shall dash them to pieces as a potter's vessel. His

anger is dreadful. In His just and holy wrath He will cast ungodly sinners into the eternal condemnation of hell. He is the God of sovereign predestination. In sovereign mercy He saves those whom He has chosen before the foundations of the world. By almighty sovereign grace He makes His people to be instruments of His praise. He saves them into eternal glory to live with Him forever and to praise Him through all eternity. By the same sovereignty this God condemns the ungodly from eternity and causes them to be vessels of His wrath fitted for destruction. He raises up a proud Pharaoh and sovereignly hardens his heart in order that God

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might show His power and glory in delivering His people Israel. What reason there is to fear such a God! How very puny and powerless man is in comparison to this God. There is nothing more terrible imaginable than the holy and righteous judgments of this God. There is nothing more blessed and wonderful than the favor and loving kindness of this God.

Yet often we fear man rather than God. We fear what man can do to us. We fear what man will say to us and about us. We fear shame and reproach before man. We want desperately to be accepted of man and to have a place of honor and glory among men. We forget that we stand before the Lord. He daily judges all our actions and even the thoughts of our hearts. How much more important it is to be accepted of Him, and to be exalted in His presence.

When we fear God, love His commandments and keep them, and confess the truth of His name, then the world will hate and despise us. We will be ridiculed and put to shame in the world. If we are serious Christians who refuse to compromise the Word of God, then the world will ostracize us. When we seek the glory of God and condemn the wickedness of the world, we will be threatened and persecuted in the world. This is just as true in the modern day wicked world as it always has been. In fact we know that in the last day this will grow worse and worse. How much then do we need to be very clear on the truth that God is to be feared more than man. We need to stand in the spiritual courage that is rooted in the fear of God. We need to be willing and ready to suffer the loss of all things in the world, including our own honor and glory because of the fear of God. We must very really expect the time to come when Christians will once again have to face terrible suffering and even death for the Lord's sake. The only thing that will keep us in that day is the fear of God. We can expect to stand in that day only if by God's grace today we fear God rather than man.

The most fierce hatred against the Lord and His truth always comes from apostate Christendom. History has proven that time and again. It was apostate Israel that persecuted and killed the true prophets of the Lord. The unbelieving Jews crucified the Lord of glory. It was the apostate Roman Church that engaged in one of the most dreadful eras of persecution of the true church of Christ that the world has ever known. Our age is such an age of tolerance of every form of belief that we easily imagine that this kind of thing will never happen again in the world. But we must remember that, though the world will tolerate every form of the lie and wickedness, it will never tolerate the righteousness and truth of God. In the last days the true church of Jesus Christ will become smaller and smaller, while the apostate church will become larger and larger and more and more powerful. We must be ready as faithful believers to face the ever increasing wrath and fierce hatred of the liberal Christianity of our day. To be associated with the true church of Jesus Christ will become increasingly unpopular. If you are serious about living the life of a Christian, you must be ready to endure the shame and ridicule and persecution of modern day nominal Christianity.

The fear of man is one of the chief reasons for compromise in Christianity. We must realize that and be on our guard against it. It takes place on every level. Churches want to be popular in the world. They want to have large memberships and maintain vast and beautiful complexes to boast and glory in. In order to do that they must be careful not to offend any members, especially those with money and influence. Therefore they change the Word of God which sharply and absolutely condemns man's wickedness, and they preach a doctrine of a God who loves everyone and who winks at sin. They seek to make their "gospel" appealing to the natural man and as easy as possible to follow. By doing this they will attract many to their fold. But at the same

time they fear not that they are dishonoring the name of God and compromising and denying His truth. What an awful judgment will come on such churches. Men stand in awe of the mega churches of our land but pay little attention to the Word that is preached in them and to the fact that many of them are nothing but synagogues of Satan. On the other hand a church that is small and insignificant in the eyes of men is looked on with disdain and ridicule, even though it may be far more faithful to the Lord and in the true sense serve the Lord with greater zeal and love to Him.

How many ministers of the Word in our land are desperately interested in becoming popular among men and even in becoming rich and famous in the world. The recent scandals that have been perpetrated by so-called ministers of the gospel are evidence of this. How easy it is for a minister to compromise the demands of the Word of God. As a preacher I know the danger of this. It is just so much more pleasant to be well received and to have all men speak highly of you than to have to bring the offense of the Word of God. It is so easy to leave off admonishing the people of God though they sometimes need this. It is a fearful thing to have to bring a Word to a home or individual that you know is going to offend. You know that you will be hated for it. Oh how we love the praise of men and try to avoid therefore anything that will make men angry with us. Yet we must remember that the fear of God is so much greater. If we fail to bring His Word faithfully we will incur His wrath and displeasure, and He will hold us accountable for those we have deceived by flattering words and have failed to warn against their sins. How preachers need to be men of courage, a courage rooted in the fear of God and that is not afraid of the faces of ungodly men. One of the chief requirements for the minister of the gospel is that He is one that fears God. In the history of the church it was such God-fearing men that were mighty in the church and were ready to face even the fires of

persecution rather than in the slightest way compromise the truth of God.

The fear of man is real for the workman in his work place and business establishment. The world we live in is full of corruption and wickedness. There is strong pressure upon the Christian that he go along with this. Often it seems as though the wicked man prospers in his way. On the other hand, when the Christian maintains the principles of the law of God, he must suffer financial loss. Only the fear of God can cause the Christian to persevere in such a world. The Christian who refuses to join the godless labor unions of our land will often be left without a job or have to take a job with much less pay. Threats and intimidation are the common tactics of the world to seek to persuade the Christian to join ungodly men in their ungodly walk. Who dares to oppose this out of the fear of God? What God-fearing courage is necessary.

There is strong social pressure on the Christian to conform to the "norms" of society. Those norms are based on humanistic philosophy that leaves out God and His truth. Anyone who refuses to conform to these norms will be ridiculed and put to shame. The

feminist movement wants every woman in our land to rebel against her God-ordained role in the home as wife and mother and to seek a glamorous career in the world. It does everything in its power to make the virtuous and godly woman look ridiculous and stupid. The career woman of the world is portrayed as the most worthy of praise. She appears on the front page of the women's magazines. How many are ashamed and afraid to stand against the pressures of our modern day evil society because they are driven by the desire of the praise and glory of men. But, again, let us remember that the wrath of God is upon this ungodly world. How much more important is the favor of God and being found of Him in honor and glory.

Young people face peer pressure. How very strong this is. Often it is very subtle. You must conform in your life style to be accepted, you must wear the same clothes as the world does no matter how immodest they may be, you must listen to the same music and dance with the world's dance no matter how wicked and immoral. If you want to be "with it" then you must adopt the language and life style and interests of the world. And who wants to be different? Who wants

to be considered a prude? Who wants to be left out of the fun and excitement of the world? Young people, are you afraid to be different because you are afraid of men and the consequences that a life of godliness will have on your glory and honor among men? Remember that the evil philosophy of modern-day youth is accursed of God. Fear God and be courageous to live lives that are pleasing to Him and honorable in His sight.

Fear God! The Lord will preserve all those that fear Him. He will destroy the wicked. His wrath and judgment are terrible. Fear not what man can do to you, for that is nothing compared to the judgment of God. Fear God, for the Lord is able to keep His own through all the persecutions and trials of this world. Fear God, for the reward of His grace to His saints who remain faithful and steadfast is infinitely more glorious and blessed than anything which the world can promise. Though the world may try to bring shame and reproach on the godly, before the Lord we shall never be put to shame. The glory of the world shall soon be destroyed. The glory which God will give to His saints will endure forever. □

Contribution
Mr. John Veldman

From Oppression to Freedom

Mr. Veldman is a member of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

People have often in the past expressed to us interest in hearing the story of the Romanian refugee family which is attending our Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. We have always been willing to share that story with others, because we ourselves have been thrilled by the opportunity given us to have a part not only in this family's coming to

America, but more especially in their becoming members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in this country. When therefore we were asked to write a short account of our experiences with this family, we readily, though somewhat fearfully, agreed to do so.

It was back in 1986 that I received a telephone call from Rev. Bekkering, informing me that a

representative of "Freedom Flight Refugee Center" had contacted him to ask about our church's willingness to sponsor a refugee family. At Rev. Bekkering's request I met with the man to try to determine if there were any way in which we could work with that organization.

I learned that Freedom Flight Refugee Center works through churches, attempting to persuade as many of them as possible to become "sponsors." We realized of course that sponsoring refugees is not the calling of the church, and we explained our position to the representative of Freedom Flight. At the same time, we expressed our willingness personally (i.e., as a family) to become involved in such a project.

Freedom Flight agreed to that arrangement and we were soon busy with them, in meeting after meeting, screening and evaluating the requests from the many families who had fled Romania and were waiting in refugee-camps. We learned that the majority of these families, who were of all kinds of religious backgrounds, gave *political* reasons for their flight. Only one declared that they had fled to escape persecution — persecution which they had to endure, partly because they were Hungarians in Romania, and more particularly because they were Hungarians who were Reformed Christians. We informed Freedom Flight Refugee Center that this family was our choice, and the Center in turn filled out the necessary application forms to file with our government, requesting that they permit this family to come to the U.S.A.

May we introduce to you at this time the Barabas (pronounced Bare'uh bus) family? The father's name is Zoltan; the mother's, Irma (with a Dutch r-r-r-r). The older of two sons is also named Zoltan, and the younger is Csaba. At the time of their flight from Romania, their ages were, respectively, 44, 42, 20, and 12. They had tried first to escape through Czechoslovakia. When that failed, they determined to make another attempt through Hungary. Being themselves Hungarian, they had relatives in that



The Barabas Family: Zoltan, Irma, Csaba, and Zoltan, Jr.

country; and they prevailed upon an aunt to send them an invitation to come and visit her. With this invitation in hand, they went to the Romanian police and, to their great delight, were given permission to go. Now they could cross at least one border without trouble. But they were of course, for all that, still behind the "iron curtain."

After visiting their aunt they boarded a train, not for Romania, but for Austria. They moved purposefully to the front part of the train. That gave them a slight advantage; for when the train stopped at the border, the first few cars were in Austria, while the rest were yet in Hungary. That meant that the border guard who asked to see their passports was Austrian, not Hungarian. But in no way could they rest easy at that point. For though they could produce passports, it would be immediately clear, when they did so, that they had received no authorization from the Romanian government to travel to Austria. If the guard therefore would, in accord with international law, turn them back, then prison, or worse, would be their lot. Needless to say, their hearts pounded. What will the border guard do? He

looked at them, looked again at their passports, shook his head and said, "Get off the train...and may God bless you."

They were overjoyed, of course, to be able to step out of that train onto "free" soil. What they did not anticipate however was that they faced in Austria a wait of no less than 22 months, living in a one-room apartment without running water. That's a family of four!

The Barabases had come from a part of Romania called Transylvania. That was land which had once been part of Hungary but had been taken by Romania. Many of the Hungarians were forced to leave, and as many Romanians were moved in to take their place — in the hope that the Hungarians who remained would lose their ethnic identity. It happened that the Barabas family was left alone. They were allowed, too, with other Hungarians, to go to church. If, however, the people of the church planned an activity during the week, the communist government more often than not would find a reason to cancel it. Church services, though, were possible in Romania. And, ironically, now that they were in Austria, they found

that that privilege was no longer available to them. For 22 long months in the refugee camp...no spiritual care!

Finally, in June of 1987, came the happy news to the Barabases, "You have a sponsor in the U.S.A." More months passed however with little apparent progress. Then, early in 1988, there came a knock at their door. A stranger it was, and he asked simply, "Does the Barabas family live here?" After an initial, fearful denial they admitted that they were in fact the Barabases. And who was the stranger standing at the door? None other than Bruce Jabaay, from Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan. He had been in Germany, on a business trip, and decided to travel to Austria to look up the Barabas family. What a happy encouragement that was to the Barabases.

Meanwhile, back in the States, a "Laymen's Committee" had been formed to make the necessary preparations for the arrival of the family from Romania. Through their work, and through the willing donations of individuals in various of our congregations, there was soon supplied adequate bedding, furniture, food, etc. During that time too, many of us corresponded with the Barabases regularly, even managing to send them a Hungarian Bible — since they had not dared to take their Bible with them out of Romania. Our letters were painstakingly translated by them, and their response to us was always to give God all of the praise and to trust in Him Who had so marvelously given them escape.

Finally, on July 21, 1988, the big day arrived. The Barabas family landed at the airport. Though it was a daytime arrival, there was a good-sized crowd waiting for them. A gratifying experience that was, for them; but then began the hard work of settling in a new country. The language barrier was of course the most immediate and the greatest obstacle. Now they had actually to *learn* that terribly difficult English! Even with their thorough acquaintance with the Heidelberg Catechism, the drift of the sermons in Faith Church still

often passes them by.

For the boys, this is different. Zoltan, Jr. understand everything now — since he had a good beginning in the basic English he had taken in school in Romania. Csaba has advanced more slowly, but nevertheless steadily. Very soon after the family's arrival, he went to our Hope School to be tutored by our patient and helpful Miss Winifred Koole. Now he is attending our Heritage School, and catechism classes in Faith Church. And he's even beginning to forget some Hungarian words!

Right from the start, they have been happily employed in the woodworking and building trade. They are very good at their work. Several times we have received calls indicating that their craftsmanship is much appreciated.

Mr. and Mrs. Barabas still find the English language a handicap. They do in spite of it experience the friendship of the members at Faith Church. But our hope is that they may begin better to master the language, so that there may also, by the working of the Spirit through the preached Word, be a growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior.

The family is happy to be in this free country. But their hearts go

out to their daughter and her husband and family who live yet in Romania — as well as to both Zoltan's and Irma's parents. All is not well in Transylvania. Now there is fighting between Romanians and Hungarians. The Barabases here have taken steps to try to help their daughter and her family to move to the U.S.A. That's not likely to happen soon, however, because for the present the grandparents need the protection of this young family in Romania.

More and more we realize that we live in perilous times. God's sovereign power is clearly visible not only in floods and in earthquakes but also in revolutions. We in this country have yet a great measure of freedom. Let us pray for, and, as we have opportunity, help those who are terribly persecuted, in other lands, for their faith. The King's command is:

"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Heb. 13:1-3).

"For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners" (Ps. 69:33). □

Pentecost (John 7:37-39)

— Suzanne Looyenga

Feast of fulfillment this:
Offspring of seven days of fest.
There is a plenteous harvest
gathered here
Where in our tabernacles we are
called to rest.
And now this wilderness, this
barren place
Breaks forth with joy and praise
And we behold a wonder done
On this His Day of Days.
The Rock He cleaves
And forth come streams to
quench our thirsting souls.
We, dying pilgrims, sin-parched,
drink
These living waters of an un-
plumbed depth and are made
whole.
Now deep within us dwells

The spirit of our Rock and
Dwellingplace:
The water that refreshes us oft' as
we come to drink,
Oft' as we seek His face.
We, stirred to life, break forth as
fountains now
Within this desert-world: as
Springs of praise
To Him, the Source unmeasured of
our joy;
As pitchers pouring out to all upon
our pilgrim ways
A cup of water from the Well. Oh
who would taste
And see the goodness of the Lord?
Would you deliverance find, poor
stranger too?
Already He has called you to the
waters. Haste!

The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

The End Times (5)

Preaching To All Nations, Then the End

Young people, do you know the teaching about the end times? Are you aware of what the Bible teaches will happen in these perilous times? Are you aware that they will be perilous?

Before the rise of Antichrist and great persecution take place, the church is to be busy. Instead of simply watching these developments and wringing our hands in despair, or only assuming a *defensive* posture, the church is to be busy with the positive and offensive work of the preaching of the gospel to all nations, as the Lord commanded in Matthew 28:18-20. And this work of the gospel preaching to all nations is *connected* by the Lord to the end times in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come."

This shows how important the preaching of the gospel is! The end of the world and the coming of Jesus Christ wait on the preaching! The end cannot come until the gospel is preached; and when it is preached, it will *come*! Everything waits on the preaching. For example, since the Antichrist will stop the preaching, that is, silence the witness of the church (Rev. 11), something must hinder the coming of the Antichrist (II Thess. 2), so that the gospel can go throughout

Review

A couple of months ago I began by saying that, although we do not know when the end will come in terms of days or even years, the Bible does give us good instruction as to what we must expect before the Lord returns to make all things new. I hope and pray that you will know these things!

Close to the end there will be a wholesale "divorcing" (apostasy means "putting away") of the truth by the churches. Men and women in leadership and in the pew will reject the doctrines that the true church has always held, in that way laying the groundwork for the great Apostate, Antichrist. Combining both political and church powers into one mammoth power, his will be the peaceful, prosperous, highest attainment of man this earth has ever known. Alliance with him will give lucrative benefits. Opposition to him will mean persecution, such horrible persecution that the true church is almost pressed out of existence. But the elect will not perish, spiritually. The Lord will shorten the days. The people of God will be saved.

all the earth. Antichrist will not come until the preaching is finished. The end waits on the preaching!

If this is true, it is the saddest (and most wicked!) behavior possible that churches who claim to love the Lord Jesus are throwing out or putting the preaching off to the side. And it would be the worst thing in the world for the young people of the churches to ask for anything to replace the faithful preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I just talked with a pastor who said that, even though he knew it used to be the tradition of his denomination to let the preaching have the central place, it certainly was not the case in his church anymore. Pray that you may so love Jesus Christ and His work that you love the *preaching*.

Kingdom preaching!

The "gospel of the kingdom" that Jesus refers to in Matthew 24:14 teaches that your God is the King, that the Kingdom is His Kingdom, not man's. The Kingdom you belong to is a King-

dom of *heaven*, not a kingdom of this world, a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly kingdom. Jesus Christ, Son of the King, your older brother, rules in His Kingdom by His Holy Spirit and the Word of His grace.

The *gospel* (good news) of this Kingdom that we preach and that you young people hear and remember as you lie down to sleep with a guilty conscience, is that the King has grace and favor towards sinners through Jesus Christ, and that there is salvation from sin and death and hell in the blood of the cross of Christ! So the *message* of the Kingdom's gospel is the whole story of Jesus Christ — His Person, His work, His power, His glory! Really, it is the whole Bible, but always as it centers in Jesus Christ Who is Lord and King through His death and resurrection. Why? Because the foundation of the Kingdom is the righteousness of Jesus Christ in His cross. Without *this* foundation, the Kingdom is nothing.

But how is this kingdom built? How does it grow? Can you see it?

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God's children come into this kingdom *through faith* in Jesus Christ. God's rule in the kingdom people is a rule *in their hearts*. Jesus Christ puts His throne *there*. Remember, you have the *riches* of that Kingdom when you have the riches of *salvation* in Jesus. You have the *peace* of that Kingdom when you know that all your filthy sins and corrupt nature are *forgiven* you because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is peace! That is prosperity! And that is *invisible*! "The kingdom of God cometh *not* with observation" (Luke 17:10). Pray for *that* Kingdom to be yours more and more.

So the gospel of that Kingdom is a message of repentance, of sorrow for sin, of humbling yourself before God's great goodness because of sin. It is a message that *joy* comes *through* this godly sorrow!

Is this the gospel that you are hearing today? Is this what comes from your pulpit and out of the mouth of your pastor? I pray that it is in yours, because *another* kingdom is being promoted today, an earthly kingdom with earthly riches and earthly peace. This is the kingdom of man, of man's power and man's glory. In the preaching of this kingdom, the kingdom of heaven is laughed at as old-fashioned and ineffective. In the preaching of this kingdom, the message of sin and repentance is despised.

On an Amway inspirational tape, Robert Schuller, "Reformed" pastor who has a larger audience than any other "Reformed" pastor in the world, says, "I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality, and hence, counterproductive to evangelism enterprise, than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition." Explaining Philippians 2:7, 8 he said, "Jesus...suffered the cross to sanctify his self-esteem, and he bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem. And the cross will sanctify your ego-trip." His is the gospel of "meat and

drink," whereas the gospel of the Kingdom is of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (see Romans 14:16).

That "gospel," the gospel of *that* kingdom, which is not the heavenly kingdom, is powerless to save sinners. It may deceptively remove a little of your guilt now, but it certainly doesn't save. But the gospel of "*this* kingdom," Jesus' Kingdom, actually makes the Kingdom to grow. You see, the preaching of the Kingdom does not just inform you *about* the kingdom; it actually translates God's elect *into* the kingdom. The preaching draws you and me into the Kingdom, and in doing so establishes the rule of Jesus Christ in our hearts! See Romans 10:13-15 and I Corinthians 1:17-24.

Is it not strange, then, that people who claim to love the kingdom, claim to want to promote the kingdom, claim to be zealous for the establishment of that kingdom, are running madly around the world doing everything except preaching the gospel of this kingdom? It is like a young man who wants to attract a girl but never uses his deodorant, or like a father who wants to feed his family but eliminates the grocery item from the budget.

Young people, do you see that the church's calling is to preach? Since the gospel is so powerful, do you learn from this how important it is that we *listen* to it? Do you see that your duty is to *support* that preaching of the gospel, the preaching of *this* gospel, and no other? Let your support be thrown behind the denominational mission work and the evangelism work of your local church, by giving liberally to those collections. Give your support to the seminary where gospel preachers are being trained. Give encouragement to your pastor. Pray for the preaching!

And could it be that the Lord wants you, young men, to be trained for the ministry of the gospel, so that you personally will be used by the King of the Kingdom for this blessed work? Do I need to tell you again that this work, in addition to being one of the most important works in God's

kingdom, also carries with it a blessing and a reward "now in this time...and in the life to come..."?

* * * * *

Two dangers must be warned against when we speak of the preaching of the gospel to all nations.

First, there is the temptation to be *optimistic in the wrong sense about the results of the gospel preaching*. There is the view that before Jesus returns, almost the whole world will be converted by the gospel and be saved. Earthly life will become almost completely Christian, in politics, in law, in culture, in ethics. This is the postmillennial golden age that will be a fulfillment of the Old Testament's prophecies about beating swords into plowshares and about the knowledge of God covering the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But this is a dream that is not scriptural. As we saw last time, Matthew 24 teaches conclusively that the last times will be times of false prophets, horrible apostasy, vile wickedness, hot persecution. So terrible will these days be that for the elect's sake they will be shortened. We may not suppose that the end times mean fantastic success in the mass conversion of the world's population.

But, second, this does not mean that we must be *pessimistic about the preaching of the gospel*. You notice that I said the first danger was to be optimistic *in the wrong sense*. But optimism is warranted! There is nothing pessimistic about the prophecies in the Old Testament, including the promise that the "little stone" of Daniel that crushes the image will grow until it fills the whole earth, nothing pessimistic about the message that the white horse of the preaching will go forth triumphantly. We are optimists. We must be optimists, because Jesus Christ sits on the throne, ruling right now! And the message that Jesus sends forth through His faithful servants is accomplishing His will triumphantly, right now!

But we may not get the wrong impression of what Jesus promises will be the *result* of the gospel preaching. Christ does not say in

Matthew 24 that the gospel will convert all nations, but that it will be preached as a *witness* to all nations. The triumph that II Corinthians 10:4, 5 speaks of is a *spiritual* triumph, just as the weapons of our warfare are *spiritual* weapons. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God...."

As a "witness" to all nations, the preaching will result in the hardening of some nations and of some in all nations. The preaching witnesses to them the error of their way, the lie of their theology, and

exposes their crooked behavior. But they reject the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In doing that, they fill up the measure of the cup of sin and are readied for the final judgment. Jesus always warned the disciples that this would be one of the results of faithful gospel preaching. That is why He forewarned the church that she would be hated for His name's sake (Matthew 24:9).

But this is not the only result of the preaching. The positive result, indeed, the *main purpose* of God in the preaching, is to save His elect in every nation, to save you, who believe. By this gospel, the elect are brought into the kingdom, saved from the power and misery

of the *other* kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. Praise God, the gospel of this kingdom saves! We come into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13). This dear Son rules, and we possess the riches and peace of the only lasting kingdom, so that in every aspect of our life, the kingdom comes and is extended.

Has the gospel of the kingdom been preached to all nations? When it has, all the elect will have been gathered in and the end will come.

"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. And grant us the grace to be faithful in preaching and, hearing the preaching, to believe." □

Guest Article

Mr. Don Doezeema

Our Mission Work – '89/'90

The work of the Domestic Mission Committee, like that of most other Synodical Committees, is not highly visible. Not that it cannot be, or should not be. It just isn't. And that's too bad. Maybe we should have, in The SB, short quarterly reports from the secretaries of the major committees. Then one wouldn't have to wait for the agenda for Synod in order to learn about what's happening in the British Isles, or in Tasmania, or in Jamaica, or in Florida. A good test to determine the worth of such regular reporting can perhaps be found in discovering whether our readers know more about Larne than they do about Jamaica; for, if memory serves me correctly, the

secretary of the Contact Committee has done more to disseminate information than has that of the Domestic Mission Committee. Whatever the case, we hope that this article will give our readers a little flavor of what has been happening in missions in our churches this past year, and what decisions must be faced, relative to those labors, by Synod 1990.

The year has been comparatively uneventful — compared, that is, to previous years when there were no fewer than four full-time missionaries, stationed in various parts of the country and abroad, all of whose labors were the concern not only of the respective calling churches but also of the Mission Committee, which has an important part to play in supervising the mission activities of our churches in common. One by one, however, in '88 and '89, those missionaries took calls to serve as pastors in var-

ious of our congregations. Gone too, of course, were the mission stations — two of them having in fact been granted permission to organize.

The Mission Committee has nevertheless, since then, been active. Florida, for example, has demanded our attention. Synod 1989 instructed us to investigate the Bradenton/Venice area, with a view to making a recommendation to this year's Synod as to whether or not we have there a viable field for mission labor. Since that kind of determination cannot be made from a distance, the Mission Committee arranged for various of our ministers to spend a couple of weeks each in the area. Rev. Houck, while he was still a missionary, worked for three weeks in Florida on two different occasions. Rev. Bekkering, Rev. Bruinsma, Rev. Gritters, Rev. Key, and Rev. Woudenberg were also there for a

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short time. For their labors on our behalf we sincerely thank them and their respective consistories.

Reports we received from them were, for the most part, optimistic. That began already with Rev. Bekkering, who worked in Florida immediately after Synod 1989 and saw potential for continued and expanded labors in the south. Not long after that, we received a letter over the signature of eleven individuals in the Venice area urging us to send a missionary or minister of our churches to "present the truth of the Scriptures with a view to establishing, if the Lord will, a Protestant Reformed Church in this area."

The Mission Committee has no well-defined, objective criteria to determine when an area is ripe for the labors of a missionary. It is a matter therefore of gathering as much information as we can, weighing all the evidence, reaching our conclusions, and then preparing advice for Synod. Sometimes, perhaps, the evidence may very soon become overwhelming, even compelling. More often than not, conviction comes gradually, as events seem more and more to lead us in a particular direction. In the case of Florida, debate on the floor of the Mission Committee has been sometimes warm. We are well aware, as a committee, that the rather prominent seasonal presence of Protestant Reformed visitors to the land of winter sunshine has in the past been and continues still to be a complicating factor in our churches' consideration of this area as a potential field for mission labor. Over the course of the year however the Mission Committee became more and more convinced that we are being shown in Florida an open door, and that we cannot let the "PR factor" (which is really a separate issue) determine the legitimacy of a mission labor in that place. We have in Venice, according to the reports of three minister-members of the committee who have themselves already spent a couple of weeks in that area, a definite opportunity to bring the gospel. Interested families love the preaching, plead for a missionary,

and are apparently willing not only to support the work financially but also, and more importantly, to involve themselves personally in the labors which are expected of a "core" group once a particular area is declared a "field." That group currently consists of five families. And the Venice area, which is growing steadily and has a large school system, seems to offer potential for a mission outreach. The Reformed faith is not strong in the area. An opportunity we would have, therefore, to preach the good tidings of the Reformed faith to many who were never privileged to receive instruction in it. It is with all this in mind that the Mission Committee will ask Synod 1990 to declare the area of Venice, Florida a denominational mission field.

Another exciting opportunity for the Protestant Reformed Churches is a possible labor in the British Isles. Synod 1989 instructed the Mission Committee to study the matter of calling a missionary to labor in Larne, with the possibility of pursuing also contacts in the British Isles. We were directed to lean heavily on the advice of the Contact Committee, which was then laboring still with the little Covenant Reformed Fellowship, part of which was a remnant of the Bible Presbyterian Church, with whom we had until recently sister-church relationships. The Fellowship is made up now of five families and two individuals. In addition, there is another family, and three more individuals, who attend regularly and show deep interest in the Protestant Reformed truth. Lectures in nearby Ballymena attract fifteen to twenty additional interested people; and ads in local newspapers, offering pamphlets or tapes, regularly bring requests for 20 to 30 items. Interest in England is scattered and isolated; but it is real, it seems to beckon, and it added an intriguing element to our consideration of the British Isles as a focus of our mission work. What is decisive however, for the present, is the very solid core group of five families (with 15 children) in the Larne/Ballymena area of Northern Ireland, all of whom are firmly

committed to the Reformed faith and have requested from us a missionary. On the strength of that, the Mission Committee will recommend that Synod 1990 approve the calling of a missionary to the British Isles, locating him in the Larne/Ballymena area as the initial center of his labors.

Then there is Jamaica. It happens that Jamaica is the one and only field which our churches currently have. And we've had it for a good long time, for it has been some 30 years ago that we were introduced to the work on that island in the Caribbean. And where are we now? What have we accomplished? The number of congregations...has dwindled. And the congregations which remain...are smaller. Besides, some of the problems with which we had to cope at the beginning have persisted to the present. One could very easily become discouraged by all of that, and wonder even whether the blessing of God has rested upon our efforts there.

It is with those realities that the Mission Committee and the calling church have had to wrestle. But what are the realities of the situation? What about those 30 years? We have to remind ourselves that, though Jamaica has appeared regularly on our Mission Committee agendas for over many years, we cannot claim to have labored there for very long at all. For, during most of those 30 years, our work consisted of nothing more substantial than sending emissaries and carrying on correspondence by letter. In no way can that be said to constitute *mission* work, which requires the presence of a *preacher*.

But what then about those last five years, the years during which Rev. Bruinsma labored diligently on the island? Where are all the positive, concrete results of that? Should we not have more to show for those efforts? The truth is that there *were* positive results — in the organizational structure, in the strength of the leaders, in the spiritual growth of the people. But is that *enough*?

I remember one of our ministers once wondering what we would

expect of a pastor here in the States, were he to be assigned responsibilities comparable to those given to our missionary in Jamaica. By "comparable responsibilities" I understood him to mean that a minister in, say, Michigan would be given the oversight of work in a couple of congregations in Grand Rapids, of another congregation in Grandville, still another in Jenison, and likewise one in Hudsonville and in Holland and in Kalamazoo, with the help of two young ministers. (And that is to say nothing about the added difficulties and stress of living in a different culture and having to home school one's own children.) His point was this: would we then wonder at the end of five years why there were not seven flourishing congregations in the west Michigan area? From that perspective, and in light of the actual needs of a foreign field like Jamaica, it would seem that the inescapable conclusion is that our efforts to date have been, at best, feeble, meager.

And what about the weaknesses and failings which persist among the people? Those, we think, are reasons, not to forsake them, but to continue with them in the compassion of Christ. No evidence do we have that the people among whom we labor are hardened in wickedness and rebellion against the Word of God which we have brought them. Rather, we have abundant reason to believe that God's people are there. And the Lord in His good providence has given us opportunity to share with them the wonderful heritage of the truth which is ours as a gift of grace alone. That, if nothing else, should spur us on to greater efforts. We might not be able, with our resources (both human and material), to carry on a work as extensive as those of larger denominations; but our smallness is no excuse for less than wholehearted commitment to a cause which constitutes Christ's one great commission to His church.

But how to work effectively in Jamaica, given our resources — that is the question with which the Mission Committee and First

Church and our Synods have had to struggle for years. That the work requires the presence of a missionary or minister to labor on the field is a given. It is clear, too, to all parties concerned, that the demands on the missionary which are inherent in the work in the Jamaican hills makes a companion in the labor a virtual necessity. Synod has in fact instructed us to try to meet that need by calling two missionaries. Faced as we are, however, with a minister shortage in our own churches; and recognizing too that the Lord has given to our churches other resources, in their many capable elders, the Mission Committee will propose again that Synod approve our sending an elder as a co-worker to assist the missionary until such a time as we are able to have two missionaries in the field. We will attempt to demonstrate, in our overture, that there is abundant biblical precedent for employing men unordained to the ministry as co-workers in missions, and to point out too that the great value of elders' assistance is a matter of record in our own work, both in Singapore and in Jamaica. Our Synods prior to 1983, in fact, repeatedly made provision for it in the conduct of our work in Jamaica.

First Church, meanwhile, was busy working out a set of Guidelines for a different kind of labor in Jamaica. They too saw the unlikelihood, in the foreseeable future, of obtaining two missionaries to Jamaica, as well as the difficulty involved in obtaining even one. Feeling keenly their responsibility toward the field which had been entrusted to them for oversight, First Church was anxious to be busy again with the people they had learned to love. We speak of course particularly of those from First who had themselves spent time on the island. That makes a big difference. To those of us who have been there, both from the calling church and the Mission Committee, word (for example) that Elder Tomlinson was examined by the Jamaican Classis and ordained in February of this year to the ministry of the Word — that news, we say, has special meaning. "Tomlinson" is not

just a name. We think of an amiable, warm, unassuming, serious-minded, humble black man whose love of the Lord, and appreciation for the Protestant Reformed Churches because of his love of the truth, are unassailable. And when we receive from Rev. Williams this: "Please continue to remember us in your daily prayers that whatsoever hath pleased the Lord to be done for our good may be done by the decisions of your Synod to the glory of God and for our good" — when we read that, we say, our hearts go out to the saints there and we want to get on with the work. It was out of that desire to be busy in the interim (i.e., while there are not yet men to labor in the field full-time), that First Church prepared the Guidelines which call for a minister and an elder to go to Jamaica twice a year, for two months at a time, to labor particularly in the instruction of leaders and potential leaders. This will, under the blessing of God, assure some continued progress toward our goal of establishing truly indigenous churches in Jamaica, even in the absence of a missionary. The idea is not, of course, that this seminar approach could go on indefinitely. For one thing, we emphasize again that it is intended only as an interim activity; and, for another, First Church envisions an end to this type of labor after four years.

More, much more, could be said, about Jamaica and about all of our other labors. We offer the above, not as a comprehensive report of the extent of our work in 1989-1990, but to give our readers a feel for the nature of the work, and some knowledge of the main aspects of it. A lot of time and energy goes into the work on the Mission Committee. Especially is that so for the already hard-pressed minister members of the committee. But it is a labor which can be and is rewarding. And we have experienced in it the blessing of our God. We covet your prayers that that might continue, for the good of our churches and the advancement of the cause of Christ as we are given to represent it. □

Decency And Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Election of Elders

The elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed, that they may after they are approved by it, unless any obstacle arise, be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one-half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeably to the form for this purpose.

— Church Order, Article 22

The main subject of this article is the manner of the election of elders. The article spells out the role of the consistory as well as the congregation in the election process.

Article 22 indicates three distinct stages in the process by which men are chosen for the office of elder. The three stages are: election, approbation, and installation. With ministers there is the additional stage of examination. In the case of elders, our churches do not require any kind of formal examination, although there have been those in favor of this. The careful examination by the consistory of a man's gifts prior to nominating him takes the place of examination.

METHODS OF ELECTION

Several different methods of electing elders have been followed.

There is the hierarchical method according to which elders are appointed and foisted on a congrega-

tion. There have been those who favored appointment of elders by the civil government. There is the method according to which elders are chosen by a free election of the members of the congregation.

In distinction from all of these is the Reformed or Presbyterian method. According to this method elders are chosen under the guidance and leadership of the consistory, with the cooperation of the congregation. Both consistory and congregation play a role in the election process.

Article 22 recognizes the leading role of the consistory. "The elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons...." "...in order that the consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed...." "...or (the consistory may) present a double number to the congregation...."

But Article 22 also recognizes the role of the congregation. The membership is given the privilege of directing the consistory to names of suitable candidates for the eldership. Approbation by the congregation is required. And actual election by the congregation from a double slate of nominees is recommended.

Historically three different methods have been followed by Reformed churches in the election of elders.

There is the Aristocratic method. This was the method followed by the French Reformed churches. According to this method, the consistory selects the elders, and its choices are simply presented to the congregation for approval.

There is the Democratic method. This was the method followed by

the Dutch refugee church in London. According to this method, the members of the congregation, by a free election, select a list of candidates. The consistory then chooses from this list those whom it deems most qualified.

There is the Aristocratic-Democratic method. This was the method followed by the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. According to this method, the consistory presents a double slate of nominees to the congregation, from which half are elected.

Article 22 allows for the use of the Aristocratic and the Aristocratic-Democratic methods.

Of these two, the Aristocratic-Democratic method is to be preferred, and is the method commonly followed in our churches. This method does greater justice to the right of the congregation to be actively involved in the selection of its officebearers. This is not to say, however, that a consistory may not choose to follow the Aristocratic method.

APPROBATION AND INSTALLMENT

No matter which of the two methods permitted by Article 22 is followed, there must be the approbation by the congregation. If the Aristocratic method is followed, there is one period of approbation between election and installation. If the Aristocratic-Democratic method is followed, there are two periods of approbation — one before election (after the slate of nominees has been announced), and another after election and before the actual installation into office.

As part of the approbation process, the following decision has been appended to Article 22:

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"Nominations and congregational meetings shall be announced upon two successive Sundays."

(Adopted by Classis of June 6, 7, 1934; and Synod of 1944, Art. 66, 67.)

Approbation provides the members of the congregation the opportunity to register with the consistory objections against certain nominees. Such objections would deal with the requirements for office laid down in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. If the consistory upholds an objection, the man's name would be removed from nomination, or, if he has already been elected, the election declared invalid. If the consistory does not uphold the objection, it may do one of two things. It may proceed to the installation, if it judges the objection to be trivial or without any ground. Or it may wait for the judgment of the Classis, if the objection is of a serious nature and the consistory has been assured by the one bringing the objection that he intends to appeal to Classis.

After approbation by the congregation, the consistory proceeds to the installation of the newly elected elders. Installation is the actual induction of a man into office. At the time of installation, he actually begins to function as an elder. If he succeeds someone, the outgoing elder continues in office until his successor is duly installed. Installation takes place during a formal worship service and with the use of the "Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons."

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Article 22 mentions certain "...regulations for that purpose (i.e., for the purpose of electing officebearers) established by the consistory...." The reference is to local regulations adopted by the consistory to promote orderliness in the election process. VanDellen and Monsma offer a "Suggested Set of Rules Governing the Election of Elders and Deacons" (*The Church Order Commentary*, p. 104). Such regulations might include the time of the annual congregation meeting, the terms of officebearers, the time of installation, that a majority is one over half and that those with

the highest majority are elected, that proxy votes shall be valid on the first ballot only, and so forth.

Article 22 speaks of the consistory giving the congregation opportunity to suggest possible candidates for office. This is not mandatory, but each consistory shall be at "liberty" to do this. This may be done no matter which of the two methods of election suggested by Article 22 is followed. Even when the consistory provides this opportunity to the members of the congregation, it is not bound by these suggestions.

Often the question is raised whether a father and son or two brothers may serve simultaneously in the consistory. Neither the *Church Order* nor Scripture expressly forbids this. There were two sets of brothers among the twelve disciples of Jesus. For practical considerations, however, it is perhaps not a very desirable arrangement. Some consistories even have local regulations to prohibit this. In some congregations, especially smaller ones, it is almost impossible to avoid near relatives serving in office together. In the end, this matter must be left to the discretion of each particular consistory.

Often a question is raised concerning the permissibility of immediate re-appointment. Article 22 does not forbid immediate re-appointment. Most consistories have a custom prohibiting immediate re-appointment of retiring officebearers. But there is nothing in the *Church Order* or Scripture that expressly forbids this. In case of re-appointment, re-installation is also necessary. Installation is for a definite period of time. When that period of time comes to an end, if a man is re-appointed, he must also be re-installed. The Christian Reformed Church Synod of 1928 ruled that re-installation was "...not only desirable but also proper."

The exception to the methods of choosing elders laid down in Article 22 is the election of elders at the time of the organization of a new congregation. Because there is no existing consistory as yet, the practice is to hold a free election of all

the male members who are entitled to vote. One wonders about the wisdom of this, not to speak of the consistency of a "free election" with Reformed principles of church government. Better it would be, and more in keeping with Article 22, if at the time of the organization of a new congregation, the consistory overseeing the organization would compose the slate of nominations for the initial election.

It is proper that nominees be officially notified by the consistory, preferably by a committee of elders. Nominees ought not easily be permitted to refuse their nomination. If a man does object to being nominated, he should be encouraged to make a personal appearance at the consistory to present the reasons why he feels compelled to decline the nomination. In the end, if a man simply refuses to serve, the consistory has no choice but to remove his name from nomination. If he has no valid reason for refusing to serve, the seriousness of his refusal to serve Christ and His church by the use of his gifts ought to be impressed upon him. But persistent refusal indicates that a man does not possess one of the qualifications necessary for an elder, namely, that he "...desire the office of a bishop..." (I Tim. 3:1). □

Watch and Pray

Christian, seek not yet repose,
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes;
Watch and pray.

Gird thy heavenly armor on,
Wear it ever night and day;
Near thee lurks the evil one;
Watch and pray.

Hear the victors who o'ercame;
Still they watch each warrior's way;
All with one deep voice exclaim,
"Watch and pray."

— Charlotte Elliott

From Holy Writ
Rev. George Lubbers

Exposition of Isaiah 6 (4)

*And he said, Go, and tell this people,
Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and
see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

*Make the heart of this people fat, and
make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;
lest they see with their eyes, and hear with
their ears, and understand with their heart,
and convert, and be healed.*

— Isaiah 6:9, 10

THE GREAT PROPHETIC MESSAGE TO THIS PEOPLE

These words which Isaiah must speak to Israel are indeed *prophetic words*. Of this there cannot be a shadow of doubt when these words are read in the light of all of Scripture. And the latter we shall need to do if we are reverently to bow before the Bible.

First of all, we notice that they are words which Isaiah must prophesy. They are not merely a one-time announcement for Isaiah in his day, but they are words which really reach across the ages till the first and second coming of the Son of God in the flesh.

Let us try to see this together.

When Nathan comes to David to tell him of his heinous sin against God in the killing of Uriah by the sword of the enemy, and of his sin of adultery against God in the taking of another man's wife, then that is a message which is one-time, and is not something of a prophetic character. Likewise also are the words of Elijah when he stands before Ahab and announces the three-and-a-half-year famine and drought over Israel. That too is not a prophetic word which awaits centuries of fulfillment.

But here it is different.

Here is not a message from God to an individual sinner, but a message to a *people*, to a nation whose generations extend over centuries of time. These are words which reflect the lives reaching back till the days at Sinai, and Israel's wanderings in the wilderness, and reaching forward, for their initial fulfillment, in the captivity of Judah in Babylon. For the later and more complete fulfillment they anticipate the utter destruction of the temple by the Roman legions as they surround Jerusalem. Typically the destruction of Jerusalem represents the end of the world, when it will be said by God "it is done" (Matt. 24:13-25; Luke 21:20-23; Rev. 16:17b).

But we have stronger evidence still that these are words of futuristic prophecy. It is none other than Jesus Himself Who thus interprets these words to His disciples. In Matthew 13:14 we read, "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and not perceive...."

We ought to notice a few things

of importance here.

1. That Jesus looks at His work of doing miracles and of preaching the gospel far and wide for three years as the very climax of the work of all the prophets who prophesied until John.

2. That at His day this prophecy was *fully* fulfilled. Nothing more needed to be done in the way of preaching to fulfill the words "go and tell this people." Yes, over many centuries these words had been preached by prophets, from generation to generation, and by various prophets whose words were taken up in the inspired Scriptures. Two prophets in particular merit our attention. They are Jeremiah and Ezekiel. However, Daniel, Hosea and Micah, Haggai and Zechariah as well as Malachi, all spoke this word of Adonai to Israel, rising early and late.

THE IMPORT OF THE TERMS IN THE TEXT

Our next question to consider is the exegetical import of the terms: *hear ye indeed* and *hear not*, etc. These words, of course, presuppose that each generation is going to hear these words in future preaching of the promise of God and its certain fulfillment by Him, Adonai, Who sits on the throne.

Grammatically the terms in the Hebrew are very significant. In the Hebrew the verb "hear ye" has a modifier. It is the same verb in a form of the verb which is called "infinite absolute." It is used to add emphasis to the verb, in this case to the verbs *hear* and *see*. It means *hear* and *see* very emphatically. Know the content of what you hear and see so that you never forget it. It will stick in your mem-

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ory; yea, it will, even from a spiritual point of view, penetrate into your very heart (Matt. 13:19). It was sown in the hearts of the hearers. It is indeed the calling by the Gospel. It comes as the word which is circumscribed in Hebrews as follows, and we quote:

For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:12, 13).

Now here we have the spiritual-psychological insight into what happens in the preaching of the Word. This text explains rather profoundly the import of "hearing hear emphatically" and "seeing see very clearly" from a natural (psychical) point of view. This people must hear and must come to stand naked and opened before the eyes of the all-knowing God with whom they have to do. They will, therefore, stand condemned by their own gospel-enlightened conscience. They belong to those who are under law, and stand with the entire world whose mouths are stopped and who stand guilty before God (Rom. 3:19).

In this spiritual blindness and hatred, God's righteous judgment upon them is evident!

Yes, they are those blind leaders of the blind who cannot read the Scriptures. It is for them a closed book. We read of them in Isaiah 28:8ff., where they are portrayed in their riotous drunkenness. When reproved by the prophet they derisively retort, Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Does he think that we are still babes in arms? He teaches us in the abominable rote: precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little!

But God says to these mockers "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people." It is not often understood that those in Corinth who clamored for eloquent preachers were not merely guilty of a certain clique

spirit, but they were those who did not love to hear the message of the Word of the Cross as they should. To them as well as to us comes this warning in I Corinthians 14:21!

When these foolish unbelievers are told really to read the Scriptures so that they would hear the great Gospel-truth uttered by Paul in I Corinthians 30, 31, then they cannot possibly read that Gospel-message in the Scriptures. God says of these men, who are wise in their own conceits: I have not given them ears to hear, nor eyes to see, neither have I given them to see what the prophets desire to see, the fulfillment of the Promise in the SEED. With the Bible-book in their hands they really say to the Lord, I cannot read in the entire book any such gospel as "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest. And this is the refreshing. But they would not hear."

They never walked in the old and tried paths spoken of in Jeremiah 6:16,

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said: we will not walk therein.

In Matthew 11 Jesus says to this same people, "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented. John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say: he hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say: Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Yes, Jesus adds, "But wisdom is justified of her children."

Unto this people "say" the very strong word of God's eternal wisdom, "hear ye indeed, but understand not!" In this light we understand that the divine wisdom of the Cross through the foolishness of preaching is justified in the believing children. Yes, here we take the shoes from off our feet, and repeat with Jesus:

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these

things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight (Matt. 11:25, 26).

The church-world of contemporary "theology" is full of such preachers and unbelieving churchgoers who say "the book is sealed I cannot read." Such they are, not in their own judgment, but in the all-wise judgment of our Lord Who sits on the throne as King in Zion.

But remember that Capernaum, which had been raised to heaven when Jesus preached the content of John 6:44-51 in their synagogue, will in their unbelief be cast down to hell (Matt. 11:23)!

It truly will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum. He that has known the way and has not walked in it shall be beaten with many stripes. For they that sinned under law shall be judged by the law in the day when God judges the secrets of man according to His Gospel (Rom. 2:16). □

Christ Is Coming

Christ is coming! We are waiting
'Mid the shadows dim;
Longing till the night's dark
pinions
Fold their plumes to Him.
Waiting by each gate of sorrow,
Thinking of the glad tomorrow;
Standing 'neath His banner,
keeping
Watch while all the world is
sleeping.

Christ is coming! Come, Lord,
come!
Christ is coming! in a moment
Shall the shout resound,
And the voice of heaven's
archangel,
And God's trumpet sound;
Then the sleeping saints arisen,
Bursting from their earthly prison,
With the living upward soaring,
See their Lord with eyes adoring.
Christ is coming! Come, Lord,
come!

— Heyman Wreford

Book Review

UNHOLY HANDS ON THE BIBLE, Volume I (An Introduction to Textual Criticism, Including the Complete Works of John W. Burgon, Dean of Chichester), by John W. Burgon and Jay P. Green, Sr. Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1990. Pages vii-H-12, plus index of biblical texts. Hardcover. \$24.95. (Reviewed by the Editor.)

When the English Bible (the King James Version) was revised in 1881, the revision (the Revised Version) abandoned the Greek text of the New Testament that had been used until then, not only for the English Bible but also for all the Bibles of the Reformation, e.g., Luther's Bible and the Dutch Bible authorized by the Synod of Dordt. The revision chose the newly discovered Greek text advocated by the textual scholars, Westcott and Hort. All subsequent English versions, except the New King James, have used the Westcott-Hort (W-H) text, rejecting the Greek Text of the KJV as an inferior text.

One godly scholar opposed the change at the time of the revision in the late 19th century — the English textual scholar, John W. Burgon. Burgon defended the Greek text of the KJV, which he called the Traditional Text and which is referred to today as the Majority Text or *Textus Receptus*, as the authentic text of the New Testament Scripture. He criticized the W-H text as false and dangerous.

Unholy Hands on the Bible is basically the complete works of Burgon on the issue of the Greek text of Holy Scripture. It is, therefore, a powerful defense of the KJV and a devastating attack on all modern English translations of Scripture

with the exception of the New King James.

The work is not intended for the ordinary church member. It virtually demands some knowledge of the Greek. But preachers who are committed to the complete inspiration of Scripture should avail themselves of it, especially those who assume that the W-H text is the best text and those who suppose that there is no significant doctrinal difference between the texts. It should be in the libraries of seminaries that hold the doctrine of verbal inspiration and therefore have deep concern for the authentic text of the New Testament. It should be consulted in the classes on textual criticism. Reformed and Presbyterian churches that have removed the KJV from pew and pulpit and replaced it with the NIV would do well to reconsider in the light of the solid scholarly work and sharp warnings of Burgon. Ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches and in other denominations that retain the KJV will learn that there are reasons for this retention in the Greek text and will be able to teach their people the serious faults of the modern versions.

Included are an edited version of Burgon's major defense of the Greek text of the KJV, "The Traditional Text of the New Testament," and an edited version of his main critique of the English Revised Version of 1881, "The Revision Revised." The book also includes his careful, convincing treatments of controversial passages in the area of textual criticism and English translations. There is his "God Manifested in the Flesh" on I Timothy 3:16 (the W-H text and the modern English versions omit

"God" in this text). There is his study of John 7:53-8:11 (omitted in the modern versions), "The Woman Taken in Adultery." There is his "The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel of Mark" (also omitted in the W-H text and in the modern versions).

The obvious value of *Unholy Hands* is that it gives all of Burgon's works on textual criticism in one volume. The editing out of some of the technical and dated material from Burgon's original writings makes the book manageable and less daunting to the hard pressed pastor who yet desires to get a handle on this important textual issue.

A biographical sketch of Burgon and a helpful "Introduction" that clarifies the important issues are supplied by Edward F. Hills, himself a notable textual scholar and a contemporary disciple of Burgon.

Fundamental to all of Burgon's thinking and work with the text of Scripture was his conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God — a divine book. Following from this was his conviction that God has providentially preserved the text. These convictions have implications for textual criticism. The lack of these convictions also has implications for textual criticism.

The publisher, Jay P. Green, Sr., informs us that Volume II "will take up the individual modern translations and relate them to the factual information conveyed in this volume." □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

MISSION ACTIVITIES

I thank Rev. C. Hanko for furnishing the following information.

For the past nine months weekly worship services and evening Bible Study, sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches, have been held in Venice, Florida, a city located about thirty-five miles south of Bradenton. These meetings are conducted by Rev. C. Hanko, with the assistance of ministers who are sent here by the mission committee.

It is more than a year ago that two families came from Venice to attend the services held in Bradenton, and have been attending our services ever since. In May of last

year the services formerly held in Bradenton were transferred to a home in Venice.

Five couples and four children were regular attendants from this area, supported by others who have taken up or consider taking up residence in this area. Three of the local residents in Venice work with heavy earth-moving equipment, one is an accountant, and one is retired. Their background, for the most part, is in the Reformed Church, while one couple comes from the Presbyterians and another from the Nazarenes. These have been unhappy with the preaching they received, hungering for the Word of God, and now testify that their souls are being fed with the Bread of Life.

There are also others who occasionally attend these services. Time and again visitors (local residents or individuals contemplating moving into this area) inquire as to the possibility of a permanent congregation being established here.

Last September an effort was made to find a suitable hall for our meetings. This was found in the Shamrock Center on Shamrock Boulevard, where we are able to accommodate close to a hundred people. This building has been furnished with a number of chairs, a platform and pulpit, and also an organ, all of which gives a comfortable place to worship our God and search the Scriptures.

And, also with regard to Venice, Rev. C. Hanko will be returning to Michigan for six weeks. The Mission Committee meanwhile continues to arrange for ministers to labor in the area. Rev. Slopsma will be in Venice for two Sundays in April, Rev. VanOverloop for two weeks in

May, and Rev. Woudenberg for four Sundays in May/June.

The Council of South Holland PRC in South Holland, IL also reports that the decision was made to continue the work in Fort Wayne, IN with a review of the work to be made in one year. The Council also instructed the Evangelism Committee of South Holland to expand the work if possible, and to pursue other means to extend the witness there.

The Consistory of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ turned down a couple of requests from the Committee of Contact requesting that their pastor be released either for one or two months to labor in Larne, Northern Ireland or for one year to labor in Tasmania.

MINISTERIAL CALLS

The congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC has extended a call to Rev. J. Kortering.

And the Hope PRC in Isabel, ND has formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. M. DeVries, R. Flikkema, and T. Miersma.

CONGREGATION HIGHLIGHTS

On March 22 Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brands presented a slide program on Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand for the members of the First PRC in Edgerton, MN.

At 7:00 PM on March 27, the congregation of the Grandville, MI PRC met to dedicate formally their new church sanctuary. The program included remarks from Rev. Kortering and Jon Huiskens, chairman of the Building Committee. Special numbers were given by both the choir and the Sunday School. The congregation was included personally with a Litany of Dedication, and with singing of

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Psalter numbers. Also dedicated that night was Grandville's new organ.

Perhaps Rev. Kortering expressed it best that night when he said, "Let us go forward with courage and confidence in God's blessing as we stand together for the great task which He has given to us as a church, the ministry of the gospel for the gathering of Christ's church from within and without."

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Holland, MI sponsored a Spring Lecture in Zeeland, MI. Prof. H. Hanks spoke on the theme, "Is There a Need for Church Revival?" □

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On April 2, 1990, the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, took to Himself one of His precious children, KATIE MARIE BRUMMEL.

We express our deepest sympathy to Mary, and to her husband, Joe, and their family, in the loss of their daughter and sister. We mourn with them and pray that God will be near them and comfort them with His Word.

"Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life" Psalm 42:8.

Adams Street Christian School Mothers' Club

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study group of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, extends her Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Neal Pastoor in the recent death of his sister CAROL PASTOOR.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever" Psalm 37:18.

Rev. Steven Key, President
Henrietta Kamminga, Vice-Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 4, 1990, our parents and grandparents MR. and MRS. WILLIAM CORSON will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary.

We rejoice with them on his happy occasion and are thankful to God for their Christian love and instruction. It is our prayer that God may continue to guide them in their remaining years together.

"Instructing our sons we gladly record the praises, the works, the might of the Lord. For He hath

commanded that what He hath done be passed in tradition from father to son" Psalter # 213:2.

Ron and Linda Corson

Melissa, Chad, Rhonda, Anna
Randy Corson and Cheryl Bleyenbergh
(fiancee)

Rick and Sharon Corson

Kyle

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!

According to the decision of Synod 1989, the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church was appointed the calling church for the 1990 Synod. The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1990 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 5th, 1990 at 9:00 AM in the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Pre-Synodical Service will be held Monday evening, June 4th at 7:30. Rev. James Slopsema, President of the Synod of 1989, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service. Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. R. Moelker, 1448 Calvin S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507, Phone (616) 452-5753.

In the service of our Lord,
For the Consistory
R. Moelker

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN AN EVIL AGE

Does it really make a difference where I go to church?
My church is departing from the teachings of the Bible. What do I do?

How do I know what church to join?

What are the marks of the true church?

Sponsored by: Southeast Protestant Reformed Evangelism Society

Date: May 10, 1990

Time: 8:00 PM

Place: Calvin College Fine Arts Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Speaker: Rev. Steven Key

A cassette tape of the lecture will be available for a nominal fee.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Ralph Brummel in the death of her husband, MR. RALPH BRUMMEL.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).

Rev. Richard Moore, President

Mrs. Judy Brummel, Vice-Secretary