

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE STANDARD BEARER

In this whole sensitive issue of mother-working as a source of second income, let us keep something in mind, namely, children do *not want* to raise themselves; children *can not* raise themselves (properly); the Lord God *did not intend* for children to raise themselves.

See "Responsibilities Towards Children"
— page 279

Contents

March 15, 1991

Meditation – Rev. James D. Slopsema THE PARTING OF HIS GARMENTS	267
Editorial – Prof. David J. Engelsma AN "ELECTION THEOLOGY" OF COVENANT	269
LETTERS	271
A Cloud of Witnesses – Prof. Herman C. Hanko BONIFACE: APOSTLE TO THE GERMANS	275
Into All the World – Rev. Ronald J. VanOverloop MISSIONS PRINCIPLES (IV): THE TASK	277
When Thou Sittest in Thine House – Rev. Kenneth Koole RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CHILDREN (3)	279
Strength of Youth – Rev. Russell J. Dykstra JOHN CALVIN AND WOMEN DEACONS	282
Search the Scriptures – Rev. Carl J. Haak THE BOOK OF RUTH: LESSON I	284
The Day of Shadows – Rev. John A. Heys THAT PROPER WEeping AND LAUGHING	285
NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES – Mr. Benjamin Wigger	287

In This Issue...

According to an article in U.S. News and World Report six years ago, there were in the U.S. at that time no fewer than 33 million children whose mothers worked full time out of the home. And the reason given for that state of affairs was simple: economics. Mounting inflation and taxation, it was claimed, is "forcing" many women out of the home and into the labor force. And, interestingly, socio-economists have linked that spiral of inflation also to the weakening of the family and the rise in juvenile delinquency. The secular press, in other words, recognizes the adverse impact of the problem of "latchkey" children on today's society. Proper training in those early years is critical. Textbooks in child psychology show beyond contradiction that the way a child is guided in the slow process of his growing up determines the course of his whole life. Solomon wrote that, too . . . nearly 3,000 years ago.

Our families are hardly immune from the economic pressures which seem to make a second income a virtual necessity. We too, therefore, must wrestle with the problem of "working mothers," and we must do so with an eye to its spiritual implications, and in the light of the givens of Scripture.

But just what are the givens of Scripture? There are, of course, no clear-cut rules in this regard. What is clear, however, is that God has instituted the family as a haven for children, where the very atmosphere in which they live prepares them for their future. How best to provide the necessary support and guidance is a matter of sanctified judgment – sanctified, that is, by the enlightenment of the Spirit, through the Word.

We do well therefore to ponder again Proverbs 31, the wife and mother whose industry was evidently never at the expense of the spiritual well-being of her children. Her price: "far above rubies!" Because she is highly esteemed . . . and rare (vs. 10). May God grant that she not be rare among us. Read "Responsibilities Towards Children." □

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma

Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker

Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezeema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Carl Haak, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Marvin Kamps, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Dale Kuiper, Mr. James Lanting, Rev. George Lubbers, Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

REPRINT POLICY

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

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, MI
49516
PH: (616) 243-3712
(616) 531-1490

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

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

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

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

ADVERTISING POLICY

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

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume.

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

Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

The Parting of His Garments

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

— John 19:23, 24

The Roman soldiers had crucified Jesus, nailing Him to the cross.

It was customary for one being crucified, first to be stripped of his clothing. After nailing a man to the cross, the soldiers, usually four in number, would proceed to divide up his clothing among themselves. This was considered the executioner's right.

Jesus received similar treatment at His crucifixion.

His clothing was no doubt that which was commonly worn by the people. There was an inner tunic or shirt worn next to the skin. This tunic, made of leather, hair-cloth, wool, or linen, was sleeveless and came down to the knees. There was

also an outer tunic or robe, somewhat looser and longer than the inner tunic. There was a girdle or belt about six inches wide, made either of leather, linen, or silk. There was an outer garment or mantle, much like an overcoat, worn year around in both warm and cold weather. For His feet there were sandals. For His head there was a turban.

Just before being nailed to His cross, Jesus was stripped of His clothing.

Then, while the crowds scoffed and jeered at Jesus hanging on the cross, the four soldiers in charge of His crucifixion proceeded to divide Jesus' clothing among themselves, each receiving a part.

Special mention is made of Jesus' inner tunic or shirt. The inner tunic was without seam, woven from the top throughout. This fact made the tunic of greater value than the other garments. Instead of tearing it up and dividing it among themselves, which would have reduced its value to nothing, the four soldiers decided to cast lots to determine whose it would be.

* * * * *

Matthew sees in this a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The Scripture Matthew quotes is Psalm 22:18: "They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots."

Psalm 22 is a psalm of David. In the first part of this Psalm, David recalls a most desperate situation, in which he had at one time found himself. He had been surrounded and captured by his enemies, who were much stronger than he.

In the hand of his enemies, David had lost all strength. David

describes this very graphically. He was poured out like water. All his bones were out of joint. His heart melted. His strength was dried up like a potsherd. His tongue clung to the roof of his mouth.

David was also close to death. His enemies were either about to kill him or to leave him to die.

David speaks of the fact that they had stripped him of his garment, staring at his wasted form.

They had even parted his garments among them. For his vesture they had cast lots.

It is not sure when this incident in David's life took place. It is likely that this took place when David was being pursued by Saul. Some are inclined to cite the incident recorded in I Samuel 23:25, 26, when Saul had David surrounded but was suddenly called away by an invasion of the Philistines.

Our first reaction to all this may be to wonder how this is prophecy.

In that connection we must bear in mind that many individuals in the Old Testament were types or pictures of the great Savior that was to come. This was true of every prophet, priest, and king in Israel. They pointed ahead to the great Prophet, Priest, and King God had promised. David, therefore, as king of Israel, was a picture of Christ.

In turn there were often events in the lives of men like David that were typical, pointing ahead to things that would happen to the promised Savior. These events therefore served as prophecies of the life and work of the coming Savior.

We find several instances of this in Psalm 22.

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

In verse 1 David cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was David's experience that God had forsaken him. David, however, experienced this as a type of Christ, so that his experience was a prophecy of what would befall the promised Savior.

In like manner, David writes in verses 7, 8, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." See Matthew 27:43 for the fulfillment of this in Jesus' life.

The same is true of what David writes in verse 16: "They pierced my hands and my feet." This was obviously fulfilled when Jesus was nailed to the cross.

And then in verse 18 David writes, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

This prophecy was also fulfilled on the cross, as the Roman soldiers took Jesus' garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat....

* * * * *

In this prophecy fulfilled we find the blessed gospel of grace.

It had been David's great concern that God not forsake him. This concern is expressed in the opening verse of Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

David recalls in this psalm how that the Lord has been his God from his mother's womb. The Lord had been his God and not the God of his enemies.

But for a time it had appeared to David as though God had forsaken him. David, as the Lord's own anointed, had been captured by his enemies and was near death. Even his enemies considered him a dead man. For they had stripped him of his clothing and divided it up among themselves. If the Lord did not rescue him at this point, it could only be that the Lord had forsaken him.

But the Lord would not forsake David!

Even in the depths of his troubles David knew this. This is evi-

dent from the rest of Psalm 22 in which David relates how he had anticipated deliverance at the hand of God. David recounts how that the Lord had delivered His people in the past, when they trusted in Him. David expresses the certainty that the Lord will also return to help him. David even describes the glory God will have as David praises the Lord in the congregation and as the nations eventually bow before David's dominion as king.

Whereas God did not forsake David, He did forsake Jesus Christ, the great Savior of whom David was but a type.

Even as the Lord was David's God, so was He also Jesus' God. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who is eternally in the bosom of the Father. He is also the Lord's Anointed. As the Lord's Anointed Jesus walked perfectly in the service of His God, enjoying God's friendship and fellowship in ways David could not. Of the great love God has for Jesus, God more than once gave public testimony with a voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Even as the Lord delivered David into the hands of his enemies, so too did God deal with Jesus. These enemies were the Jewish leaders, Judas Iscariot, Pontius Pilate, Herod, and eventually the whole of the Jewish nation. They

surrounded Him, captured Him, condemned Him to death, whipped Him, and then finally crucified Him. His enemies even divided His garments among themselves. Jesus was as good as dead.

Surely if God did not come down to rescue Him at this point, it could only be that He had forsaken His Son.

But God did not come to deliver Jesus from His enemies. Instead God left Jesus on the cross to die the accursed death. At high noon God even sent a horrible darkness that lasted for three long hours, during which time Jesus fell under the full weight of God's infinite wrath.

Hence, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

This brings us to the great gospel of salvation.

God forsook His only begotten Son on the cross for our salvation.

We have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We deserve to be forsaken by God.

But God has forsaken His own Son on the cross instead.

Through this horrible agony, Jesus paid the full penalty of our sin and obtained for us perfect righteousness and life eternal.

Hence, we will never be forsaken by God but will enjoy the bliss of God's covenant friendship forever. □

Certainty Of Blessings

If what I wish is good,
And suits the Will divine,
By earth and hell in vain withstood
I know it shall be mine.
Still let them counsel take
To frustrate His decree;
They cannot keep a blessing back
By Heaven designed for me.
If what my soul requires
Evil to me would prove,
His Love shall cross my fond desires,
His kindly-jealous Love.

— SB, December 15, 1932

An "Election Theology" of Covenant

This at bottom is the objection of "Liberated" Reformed theologian Dr. J. DeJong to the Protestant Reformed doctrine of the covenant (cf. the letter in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*). He expresses this fundamental objection when he writes, "And Engelsma is only perpetuating the same kind of 'election' theology which refuses to entertain the Scriptural teaching of faith as the way or condition to salvation...." He says the same thing when he accuses me of misreading the Reformed creeds "through the glasses of the typical Protestant Reformed interpretation that makes election dominate all other doctrines."

For the "Liberated," the one, basic error of the Protestant Reformed doctrine of the covenant is the place -- the foundational and determinative place -- it gives to God's eternal election. For the "Liberated," "election theology of covenant" is the charge that finally disqualifies the Protestant Reformed covenant conception. For the PRC, this very "charge" is the vindication of our doctrine of the covenant as soundly Reformed. Since the charge against our covenant doctrine by the "Liberated" implies that the "Liberated" doctrine of the covenant is not an election theology of covenant, the charge is itself the condemnation of the "Liberated" covenant conception, as far as the PRC are concerned.

One thing becomes clear from Dr. DeJong's contribution to the discussion concerning the Reformed doctrine of the covenant with the children of believers: the

doctrine of the "Liberated" and the doctrine of the PRC concerning the covenant of God with the children of believers are two, sharply differing doctrines. Their difference concerns basic truths of the Reformed faith; exegesis of crucially important passages of Holy Scripture; understanding of the Canons of Dordt; and the practical matter of the approach to the baptized, covenant children.

The "Liberated" teaching is that God makes the covenant promise, "I will be the God of your children," with all that this promise contains, to every child of believing parents. With this promise comes the demand that the child believe in God when he grows up *as a condition upon which the promise depends for its realization in the child*.

The doctrine of the PRC is that the covenant promise, with all that it contains, is for the elect children of believing parents only. The demand or calling that accompanies the promise, rather than being a condition upon which the fulfillment of the promise depends, is based upon the promise and constitutes both the way in which God realizes the promise (the way of faith) and the part in the covenant (believing) of the one taken into God's covenant by the promise.

In order that the issue between us not be obscured or confused, several points in the debate must be clarified. First, I did not misrepresent the "Liberated" doctrine when I wrote that it teaches that God extends His covenant grace to all the children of believers. This is simply what it means that His

covenant promise is to them all. The covenant promise is a gracious promise. At the very least, it makes known the gracious attitude of God toward the object of the promise, as well as His desire to save the one to whom the promise is given. This is certainly what the PRC understand by the covenant promise, although we also hold that the promise is gracious in the sense that it works the renewing power of salvation in the one to whom it is given.

But the "Liberated" too regard the promise as gracious in the sense that it makes known the favorable attitude of God toward those to whom He gives the promise. The "Liberated" have always condemned the disciples of Abraham Kuyper for restricting "grace" to "subjectively-realized grace," i.e., regenerating power in the heart, and for failing to recognize that also the word of promise itself is grace. The "Liberated" theologian J. Kamphuis makes this very point against the Kuyperians in his book, *An Everlasting Covenant* (Publication Organization of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, 1985). Criticizing the Kuyperian view of the covenant and infant baptism, Kamphuis writes:

This means (i.e., the teaching of Abraham Kuyper and his followers -- DJE): If that grace will be real grace, it has to be innerly present in man, and cannot be "only" a word, a promise. Is not the choice of words revealing? Only that which has been realized subjectively can really be called grace, and is to be clearly distinguished from the contents of God's speaking in a promising way. Real

grace is here subjectively-realized grace (p. 44; *all emphasis his* -- DJE).

According to the "Liberated," the word of promise is "real grace." I agree. But DeJong must not then charge me with misrepresenting the "Liberated" when I say that they teach that God extends His grace to all the baptized children of believers. For they maintain that the word of promise is for all the children.

That there is in the "Liberated" doctrine of the covenant the teaching that God desires to save all baptized children is plain from Klaas Schilder's explanation of the crucially important phrase in the Reformed baptism form, "sanctified in Christ": "It belongs to the contents of the promise that has to be embraced in faith, that the *Holy Spirit desires to sanctify us, (indeed) imparting to us that which we have in Christ* (in the promise, by rights)" (quoted in Kamphuis, p. 80). Kamphuis explains that in the covenant promise of baptism, which according to the "Liberated" is given to all the children, "the Holy Spirit promises us that He *wants* to sanctify us." Kamphuis adds, "the LORD really means it when He says to all children of the Covenant: 'holy,' 'sanctified'..." (p. 81).

There is good reason, in fact, to analyze the "Liberated" position as teaching that God extends His covenant grace to all the baptized children in the sense that He bestows upon them all a significant blessing of the covenant. I refer to their explaining "sanctified in Christ" as meaning that all baptized children "have been *adopted* as God's children (as 'sons')" by a "public, judicial act of God." Of this public, judicial adoption of every baptized child as a child of God, baptism is a sign and seal, according to the "Liberated" (Kamphuis, p. 83).

I frankly find this incredible in a Reformed church. Adoption unto children of God by a public, judicial act of God of all the children of believers, the Esaus as well as the Jacobs, those who perish under the wrath of God now and eternally as well as those who have eternal life? But this is certain: it is no misrep-

resentation to describe the "Liberated" covenant view as one which has God extending His grace to all the baptized children. This is inherent in their fundamental doctrine that the covenant promise is for all the children. And this means that the "Liberated" must explain both to themselves and to others, why their covenant view does not necessarily involve them in serious transgression of two fundamental truths of the gospel as confessed by the Reformed churches: the irresistible nature of God's grace and the impossibility of falling from grace (which the Canons of Dordt describe as God's not allowing the elect to "lose the grace of adoption," V/6).

A second point that must be clarified is that the PRC do indeed emphatically hold and freely preach demands in the covenant. We would not like to think that we come a whit behind the "Liberated" in this regard. There is in baptism the demand to the children to repent, believe, and obey God's law. The Declaration of Principles adopted by the PRC in 1951 states that the promise of God in baptism "confronts us with the obligation of love, to walk in a new and holy life." There is also in the baptism of the infants a demand of the covenant to the parents to instruct their children in the truth to the utmost of their power. The PRC maintain Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt which requires parents to instruct their children in good Christian schools as one of the "demands of the covenant." A theology of the covenant that has election as its foundation in no wise weakens, much less abrogates, the responsibility of children, parents, or church. On the contrary!

The PRC also preach the warning -- the awful warning of Hebrews 10:25-31 -- that the baptized member of the covenant people who violates the covenant by his unbelief will be beaten with double stripes. Nor are these empty words with us. When our own physical children manifest themselves as profane despisers of the covenant, we exclude them from the kingdom of Christ by Christian discipline.

But the PRC differ from the "Liberated" in that we deny that the demand to the children is a condition upon which depends the fulfillment of the promise. Rather the demand to believe is the way in which God realizes the covenant in the case of the elect children. Their obedience to the demand, namely, believing, is itself the fruit of the promise in their lives. The promise does not depend upon the demand (faith). But the demand (faith) depends upon the promise. With regard to the reprobate children, the same demand, namely, repent and believe!, is their duty, regardless of their inability. Indeed, their responsibility is heightened by the fact that they receive the covenant sign, are reared in the covenant truth, and have membership for a time among the covenant people.

The third point that requires clarification so that the real issue can be profitably discussed is that, for the PRC, "faith-as-a-demand" is not the same as "faith-as-a-condition." Dr. DeJong simply identifies "demand" and "condition." He writes: "Paul stresses the *condition* of the covenant: the call to faith! And the requirement of faith as the way to salvation does not detract one iota from the certainty of God's promises." The implication is that the "call to faith" and the "requirement of faith" are the same as "faith-as-a-condition." Again, he writes, "(the theology of the PRC) refuses to entertain the Scriptural teaching of faith as the way or condition to salvation...." Faith as a "way" is supposed to be the same as faith as a "condition." The effect of this identification of "way" and "demand" with "condition" is that the impression is left that by denying "faith-as-a-condition" the PRC are, in fact, denying *demands* in the covenant. The impression is also left that in affirming "faith-as-a-condition" the "Liberated" are only affirming *demands* in the covenant.

Leaving out of sight for the time whether Scripture and the Reformed creeds permit the church to call faith a condition, I only want to establish here that the PRC make a sharp distinction between faith as a demand and faith as a condition.

The former, we teach; the latter, we as firmly deny. And such a distinction rings perfectly true to everyday life. A Reformed husband requires godly submission from his wife, not as a condition for becoming his wife, but as a demand based on her being his wife. Submission is also the way in which she expresses what it means to be a wife. Similarly, the honor that a father requires from his child is not a condition that the boy must fulfill in order to become a child, but rather that which is demanded exactly because he is a child.

The issue between the PRC and the "Liberated" is just this: Does

God, particularly in baptism, promise the blessing of the covenant of grace to every baptized child on the condition of faith? Is the covenant conditional in its establishment with the children of believers personally? The "Liberated" Reformed Churches say yes. They hold that all children of believers alike are in the covenant in this sense that God promises them all salvation and extends to them all His covenant grace in Christ. Against this view, I charged that it conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God. Specifically, I charged that this view makes the covenant promise and grace of God

dependent upon the child; that it necessarily implies that the death of Christ fails to secure the salvation of some for whom Christ died; and that it expressly teaches that the promise of God fails in some instances.

Dr. DeJong answers these charges in his letter, rejecting each of them as without substance and false.

The editorial in the next issue of the SB will examine the "Liberated" theologian's refutation of these charges. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Also Yet the Canadian Reformed ("Liberated") Covenant View

In your editorials entitled "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers" of April-December 1990, you have made some strong allegations against the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Considering such strong allegations, could you publish our response to your statements? You may then take this submission as a "Letter to the Editor" and give your response to it.

Let me first summarize Engelsma's position. One can only laud his initial description of both the centrality and importance of the doctrine of the covenant in Scripture. One can agree with most of what he says. Engelsma begins with stressing the fact that the children of believers are included in the covenant. His concern is with the place of the children of the believers. Hence he points out that the covenant was made with Abra-

ham and his offspring. And in a following issue he says that the children of believers are included in the covenant. In opposition to the Baptists who deny a place in the covenant to the children of believers, Engelsma says that our creeds are clear: they belong to God in the covenant!

Then Engelsma proceeds to confront the age-old problem concerning those children of believers who upon reaching the age of maturity do not accept the gospel in true faith. What are we to think of them? Engelsma says that we cannot presume them to be regenerated for this is contrary to Scripture and experience. Here, too, we can agree! Indeed, presumptive regeneration was the heart of the conflict of 1944!

Prof. Engelsma then proceeds to give three possible explanations concerning the meaning of the children of believers being included in the covenant. The first view he presents is that of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and the Free Reformed Church. This view states that the children of believers are unregenerate and unsaved.

But, living in a Christian environment, they have a better chance of being converted than other children. The second view he presents is that of the Canadian (and American) Reformed Churches. Engelsma puts it this way:

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.

Then Prof. Engelsma presents his own view, to which we shall return later.

Engelsma's Critique

First, let us consider Engelsma's critique of the Netherlands Reformed and the Free Reformed position. This view, says Engelsma, must be rejected. "God does not merely put the children of believers in a more advantageous posi-

tion, so as to make it likelier that they will be saved; but He establishes His covenant with them, so as to be their God." Who could not agree?

Then the Canadian Reformed position gets its turn. This view, says Prof. Engelsma, "conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God, doctrines which are precious to every Reformed man and woman." Three arguments are brought forward:

1. This view makes the promise of the covenant grace of God depend on the work and will of the covenant child. The covenant and its salvation are conditional and dependent on the faith of the child, and this is "diametrically opposed to the teaching of Scripture...." Here he quotes Romans 9:16. It is also against the confession, says Engelsma, quoting the Canons of Dordt, I/9, 10 ("Election is not Based on Foreseen Faith" and "Election is based on God's Good Pleasure"); the Rejection of Errors I/3 (The act of faith is not the cause for salvation, but only God's good pleasure); Canons III-IV/14 (Faith is a gift of God); and Rejection of Errors III-IV/6 (Faith is not an act of man but a gift of God). The basic argument: the Canadian Reformed position is Arminian.

2. This view implies that Christ's death for some persons fails to secure their redemption. At baptism God promises salvation to the children on the basis of Christ's blood shed for them. But some of these children perish. This denies the doctrine of limited atonement, "at least within the sphere of the covenant." Thus we are held to teach universal atonement. Again: the Canadian Reformed position is Arminian.

3. This view means that the promise of God fails in many cases. God's promises are considered to have failed. The Word of God is made of none effect. And this, too, is contrary to Scripture and confession.

Are we Arminian?

These are Engelsma's arguments. Before we consider them we must

point out that he has not accurately represented the view of the Canadian Reformed Churches. We do not teach that God *extends* to all the children of believers His covenant grace. Rather, He includes them with their parents in the covenant of grace and He *promises* to them His covenant blessings in Christ, and includes with promise the demand to believe the gospel and to receive Christ's blessings in true faith. We also do not teach that the actual reception of covenant grace and the actual realization of the covenant depend on the faith of the children of believers. Rather, God fulfills His covenant promises in His time and in His way in the lives of the children of believers whom He chooses. We also confess that such faith is a work and gift of the LORD, according to His sovereign good pleasure and electing love. Yet in this work, He is pleased to use the means. He fulfills His promise in the way of faith.

We then proceed to answer Prof. Engelsma's arguments:

1. Engelsma holds that we make the covenant and its salvation conditional and dependent on the faith of the child. But this is a fiction. As Prof. K. Schilder pointed out to Rev. Hoeksema long ago (!), it all depends on what one means by "conditional." If one means with this term that one can earn his salvation, or merit any part of it by his own act of believing or any other work, then we join in rejecting the word "conditional." But if one means by this term that God is pleased to establish certain means through which His covenant promises come to realization, then this term can never be disqualified. Indeed, there are many examples of conditional language in Scripture, as Prof. Engelsma well knows. Think of Isaiah 7:9: "If you will not believe, you will not be established." Think of Acts 16:31: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." This latter text not only shows that the covenant is conditional in its existence, but also shows how the children were included!

Thus, there is no substance to Engelsma's charge, nor to his Scripture proof. He cites Romans 9:16 -- a text which makes no direct reference either to children or to the covenant, but to God's sovereign work of election. Who can deny this? Pointing out conditions that exist in the covenant does not in any way detract from God's sovereign decree of election (see II Cor. 6:16-7:1).

The same holds for Engelsma's references to the Canons of Dordt. He quotes I/9, 10, but why does he ignore I/3, 4, and 12 or II/5, where the means or conditions of the covenant are mentioned? Canons I/3 speaks about the preaching of the gospel; I/4 speaks about the twofold effect of this preaching. Canons II/5 says that the Lord sends the gospel wherever He wills and adds with the promise the command to repent and believe this gospel. Engelsma quotes III-IV/14, but why does he not read V/14 as well? Canons V/14 says that the use of means are included in His sovereign work of grace. One cannot successfully argue a case by upholding only a *part* of a creed, and silently passing over the other parts. And here I have not even mentioned I/17, where *all* the children are explicitly included in the covenant.

2. In the second argument, Engelsma holds that we teach universal atonement as regards the children of believers. Frankly it is a mystery to me how this is even logically possible, let alone actually true. "Universal" means: "all men" and thus logically incorporates a category incongruous with "children of believers." There is little clarity in this way of speaking.

Aside from this strange terminology -- which only reflects Prof. Engelsma's difficulties in hunting up critique against sound Reformed doctrine -- we also must reject the sense of Engelsma's argument. We do not teach that the children of believers are promised the covenant on the basis that Christ has washed them all in His blood. We say: God in Christ promises them that He will wash them in His blood from all their sins and adds with

the promise His demand that the children turn from evil and believe His Word, and that the parents instruct their children in these things. When children grow up not believing God's promises, it does not mean that Christ takes back what He first gave them. It means that His gifts are spurned, and the covenant breaker incurs the wrath of God's covenant. God has thus instituted His covenant in order to stress how serious our covenant obligations are in His service.

3. Engelsma's final objection is that the Canadian Reformed view implies the Word of God fails. For those who do not believe, God's promise does not hold true. But this, too, is a caricature of our standpoint. Faced with the unbelief of many of Israel's sons, the apostle Paul takes pains to point out, "But it is not as though the Word of God had failed" (Rom. 9:6). The unbelief of men can never nullify the grace of God. God's Word never returns empty but always accomplishes its purpose -- effecting grace to one, and wrath to the other, all in accordance with His sovereign good pleasure (Is. 55:11). But the covenant promise remains the same for all children of believers.

Engelsma Uses Strong Words Against the Canadian Reformed Churches

Their teaching stands "in diametrical opposition to the teaching of Scripture" and "conflicts with cardinal doctrines of the Word of God." But when it comes to developing a case for these statements, one discovers that he has not one sound argument in his arsenal to support such strong allegations. On the one hand he makes us say things we do not say, and on the other hand he misreads our (and his own) confessions through the glasses of the typical Protestant Reformed interpretation that makes election dominate all other doctrines. Hence we are falsely accused of Arminianism.

Engelsma's View

We will now consider the view that Engelsma himself defends with regard to the children of the covenant. We have already noted that all along he has argued for their inclusion in the covenant. He has insisted on this position in opposition to the Baptists and the view of covenant held by the Netherlands Reformed Congregations and the Free Reformed Church. Here then is Engelsma's view.

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.

Here the truth of his position finally appears. The children of believers are included in the covenant, but actually they are also excluded from the covenant.

What is anyone to make of this reasoning? What does it mean to be included in the sphere of the covenant? Here Engelsma's language suddenly becomes vague. And there is a clear reason for this turn to the vague concept of the "sphere of the covenant." When one closes the door to the simple teaching of Scripture, one begins to reach for whatever might fit the occasion in order to salvage the situation.

Once Engelsma begins on this road there is no end. Whereas he began with denying presumptive regeneration, in the end he says: "Viewing their children as God's children, believers must approach them as elect children in teaching and discipline, even though there may indeed be reprobate and unregenerate children among them. Election determines the approach." What is this but presumptive regeneration? He even goes on to say that the Canons of Dordt restrict the promise of the gospel and the sacraments to believers, (quoting III-IV/8) a statement which the article quoted does not make, and which flies in the face of the clear language of II/5. Ultimately we find Engelsma reading his view

into the confessions, and hence entirely misinterpreting their message.

What Scriptural references does Engelsma bring forward to support his view? He refers to God's words to Moses in Romans 9:15: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." But as I have previously stated, this text does not deny for a moment the seriousness and the validity of God's covenant promise made to the children of all believers in the covenant. Engelsma reads this denial into the text. The focus of Romans 9 is on the fulfillment of the covenant promise through God's own sovereign act, and it does not touch the validity (legal reliability) of the covenant promise made to all the offspring. Then, quoting Romans 4:16, Engelsma says: "The promise of God is sure to all the seed." But then he must have strange glasses on, for Romans 4:16 says: "That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his (Abraham's) descendants -- not only to the adherents of the law but also those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all." Paul stresses the *condition* of the covenant: the call to faith! And the requirement of faith as the way to salvation does not detract one iota from the certainty of God's promises!

The reasoning of Prof. Engelsma is an unending circle, fraught with self-contradictions. First the children are included, then they are excluded. First there is no presumptive regeneration, then we must presume our children to be elect children. Where does this end? In effect, there is not much difference in the view on the position of children in the covenant between the Protestant Reformed and the Baptists and Netherlands Reformed Congregations that Engelsma is opposing. They each differ in degree, but not in essentials: they all do not *really* include all the children of believers in the covenant of grace.

The sad part of all of this is that the theory of the "sphere of the covenant" as propounded by En-

gelsma is foreign to the Scriptures. It is a "sphere of the covenant" theory much in the same vein as propounded by several church leaders opposing the simple view of Scripture upheld at the time of the Liberation in 1944. And whereas Rev. Hoeksema took a good stand opposing the "Three Points of Kalamazoo" which made the doctrine of common grace binding in 1924, in 1950 all his gains were lost when he made a binding statement of his own excluding the view of the confessions defended by Schilder. And Engelsma is only perpetuating the same kind of "election" theology which refuses to entertain the Scriptural teaching of faith as the way or condition to salvation and the notion of God's wrath against covenant breakers.

In sum: we reject the allegations of Prof. Engelsma that we are Arminian in our view of the covenant, and we reject his charges that we teach doctrines diametrically opposed to the Scriptures. We teach those confessional doctrines which are clearly maintained in the creeds and which he does not appear to notice: the covenant has conditions.

The crux of this debate is ultimately very practical. How do we view our children? How are we to approach them in teaching and instruction? The Lord demands a great sacrifice precisely because they are included in the covenant -- a covenant in which our responsibility is never abrogated. Let no one bury the clear demand of the gospel under a smoke screen of "sphere" theories, but simply do his duty in the place he is called. Then we will also see the rewards!

(Dr.) J. DeJong
Theological College of the
Canadian Reformed Churches
Hamilton, Ontario

■ Response

My answer to Dr. DeJong appears as the editorial in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Dr. DeJong has published the above letter as an editorial in the January 18, 1991 issue of *Clarion*, the magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches. I

am asking that he publish an adaptation of my editorial response to his article as a letter in *Clarion*.

My original analysis of the "Liberated" covenant view (held by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and other churches), to which Dr. DeJong responds, can be found in the May 1, 1990 issue of the *SB* (pp. 341, 342). My defense of the covenant view of the PRC against the view of the "Liberated" can be found in the July 1, 1990 *SB* (p. 413).

Anyone interested in studying the PR defense of an unconditional covenant on the basis of the Reformed creeds should read the "Declaration of Principles," adopted by the PR Synod of 1951. This document, intended to be used "only by the Mission Committee and the missionaries for the organization of prospective churches," is found in the book of Church Order of the PRC.

Since I suppose that there can be no additional objection to the doctrine of the covenant that I have been setting forth in these pages, objections from all possible quarters having already come in, I take this opportunity to express thankfulness -- and pleasant surprise -- that there is still obviously a great deal of interest in the vital truth of God's covenant with believers and their children. It is disheartening, however, that after almost 500 years of Reformed church history, there are still so many and so great differences among Reformed and Presbyterian churches over this truth.

-- DJE

■ A Horror Out of Hell

Your editorial "The Collapse of Communism" (the *Standard Bearer*, Feb. 1, 1991) was a very accurate diagnosis of the horror out of hell known as Communism. (Of course, it is still the ruling tyranny in many countries.) It has been a curious thing to me that until recently the atrocities and utter bankruptcy of Communism was almost an unmentionable subject in supposedly sophisticated circles.

For anyone to expose its evils and unimaginable atrocities was to invite the ridicule of being called a "Right-wing, John Birch, McCarthyite, Anti-Communist Crusader." Remember the scorn heaped on President Reagan for his remark that Russia was "an evil empire"? In my own experience since the early 1950s, I was often ignored or ridiculed, even by Reformed "intellectuals," for daring to expose the brutal truth about Communism, truth which was readily available to anyone who really cared.

You are absolutely correct in stating, "the theological liberals in the West will carry into the Judgment complicity in Communism's evils." The story of how the liberals and, yes, many theological conservatives also, aided and abetted this monstrous criminal conspiracy by refusing to condemn it forthrightly and without qualification is truly a shocking chapter on the hardness and blindness of heart of 20th century Christian "intellectuals."

Thanks for a very penetrating, succinct commentary. □

(Rev.) Norman Jones
Pierre, SD

Do I Ever Pray?

I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?

I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.

For words without the heart,
The Lord will never hear;
Nor will He to those lips attend,
Whose prayer is not sincere.

-- SB, December 1, 1932

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Boniface: Apostle to the Germans

When in the early history of the new dispensation church God was pleased to bring the gospel to Europe, the continent was overrun with many different barbarian tribes which were in darkest paganism and were constantly on the move. They were uncivilized, warlike, worshipers of idols, and perpetually fighting with each other. They were a threat to the Roman Empire and finally destroyed the empire in the West in the fifth century. All the institutions of society in the Roman world were destroyed -- except for the church. The church alone remained through all the turmoil and destruction of this terrible time.

The church was deeply conscious of her missionary calling and without interruption sent out her servants to bring the gospel to these barbarian tribes. It took men of self-sacrifice, of courage, and of conviction to venture into the lonely forests and mountains of Europe to fulfill the command of Christ. The dangers were many, not the least of which was the constant threat of vicious tribes who knew nothing of Christ and who despised all that belonged to Roman culture.

God was pleased to bring the gospel to these barbarian tribes in such a way that Europe was "Christianized." By this term I mean that the gospel, over the course of many

centuries, so entered into the warp and woof of the life of these barbarians that not only were the barbarians brought into the church, but Christianity itself became part and parcel of all the institutions of society. Society as a whole became Christian. The missionary work of the church produced Christian nations. And we in this land are heirs to this heritage.

This was not, of course, outside God's purpose. These very Christian nations (of Europe and America) have, over the course of the years, while retaining an external form of Christianity, become Antichrist and will, in God's time, produce the great beast of Revelation 13. In this way they are separated from "Gog and Magog," the nations on the four corners of the earth who remain in all their history pagan -- even though God is pleased to gather His church also from them.

One of the great missionaries to bring the gospel to the barbarian tribes in Europe was a man by the name of Boniface. He was born in Craediton, near Exeter, in the little Saxon kingdom of Wessex in the land of England, around 675. He was given the name of Winfrith by his parents who belonged to the nobility. Because royal blood coursed through his veins, he had the opportunity to engage in studies, and he received the best education available in his times. In his early years he proved to be an able scholar and soon advanced in his career. He entered a monastery and was busy there until the fortieth year of his life. In the monastery he was teacher, poet, grammarian, and theologian. So

great were his grammatical skills that he prepared a Latin grammar for use in the school. It seemed as if a life of leisurely teaching and learning were to be his calling.

But God called him to other labors. Reports reached the quietness of his monastery of a catastrophe that had taken place in the Lowlands, now Netherlands. A missionary by the name of Willibrord had labored there. This faithful servant of Christ had had some success in his work among the barbarian tribes which inhabited the land on the far west of Europe. But his work had been completely destroyed by a fierce Frisian king named Radboud, who rooted all Christianity out of his lands.

When these reports reached Winfrith, he determined to travel to the Lowlands to attempt to restore the work. He forsook his life of ease, his home with his parents, and his homeland, to travel to the dark forests and swamps of northwestern Europe to bring the gospel to the fierce Frisian barbarians. With two or three companions, he set sail and soon landed on the coast. But his work met with little success, and he determined to press on into the interior (into what is now Germany) to bring the gospel there.

Before traveling to Germany, however, he decided that he would attempt to gain the endorsement of the most powerful man in Europe, in the hopes that this would assist him in his missionary enterprise. Traveling first to what is now France, he secured the endorsement of Pepin, the ruler of the Franks, and then went on to Rome to secure the endorsement of the pope.

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

This latter endeavor was filled with important consequences for his work. In order to understand this, we must know a bit about the currents of history running through Europe at this time. The barbarian tribes themselves were constantly at war in efforts to expand their territories. Among the Franks a strong centralized government was gradually emerging, and the kings of the Franks were attempting to extend their empire into Germany by subduing the Saxons. An endorsement by the king of the Franks would, in the opinion of Boniface, aid him in the work. From another direction, the bishop of Rome was attempting to extend his influence and rule over the whole of Europe, and he saw missionary work as an instrument to accomplish this. Between the Franks and the pope an alliance had been formed which was to last for centuries. Boniface was, therefore, convinced that to receive credentials from both the Frankish king and the pope of Rome would advance his work greatly.

Having received commendation from the pope, Boniface became a loyal son of the church who fought with great energy to advance the cause of the papacy in Europe. He would tolerate no opposition to the church of Rome whatsoever. This involved him in struggles with other missionaries who had come to the continent from England and who wanted to establish a church far more independent from Rome than anything either the pope or Boniface wanted. These Scottish and Irish missionaries became Boniface's opponents.

Germany itself was still under the sway of barbarianism. Some missionary work had been done there, but the constant wars between the tribes and the general paganism and superstition of the people had resulted in an almost complete destruction of earlier missionary work.

Into these streams and currents of life Boniface set out to preach the gospel. He had a rare gift for preaching and soon established churches and monasteries in many different locations as thousands

were turned to the church by his labors. The most famous monastery which he erected was in Fulda, where eventually he was also buried. He met with fierce opposition, and his life was constantly threatened.

Perhaps his greatest victory was scored early in his labors in Germany. The Saxons venerated a large oak tree as the sacred tree of their god Thor, the god of thunder. The people not only worshiped the huge and solid tree, but held their tribal meetings under the "divine" protection of its branches. When Boniface saw that the oak was an obstacle to his work and that it was a barrier to the reception of the gospel, he took an axe and in the presence of a quivering throng of idol-worshippers, began to hack away at its trunk. While the gasping people were convinced that Thor would come in judgment upon this presumptuous missionary, the tree was felled without any interference from the heathen idol. Legend has it that a powerful wind from a thunderstorm arose as Boniface was chopping and assisted him by blowing the tree down and splitting the oak into four pieces of wood of equal length. At any rate, Boniface boldly used the wood of the oak to construct a chapel in the area for the worship of God.

As his success among the Saxons increased, he rose in the estimation of the pope, who appointed him bishop in 722 and archbishop in 732. In the meantime, he applied his not inconsiderable abilities to the organization of the churches in Saxony and to the rooting out of evils. He traveled and preached, presided at Synods called to rectify abuses, and settled disputes. He was unsparing in his labors to root out the superstition and immorality which plagued these peoples, and he was totally intolerant of the Scottish and Irish missionaries who wished to labor with him, but who were not, in his judgment, as loyal to the church of Rome as they ought to be. He extirpated pagan customs, set rules for life, and punished heretics and wicked men.

When he was an old man, the tug of the Lowlands came once

again and he resolved to return to the place of his earlier failures. He traveled there in 754 taking his shroud with him, apparently aware of the fact that in the Lowlands he would die and be buried. Here he labored with some success in the brakes and swamps of what is now Friesland in the Netherlands. But his work was early cut off. The enemies of the faith were aware of his work and determined to destroy it. While he was near the village of Dockum to baptize a number of converts, a part of the fierce Frisians fell upon the company. While the Christians wanted to resist and protect their leader, he admonished them: "My children, do not fight; let us follow the example of our Lord in Gethsemane. We shall soon see him in his glory. I have longed to see him, and to be with him. Let us pray." As they knelt in prayer, the mob, yelling and shrieking, fell upon them and killed Boniface and 51 of the people. He died on June 5, 754.

We would surely want to criticize Boniface for his strenuous efforts to establish churches loyal to the papacy, and he must be criticized for this. Yet he was a faithful preacher of the gospel and was willing to live a life of hardship and self-denial in the cause of missions. In the course of his work he had himself defined his labors: "Let us die for the holy laws of our fathers. Let us not be dumb dogs, silent spectators, hirelings who flee from the world, but faithful shepherds, watchful for the flock of Christ. Let us preach the whole counsel of God to the high and to the low, to the rich and to the poor, to every rank and age, whether in season or out of season, as far as God gives us strength."

Boniface was surely an example of that mixture of holiness and weakness which characterizes all God's servants. One of his biographers says of him that "He had a restless, unsteady, complex nature, dangerously wracked by the black homours of despair, and he was extremely self-effacing and timid; although (he) accomplished an immense work, it was done almost reluctantly and without his ever hav-

ing had the slightest desire to push himself to the forefront. The superior interests of the Church alone guided him, but when they were in play this timid man was carried

away by his enthusiasm, and his boldness knew no bounds...."

Today a statue stands in the Frisian city of Dockum commemorating his work. The Netherlands

became not only Christian but, after the Reformation, the cradle of the Reformed faith.

God uses weakest means to fulfill His will. □

Into All the World

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Missions Principles (IV): The Task

The task of the church in her work of missions is to *teach*. Not to save souls. Not to create church growth. In His "Great Commission" Jesus stated the task in the most simple terms: *teach*.

In previous articles we have already established some of the principles of missions. First, the church of Christ performs the work of missions in obedience to her King, Jesus. Mission and evangelism work is not a matter of choice, but one of obedience. This work must be performed to the fullest of the ability God gives.

The objects of mission work are all whom God in His providence brings into their path. The church must do its best with all the means it has been providentially given by God.

Along with its labors within its own membership, the labors of missions puts the church in the position of serving as God's servant in the accomplishment of His eternal purposes of election and reprobation. Thus God is glorified.

The supreme motive for the church's obedience to her Lord's command to "Go ye into all the world" must be to glorify God by proclaiming Him as the One who is so abundantly worthy to be known and praised for who and what He

is. Our inspiration is to be found, not in successes, but in God's character! Another motivation is the great gratitude each believer has to his God for so great a Savior and for the salvation of so worthless a person and people. Another motivation is the conviction of, love of, and zeal for the truth. And the Bible speaks of our being motivated by confidence and trust in the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the preaching. A final, but certainly not the least, motive for the performance of missions is love for the neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). The second, great commandment is chiefly manifested in a concern for the eternal state and spiritual well-being of my neighbor.

* * * * *

Now we begin to consider those principles which undergird the work itself. First we answer the question, What is the nature of the work of missions and evangelism?

Teach. Baptize. And teach. Matthew 28:19, 20.

It must be noted that although the King James translation (not incorrectly) gives us twice the word "teach," these are two different words in the original language. The first word translated "teach" literally means "to disciple, to make disciples." Jesus says, "Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations." But to translate this as "teach" is not an error, for the word clearly implies that the making of

disciples is to be in the way of teaching them (we will say more on this later). First, let us consider the fact that the task Jesus gave to His church through the apostles was to make disciples.

They were not to make of a person one who would be a conservative citizen of his or her country. Nor were they to help everyone have high self-esteem.

This command to make disciples or to teach came to men who were already disciples. They knew what it meant to be Jesus' disciple. They knew that it meant to deny themselves, to take up their cross, and to follow Him. They knew that it meant to follow Him who did not have what foxes and birds have. They knew that to be a disciple meant coming to Jesus weary and heavy laden under the burden of a nagging conscience, and taking up His easier yoke, bowing to His authority (Matt. 11:28-30).

Thus the disciples were to work and pray, not for decisions for Christ, but for trustful and subjected servants of the King, Jesus Christ.

The disciples were to pray because they could not make disciples in their own strength or wit. The carnal mind, the deceitful heart, and the hardened nature will never give sincere subjection to Jesus. Nothing but omnipotent power can subdue the unregenerate. No one in this fallen world will believe the truth unless there

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

is added to the presentation of the truth the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit, which power causes them to receive the truth in love. The Bible teaches that while God's Spirit is the cause, His truth is the instrument of man's great transformation. It is the truth which affects us, and it is the Spirit which causes us to receive the truth.

The disciples understood that their Master was commanding them to be instruments to bring others into the same relationship with Christ that they had with Him. They would be instruments of His grace. They were only to teach, unreservedly trusting in their Lord to add to the church daily such as He was saving.

Jesus does not command the apostles and the church to make the heathen wonder, or to dazzle them with splendor, or to amaze them with mystery. Rather He commanded the church simply to "teach." Illustrate, explain, expound, tell, inform, narrate. Be content to sit down and tell them the very plainest and most common things. Teach them first the very rudiments of the cross of Christ. This takes away the darkness of foolish ignorance.

Teach! Not argue or debate. The great Greek philosophers needed to be taught, for they were but fools who thought themselves to be wise. The same is true for the great philosophers, scientists, geologists, and doctors of today. Teach those who have great knowledge, for unless they become as little children, they cannot enter the kingdom. Do not debate and argue with them. Position yourself not as a combatant concerning certain teachings. Rather teach, insisting that you have been sent and that Christ will back up your claim.

Therefore, the central emphasis of the church's calling is not the creation of emotional pressure points and conversions. It is not her calling to pressure people into quick decisions, often on the basis of lengthy emotional appeals accompanied by inspiring and moving music. Rather the central emphasis of the congregation or denomination, which is striving to be obedi-

ent to the calling of her Lord, is an instructional presentation of the Gospel wherever and whenever she can.

In order to support the emphasis on teaching, allow me to quote from a book recently published by The Trinity Foundation, *Today's Evangelism: Counterfeit or Genuine?* by Dr. Gordon H. Clark. In the foreword, John Robbins says that "One of the sins for which Christ condemned the scribes and Pharisees was their dynamic evangelistic program." Then he quotes Matthew 23:15: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." He continues:

The message, the teaching, the doctrine of the evangelist is what separates genuine Christian evangelism from counterfeit evangelism. ...the concern and the focus of the Christian evangelist is not growth, but truth, and if that truth is preached clearly. Growth, as a goal, is the ideology of the cancer cell. True evangelism has a different goal: the propagation of God's truth. If the Gospel is preached to every creature, God will convert all His people, all He has chosen for heaven.

Dr. Clark writes that because the Gospel is a message, he "insists that evangelism is preaching the Gospel; that a few sermons are inadequate; that as much elucidation as possible must be given." Further he says, "The Gospel is a message to be understood. Knowledge is the first and an essential part of faith." The book concludes:

The aim is to teach. Teach patiently, calmly, and in great detail. The aim is to teach the system of doctrine that the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures are not a haphazard collection of bits of information and theory. They present an integrated, logical system.

It is impossible to teach the system of doctrine in five minutes, or to reduce it to five spiritual laws. ...The Christian message is the whole Bible; it is the whole counsel of God. All of it must be taught, not just a small part, for it is all profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction

in righteousness. It is by taking heed thereto that a young man may cleanse his way.

Evangelism is the exposition of the Scripture. God will do the regenerating.

A clear implication is that true evangelism or mission work is not anything quick. It is a long-range task. It requires self-denying love which identifies with people in their need and in their spiritual thinking. It requires teaching and catechizing people so they can learn what sin is and who God is. It is teaching with the confidence that the exalted Lord will work in the heart, open it, and seal it unto Himself.

* * * * *

Secondly, Jesus said that the task of missions and evangelism is to baptize the disciples (Matt. 28:19).

Baptism locates and identifies the local community of saints.

The task is much more than the salvation of individuals. It is the building and planting of God's church. It is bringing the professing believer into the visible community of a local congregation.

Think of how the disciples of Jesus understand this command. On Pentecost they baptized those who were pricked in their hearts, and thus they were added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). The church to which Jesus added them is not the organic Body of Christ, but the local congregation. Jesus daily added to the local congregation the ones He was saving. This clearly implies that membership in the local institute is not a matter of choice, but a most delightful mandate.

Jesus teaches that no evangelism or mission work is adequate unless it views the church as an organism in which God has ordained to manifest His glory and through which He builds up His saints. I Timothy 3:15 teaches us that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, the same truth which must be taught in order to make disciples. Ephesians 3:10 shows that the church makes known the manifold wisdom of God. Ephesians 4 shows that Jesus gave the gift of preachers to the church for the per-

fecting of the saints and for the edifying of the body of Christ. It is in the local congregation that there are the means of grace, especially the preaching and loving discipline.

Any mission work and evangelism which does not build the church, no matter how sincere it may be, is wrong.

When we pray for our neighbors' salvation, we should not be satisfied until they take their place in the visible congregation.

* * * * *

Thirdly, and closely related to the former duty, Jesus commanded His disciples to teach those who are made disciples to observe all the things He commanded them. Jesus wanted His disciples to be taught and baptized unto the goal of their conforming to His Word.

This assumes that the true disciple of Christ takes his or her place in the church and world under the rule of the Lord Jesus. The true disciple wants to obey and to please Christ.

This observance of Christ's commandments implies knowledge. Obedience must have roots in knowledge of what must be obeyed. There can be no observers of Christ's commands without some grasp of Christ's doctrines. This knowledge must be accompanied with active and practical obedience, or the profession of faith and discipleship is an empty profession.

To be secured for the baptized disciples was a teaching ministry, whose responsibility it is to show to the disciples the mind and will of their Lord. His disciples must put their knowledge into practice. They must be doers as well as hearers of the Word. They are to observe what He has commanded.

Therefore the church, whether the local congregation or the mission station, must have a teaching ministry. Pastors and missionaries must strive to make the people acquainted with the whole spectrum of apostolic teaching from the per-

spective of its practical implications and demands.

Jesus requires the church to teach in the preaching, in the catechism class, and in the seminary.

* * * * *

The task Jesus gives the church is gigantic. Men and women must first be brought into a trusting and submitting relationship to Jesus Christ. Secondly, the church must bring these disciples into a lively relationship with a local congregation which manifests the marks of the true church. And, thirdly, the church must constantly strive to bring its membership into practical conformity to the Word of God.

God has given the whole task to the church.

Evangelism is from God. It is through the church. It is to the world. It is feeding back into the church. In this manner God is glorified and the church receives His blessing. □

*When Thou
Sittest in
Thine House*
Rev. Kenneth Koole

Responsibilities Towards Children (3)

We have been considering the factors that have contributed most heavily to the breakdown of the home and family in 20th century society, and in particular those things which have affected children and young people most adversely.

That the youth have been the primary "victims" of the crumbling home-structure is indisputable. Even worldly society speaks of the

youth in terms of alienation and rebellion. Those who have to deal with today's youth on a regular basis, the school teachers (whether in public or private schools), see the adverse effects most clearly. They see firsthand the bitterness, the insecurity, the resentment building up in the youth, all of which displays itself in various disturbing ways, such as challenging those in authority, or in increasing abandonment of self to immorality and drugs, or again, in growing numbers, to suicide itself, the ultimate statement of bitter despair.

In many instances they (the teachers) themselves become the recipients of this pent-up anger and resentment as it comes to expression in the classroom. Witness the number of news reports of bodily assaults upon those who teach.

Frustration characterizes every group dealing with the increasingly dissatisfied youth. "Just what is it that you want?" we ask.

Without their realizing it, or wanting even to admit it, what the youth "want" is the attention of love, and adult approval and guidance as well.

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

You ask, "Why don't they say this, then?" It is quite simple. They too have their pride. And to admit this need is to admit being dependent in some way upon the very ones with whom they are angry and who are neglecting them. To admit this is to make oneself vulnerable. Who wants to have to do that? Do you and I ... when we have differences with our spouses? No. We are more inclined to say, "Well, who needs you anyway? I can live without you." But we can not. Not in any "happy," secure way. And neither can children and youth, without our attention of love. Do not expect them to tell you that. Did you tell your parents that? Be wise enough to know that.

Society, in its foolishness, asks concerning its alienated youth, what has gone wrong? It does not much care for Scripture's answer, but we will give it anyway.

We have suggested four factors that have shaken the home foundations: first, the refusal to keep the vows of marriage (which means the bitter warfare of divorce, children being the primary casualties); second, the refusal to correct disobedience in the home by discipline ("We love them too much to cause them pain!"); third, mothers working out of the home (and longer and longer hours all the time); and last but not least, the intrusion of television (and videos) into our homes.

We have dealt with the first two. It remains for us to look briefly at these last two. And keep in mind as we do, that our main thesis is that children are not receiving enough parental attention today (which belongs to the very heart of love, especially COVENANTAL love), but are being left to raise themselves, and with disastrous results.

We turn first to this matter of mothers working outside the home. I say "outside" the home, because what mothers do within the home is also certainly "work" and very demanding. There are those making good money performing for others exactly those services that mothers provide in their own homes for "free." Those who tend to the home-fires certainly are

"working-mothers." That must be readily acknowledged first of all.

In the second place, I recognize that we deal here with a sensitive issue with complicating factors. The circumstances of families can vary so widely; some are well off, some struggling. And the bills for living in an adequate home, for paying tuition, and for supporting all the kingdom causes besides, have become staggering. A second income seems necessary just to make ends meet.

Will it do simply to state an absolute law here, "If you are a mother with school-age children or younger, thou shalt not work at all outside the home for wages"? What about the unmarried mother of a child? Should she work or rely entirely upon relatives and the church? What about the wife whose husband has left her and provides inadequate alimony (if any at all)? Or the woman whose husband is simply a lazy lug who shows little ambition to support the family? Or he is incapacitated? Or temporarily laid off? What is the wife to do in such circumstances, if for her some work is available whereby she can keep the family solvent and help pay basic bills?

And how old must the children be before the mother may leave the home with a good conscience and take on some kind of job? And how many hours is permissible? One work day? Two? Only if the hours run from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, or during the night when children are in bed?

And what about the mother who earns no wage working outside the home, but who nonetheless is gone just as much or even more than a "working mother" because she is either gadding about, or perhaps is even donating many hours to "good causes"? Still, the mother is not home when the children come through the door. The one is permissible, the other not? Says who?

And so it goes. Who in the world can lay down enough laws to cover all the circumstances? Giving the answer that addresses every situation is impossible, nor do I intend to try to do so.

Nonetheless, as this matter confronts our homes and threatens our families and we must make wise, spiritual decisions, there are things that must be kept in mind.

First of all, what John W. Whitehead says in his book, *The Stealing of America*, is pertinent. He states that

... the sharp, sustained increase of employment of married women over the past [four] decades is one of the most profound changes in American family patterns. The statistics tell us the story. In 1890 less than 5 percent of all American wives worked outside the home for wages and salaries. By 1940 this figure had increased to 17 percent, but the most dramatic increases followed World War II. In 1947, 20 percent or one out of every five married women was employed in the labor force. The proportion rose to one in four (25 percent) by 1950, one in three (32 percent) by 1960, to one out of two (48 percent) by 1980 (p. 63).

He goes on to say that it was forecast that by 1990, two out of three (67 percent) of all wives would be in the labor force.

These statistics are instructive. Surely, it can escape no one's attention that this sharp upswing in married women joining the work force coincides ominously with the sharp increase of juvenile delinquency and crime in our society, as well as of blatant immorality. These things are not unrelated. Whitehead is surely correct when he states that of all the changes in contemporary family patterns the growing number of married women becoming employed is one of the most profound, which is to say, having consequences most far reaching.

Now it is not that our society is unaware of what has been happening. It is. Today they have even coined a phrase to describe children whose parents are both off working. They are called "latchkey" children. They are expected to be independent enough to unlock the door when they come home from school and supervise their own lives for a few hours without parental supervision. During this unsupervised period problems crop up, and the older the

children become the more serious become the problems -- drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and so on. It is not that modern day parents are not aware of this. They are. Painfully so. They simply refuse to cut back and go back to the old ways. Two incomes are essential. The woman is not going to be tied down like her grandmother. It is the price the family is going to have to pay.

We are certainly very foolish if we do not observe what is happening to the children and homes of our latchkey society, evaluate the problems, assess the reasons and the consequences, and order our own lives, homes, and priorities accordingly. We are not immune.

Society may appear bewildered as to what the solution is to this problem. Scripture is not. It gives us clear, fundamental principles.

You have a passage such as Psalm 128:3. "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table." Notice, the wife is tied in with the house, it is her proper sphere. There she proves a fruitful vine; not simply in having children, but in nurturing her children, so they, like olive plants, blossom and bear godly fruit.

There is I Timothy 2:15. "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing...." And certainly the apostle includes child-rearing with child-bearing. This is a matter central to the spiritual life and development not only of her children, but of the believing woman herself. This is the way in which she is SAVED, no less.

In I Timothy 5:14 we read, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house...." How much plainer can the Apostle and Scripture be? In Titus 2:4, 5 the Apostle declares that younger women are to be taught to be "keepers at home." In other words, they are not to be gadding about, but homemakers, making the home their first priority. To this they give their attention. This is how they show their love to husband and children. For this their (your) Lord Jesus will

praise them. This they are to consider spiritually fulfilling.

Further, keep in mind what is happening to the latchkey generation and the mess it is in. Is it any wonder?

The children come home day after day to an empty house. There are no arms to welcome them home, no ears to hear what is most immediately on their minds, no wise voice settling their disputes or consoling them because things did not go well, or eyes to supervise their behavior. They are on their own. And when mother and father come home, time is short. Mother, who has been gone all day, must do the washing, ironing, meal-fixing yet too (with father's assistance, perhaps -- but then again he may have church work, school obligations, and a business to attend to). Common sense tells us nerves are going to be frayed, and we short. And so even when mother and father have come home, there can be precious little time to give the family and the children the attention they need and crave. And we expect tranquility will rule the home as we all rush madly about hurting for time? Or we wonder why our older children will not listen to our advice and instruction? What, when they have been making all their own decisions in our absence?! Let us not be naive.

In this whole sensitive issue of mother-working as a source of second income, let us keep something in mind, namely, children do NOT WANT to raise themselves; children CAN NOT raise themselves (properly); the Lord God DID NOT INTEND for children to raise themselves. If He did, He would not have made them so helpless to begin with, and ordained that they remain so dependent for such a long period of time, much longer than nearly every other creature.

The development of the human offspring is amazingly slow. The wolf cub is already beginning to catch its own game when the human "cub" is just starting to stand up by holding on to furniture to the applause of his admiring parents. This is how the Lord God made "man." Physically, psychologically,

spiritually a child is a dependent, communal creature. Children need their parents through their formative years, which runs into the later teens.

For all man's intended majesty amongst created things, his dependency when young is striking. And this itself ought to speak to us about God's whole purpose and will in raising the children given us. They are not ours to neglect or to unload on others, they are *ours* to raise. As it is true that "it is not good that man should be alone," wherefore, the Lord made a helper suited for him, namely, woman, so it is true that it is not good that our children should be alone; and therefore the Lord provided for them parents, and one in particular, mother, whose greatest assets are her love and patience and arms that embrace and hold.

Staying at home may well involve sacrifices. It is such wives, however, whose children (and husband) will rise up and call blessed. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (Prov. 31:27, 28). And remember, Proverbs 31 is the "last" word on wisdom. □

Reading The Bible

Within this ample volume lies
The mystery of mysteries;
Happiest they of human race
To whom their God has given
 grace,
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, to force the way;
And better had they ne'er been
 born
That read to doubt, or read to scorn.

— SB, January 1, 1933

Strength of Youth

Rev. Russ Dykstra

John Calvin and Women Deacons

[Some time ago, we began a discussion of how Calvin can be, and often is, misused to support an un-Reformed position. Briefly, three common methods for this are: 1) Quoting Calvin on an issue that he did not face, at least in its modern-day form; 2) Quoting a "Calvinist" from a later age, maintaining that this is what Calvin taught. 3) Taking Calvin's words out of context.]

In Reformed churches, colleges, and even some high schools the debate over women in church office has raged for some time now. In some circles it is quieting down because women have been ordained to the special offices (minister, elder, and deacon) and the churches are content, or at least willing to live with it. However, for you, the Reformed student, who maintain that the Scriptures allow only men into these offices, the issue does not go away, for, on the one hand, some professors insist on bringing the issue into the classroom and giving their personal "defense" of women in office. In addition, if and when you, in discussions or in papers, set forth your convictions, your ideas may well be summarily dismissed, and you informed that you differ with Calvin on this. This is a bit hard to take, but you ought not be immediately deflated and give up. However, in order to defend your views, it is best to know exactly what Calvin did teach on women deacons.

What did John Calvin say about women holding the office of deacon? One could wish that Calvin

gave one, clear, unambiguous answer, but that is not always true. There is just enough ambiguity in the great theologian's writings that some attempt to make a case that Calvin supported women as deacons. The references normally quoted from Calvin's works are especially two. The first is in his *Institutes*, Book 4, chapter 3, section 9, on deacons. On the basis of Romans 12:8 ("He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; ...he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness"), Calvin maintains that there were two distinct orders of deacons in the early church. The first clause in the verse refers to the deacons who administered the alms; the other clause refers to those who devoted themselves to the care of poor and sick persons — such as the widows mentioned by Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 5). For, writes Calvin, "women could execute no other public office, than by devoting themselves to the service of the poor."

The second oft-referred-to passage is in Calvin's commentary on Romans 16:1 — on Phebe. He writes, "He [Paul] first commends to them Phebe, to whom he gave this Epistle to be brought to them; and, in the first place, he commends her on account of her office, for she performed a most honourable and a most holy function in the Church; and then he adduces another reason why they ought to receive her and to show her every kindness, for she had always been a helper to all the godly. As then she was an assistant of the Cenchrone Church, he bids that on that account she should be received in the Lord.... And since it be-

hooves us to embrace in love all the members of Christ, we ought surely to regard and especially to love and honour those who perform a public office in the Church." These two passages are the strongest that have been brought to light in Calvin's writings suggesting support for women in the office of deacons. They do certainly speak of women holding public office, the office of deacon.

But before we desert Calvin and regretfully rank him with those who promote women deacons, we ought to look a little deeper. First of all, notice that Calvin distinguishes between two different kinds of deacons — those who bring alms to the needy, and those who help the poor and sick with their time and personal provision of their needs. Calvin spelled this out in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances used in the churches in Geneva. Under the "Fourth Order of Ecclesiastical Government, namely, Deacons," Calvin distinguished between stewards and hospitallers. Stewards were appointed "to receive, dispense, and keep the goods for the poor, not only daily alms, but also possessions, revenues, and pensions." The others, hospitallers, were "to care for and remember the sick and administer the allowance for the poor." Both apparently held the office of deacon and were elected as the elders were. Yet the stewards had more authority, for they decided who should get help. The hospitallers worked in the communal hospital and in the hospice for wayfarers, and maintained a room for the special care of poor in the city. However, the aid was to be given only at the word of the

Rev. Dykstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

stewards. Although Calvin does not address the issue of women in these offices, the quotation from the *Institutes* (above) reveals that he was in favor of having women only in the office of hospitaller.

The problem for us today is that we do not have this twofold distinction and function in the office of deacon. This practice did carry on in some Reformed churches in the Netherlands, at least for a time. The (Church Order) Articles of Wessel (1568) encouraged this, although they did not mention women deacons (Chapter 5, articles 5 and 6). Yet the Synod at Middelburg (1581) answered the question of whether it would be possible to reintroduce the office of deaconess (question 16). So some churches used this distinction between the deacons who handled the alms and the deacons, sometimes women, who cared for the sick and needy.

The office of deacon in the Reformed tradition became almost strictly the handling of alms (with, of course, the comforting word of the Scriptures), not the direct care of the sick and needy by operating hospitals and hospices. Therefore, it is plain, that Calvin was not advocating women in the office of deacon as we have it.

A second point must be made about both of the above mentioned passages from Calvin (*Institutes* and Romans 16:1 commentary). In both instances he explained the position of such women deacons with a reference to I Timothy 5. Even if you agree with Calvin (which I do not) that Phebe held a public office in the church, and even if you like the distinction in the office of deacon of stewards and hospitallers, keep in mind what Calvin meant. He meant that Phebe and the women deacons were widows over 60 years old who had been married to only one man, were well reported of for good works, had brought up children, had lodged strangers, had washed the feet of saints, and had relieved the afflicted. Such women, according to Calvin, would never marry again, "for they consecrated themselves to the ministry of the Church." Into this position, writes Calvin, "they

were received on the condition that the Church should relieve their poverty, and that, on their part, they should be employed in ministering to the poor, as far as the state of their health allowed." (Commentary on I Timothy 5:9-13; see also Calvin's Commentary on Romans 16:1.)

That sheds an entirely new light on Calvin's supposed support of women deacons. His "support" was not that women should be deacons who collected and distributed alms. He did not even say that the hospitallers had to be, or should be, women. Rather he endorsed only that widows, over 60 years old, who were themselves in need of alms, be put into the office of deacon only as "hospitallers," i.e., those who cared for the aged, the sick, the extremely poor, and the travelers.

This is important from another point of view in that the position of "hospitallers" (which these widows might hold) was not a position of authority in the church. The "stewards" (those who collected and distributed alms -- our deacons) decided who received the mercies of Christ. Calvin saw that deacons have *authority* in the Church of Christ, being part of the God-ordained government of the Church. In his *Institutes* (Book 4, Chapter 3, section 1), Calvin shows that Christ governs His church on earth using men, who exercise and administer the government *by the Word*. The calling of each office bearer, including deacons, therefore (according to Calvin and the Reformed faith generally), is *to speak the Word*. However, Calvin knew full well that Scripture forbids women to take a position in the church where she speaks the Word of God with this authority -- see I Timothy 2:12-14 and I Corinthians 14:34 and Calvin's explanation that women are to keep silent in the church. Commenting on Acts 21:9 and the four prophesying daughters of Philip in Caesarea, Calvin makes the bold statement that the Holy Spirit "doth not suffer women to bear any public office in the Church."

This is a rather brief treatment of the subject of Calvin on women

deacons, but it is clear that Calvin did not advocate women in the office of deacon as the office exists in the Reformed church today. While we might wish that Calvin had written a treatise forcefully rejecting the concept of women in the office of deacon (or elder or minister for that matter), we must keep in mind that Calvin lived in a day when virtually everyone agreed on the Scriptural prohibition of women holding an office in the church. That Calvin agreed with this is evident from the fact that he nowhere promotes or defends women in church office, except for the widows described in I Timothy 5. It is well known that Calvin was bold and outspoken in setting forth the doctrine and practice taught in Scripture regardless of whether or not it was popular with the people, the rulers, or the theologians. If he believed women should hold office, he would certainly have said so plainly.

I hope this is helpful to you, the Reformed student, struggling to maintain the doctrines and biblical traditions of the historic Reformed faith. May God give you the grace and wisdom to stand in and for God's truth.

If you wish more information on the subject of women in church office, two pamphlets will be of much value. They are: "Phebe," by Prof. H. Hanko, and "Women in Church Office," by Rev. R. Cammenga. If you cannot find them in your church, write to The Reformed Witness, P.O. Box 181, Doon, IA 51235. Feel free to do so, and order a few more for your friends. Every Reformed college student should have these aids. □

My Father! what am I, that all
Thy mercies sweet like sunlight fall
So constant o'er my way?
That Thy great love should shelter
me,
And guide my steps so tenderly
Through every changing day?

—SB, November 15, 1932

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

The Book of Ruth: Lesson I

■ "Trust and Obey" Ruth 1:1-18

Under Joshua's guidance, the land of Canaan had been divided among the twelve tribes (Joshua 13-19). Every family had its own inheritance, within which the family was to continue to live in its generations (1 Kings 21:3; Num. 36:7). This represented the Lord's gracious care for them, and their inclusion in the covenant rest of God (Ps. 16:5, 6). Yet, sometimes the faith of the Israelites grew weak, especially when outward circumstances of famine and apostasy were heavy; and of themselves they severed that link with their inheritance. This was unbelief, a lack of steadfastness, an unwillingness to bow under the judgment upon the land and await the time of deliverance.

The book of Ruth opens with the history of Elimelech and his family. These were true, believing children of God who had never shared in the idolatry and wickedness which had become so prevalent in the nation as a whole. But this does not mean that the wickedness of the day did not have its effect upon them. In the midst of a famine, Elimelech moves his family to Moab. Did he believe it was only a temporary move? No doubt he did. Yet, under the distress of the famine upon his family (Mahlon --

"sickness"; Chilion -- "wasting") he severed his tie with his holy inheritance. This was sin.

The Lord is faithful to chasten, and to work in all of this His own gracious purpose, namely the bringing in of Ruth as a mother in the line of Christ. This does not excuse, but shows God's power and grace. Elimelech died in Moab. His sons, after marrying Moabitish women, also died. Thus, after ten or more years, Naomi is left a poor widow, living with her two daughters-in-law (see Isaiah 47:9).

Naomi decided to return to Judah, for she had heard that the Lord had granted deliverance and bread to His people. She urges her daughters-in-law to turn back. But Ruth reveals the work of God's love in her heart, implanted by the faith-testimony of her mother-in-law. She is bound to Israel's God and desires to live with God's people. She returns with Naomi.

Points to Ponder:

1. Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? What does the presence of a famine indicate? Deuteronomy 28:15-18
2. Was Elimelech's action justifiable? Why or why not? Are there similar examples of this same thing in the Old Testament? See Genesis 12

In light of your answer"

- a. In what ways do we show we are more concerned about the needs of our earthly life than with what we need spiritually?
- b. How do we sometimes attempt to escape the cross laid in our way by changing our place, rather than to take up that cross as we ought?

3. Was the death of Naomi's husband and sons a punishment?
4. Should Naomi have encouraged her daughter-in-law to return with her so they could be with believers? Explain why she handled the situation the way she did.
5. Give a character sketch of Naomi. Did she have self-pity, bitterness, godliness, a loving heart?
6. Study in Names
Find the meaning and significance of the following:
Elimelech
Naomi
Mahlon
Chilion
Mara
Ruth
7. Ruth's beautiful confession:
 - a. Memorize Ruth 1:16, 17.
 - b. Give the main points of her confession.
 - c. Find other powerful professions in Scripture (i.e., Peter's, Joshua's, etc.)
 - d. Are these words appropriate for weddings?
 - e. What does Ruth's confession teach us about the bonds between us as Christian sisters/brothers?
 - f. On another sheet of paper, write out your own profession. (Thinking through, and writing, can strengthen faith. Using Scripture's pattern and words is helpful.) □

Rev. Haak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.

The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

That Proper Weeping and Laughing

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 we read: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.... A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."

It is important, however, to weep at the right time, and because of what truly calls for weeping; and to laugh at the right time, and for what our God wants us to laugh about in this vale of tears and sorrows. This truth we find clearly revealed in the life of Abraham and Sarah, as recorded in Genesis 17 and 18.

The Lord our God appeared to Abraham and told him that Sarah his wife would be blessed and be given a son, so that she would be "a mother of nations." What we read then is that Abraham "fell upon his face and laughed and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" (Gen. 17:17).

Still more. In the next chapter we read that after Sarah heard this truth spoken to Abraham, she laughed within herself, saying, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:12).

Surely we are all agreed that the time was not there for them to laugh the way they did. Abraham being one hundred years old and Sarah ninety, they surely should laugh in joy at this promise of God. They, however, were not laughing in joy. They laughed rather at the folly of thinking that such a thing could happen. It was not for the joy of getting a covenant child. It was the laughter of unbelief. They questioned God's promise and did not rejoice for having been given it. It was time to laugh, but not the way they laughed, and not in unbelief but in faith in our God and in the assurance that He fulfills all His promises.

There is now a time for us to mourn, and every sincere child of God will weep as he sees his sins and corrupt nature. There is also a time for him to laugh with joy in the faith and hope of being fully delivered by our God, through His Son and His cross and Spirit and by His love, mercy, and grace. Correctly we read in Psalm 98:1, "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath given Him the victory." And then again in Psalm 101:1 we read, "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." And singing here is musical laughter. It is spiritual laughter whereby the soul expresses with the mouth and voice what our God does so wonderfully through His Son. When also we sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow," we

likewise should in that praise be performing spiritual and musical laughter in our souls.

Let us then go back to this tragic event when both Abraham and Sarah laughed sinfully. Abraham was asked why Sarah laughed. When Sarah denied that she had done so, the Lord answered, "Nay, but thou didst laugh." It makes no difference whether we laugh with our lips, or whether we do it only with the soul. Laughing with the soul is sinning before our God, when we do not take hold of that which He tells us. What is more, does not the fact that Abraham was asked why she laughed reveal that Sarah did in fact laugh with her voice? Abraham otherwise could not have known that she had laughed.

In both instances Abraham and Sarah revealed unbelief. In both cases the lack of faith in what God told them and promised them was revealed. Yes, they were believing children of God. Hebrews 11:8-11 presents both Abraham and Sarah as believers. We are told that Abraham, when he "was called to go into a place which he should receive for an inheritance, obeyed." And of Sarah we read that through faith she "received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."

And the awesome truth here is that we who are believing children of God have only a small beginning of that new obedience, and of faith

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

in our God, and in His Son as our Savior. Not only must we be delivered from the hellish agony which we deserve because of our sins, and which comes upon all those who are not believers in Christ Jesus our Lord. But we must also be delivered from our unbelief and love of sin. Here is an extremely important element in our salvation. When our God said to Adam in paradise, shortly after He had created the world, that the day he sinned he would die, He was referring first of all, and chiefly as well, to the truth that he would die spiritually that day. Physically Adam did live nine hundred and thirty years after that sin. But he and Eve died spiritually that day when Satan got them to hate God. Physical death began to wear out their bodies and bring them to death. But spiritual death came at once!

Let it be interjected here that the deed which outwardly seemed so little, and was committed in less than a minute, was a terrible act that rightly called for everlasting punishment in hell. Eating that forbidden fruit not only manifested hatred against God, because it was going against His will, but also displayed lack of trust in Him. They believed what Satan said, not what God commanded them not to do. They wanted to be different from what God had made them to be. The awesome truth is that by going against God's will they denied that He is God. Instead, as Satan got them to believe, they wanted to be gods. He got them to believe that God had closed their eyes, and that here was a way for them to get them opened and see that they are gods, knowing what is good for them, and that it was evil that they were by God kept from this by being commanded not to eat the fruit of that tree (Gen. 3:5). Satan's lie was that God had lied to them. And let us bear in mind, and never put it aside, that the truth is that every sin which we commit reveals that we think that we are gods and may do what we please. It means that we tell ourselves that God has no right to tell us what we may and may not do. The "gods" can go their own way.

Now go back to that laughing of Abraham and Sarah. They sinned by doing that. Doing so they revealed the sinfulness of their minds and hearts. Get this and hold on to it tightly: Whenever we reject what God calls us to do, we are heeding Satan's lie that we can become gods. Yea, every sin that we commit reveals that we think that we are gods. For every sin is an act against the one and only God, and maintains that we need not do what He commands. Every time we sin we accuse God of sinning against us by forbidding us to do this which He calls evil and we think is good. Satan told Adam and Eve that God had lied to them, and Adam and Eve believed him!

That same sin we find here in Abraham and Sarah. When they laughed in response to God's word that at their ages they would still bring forth a covenant son through whom many covenant sons would be born, they believed that God lied to them. Most assuredly they did not believe that what He promised them would happen. Do not look at their sin as anything less than Adam and Eve's sin of not believing God, when He said that they would die if they ate of that forbidden fruit. Let us be careful not to defend any sin of any kind to any degree! Literally Abraham and Sarah did not say that God was lying to them. Literally they did not call Him a liar; but their laughs revealed that they did not believe what He told and promised them. Note the response of God Himself to this laughter. In Genesis 18:14 we read that He asked Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" They did question His power after He told them what He in His power would do.

And let us be aware of the fact that in the church-world today there is so much presentation of God as a liar. Every (get that!) *every* false doctrine accuses our holy God of saying that which is not true. In His love He tells us that He created the heavens and the earth in six days. And then in that same law wherein He says this, He on Mount Sinai used the word day as to what we must do on the Sab-

bath. Our God declares that in six days which are 24 hours long we must labor, and on one day that is also 24 hours we must rest.

How then, when in that law God declares that "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested the seventh day," dare we say that in one instance the word day means thousands upon thousands of years, and in the other instance it means only 24 hours? When in a sentence or paragraph we read the word ounce several times, may we call one of these ounces a pound, when the author in no way indicates that he means a pound? God Himself *nowhere* in Scripture indicates that by six days of creating He means thousands of years rather than six 24-hour days! Shall we then listen to unbelieving men of this world instead of to our God who certainly could have pointed out that He means years instead of hours in those days?

Turn to Luke 1:21. What a humanly impossible miracle! Mary will conceive and bear a son without any contact with a man! And she believed, when the angel said that this miracle would take place. Why should we not believe God's word when He speaks of days, not years, in Genesis 1 and 2 and in His law in Exodus 20? Could not our God, who had the power to bring forth our Savior in this humanly impossible way, create the world in six days of 24 hours? And shall we listen to unbelieving scientists rather than to our God? Shall we believe what men who reject the whole Bible say of God, and let them explain what God meant?

These false doctrines should cause us to weep. We should walk as Abraham and Sarah did as presented in Hebrews 11, not as they did as recorded in Genesis 17 and 18. Let us in our hearts laugh because of what our God did through His Son. Let us weep about the sin and works of unbelief that cause us to laugh at worldly things of unbelief. What Abraham and Sarah did when told that they would have a son is a shadow of the worldliness and false doctrines Satan brings into the church-world today. There

is that proper weeping and laughing which ought to be found in us.

Be sure then that you laugh at the right time and weep for the proper reason. Let the truth of what God promises you in Christ

fill you with joy, and let your sins cause you to weep, because you know them as acts of hatred against our true and holy God. Let your sins fill you with grief, and the gifts of God's grace in Christ

build up the spiritual joy within your soul. Such weeping and laughing glorify God and reveal that He is glorifying you. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

Are you as anxious for the arrival of some spring weather as I am? I know that for us in the Midwest, about the time March rolls around we all have had enough cold and snow. Well, we can all take heart; spring can't be too far off. At least that's what some of our churches think. Several of our congregations have already scheduled their annual picnics. And our PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada has even made plans for a golf tournament between themselves and the congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Instead of a Christmas Party during the busy month of December, the party committee of the Jr. and Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Societies of our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI decided on a post-holiday party. Plans called for a night of volleyball and games at Heritage Christian School, followed by pizza and a make-your-own sundae for dessert.

On January 11 the young people of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA sponsored a special appreciation for all the support received from the members for last summer's Young People's Convention. This was not a fund-raiser. It was a thank-you from the young people. The congregation was invited to come out for a nice time of fellow-

ship and a good meal consisting of barbecued hamburgs and other good things to eat.

About this time every year our churches come out with new membership directories for their congregations. Well, it seems that the members of our Randolph, WI PRC made arrangements for a pictorial directory last fall. However, they were informed by the company that after printing the black and white pictures for the directory the negatives were damaged. This accident meant that the company would be unable to supply Randolph with their free pictures and the pictures that were ordered. They would however receive the directory.

And, also from Randolph, there were two related announcements on bulletins in January. One, a thank-you to those who painted and cleaned the church basement, and another asking for help in painting the inside of the parsonage.

The young people of our South Holland, IL PRC sponsored a ski trip on February 2 to Hot Dog Mountain, near Lake Geneva, WI. From the announcement, it looks as if the young people from Bethel and Peace PRC were also invited to attend.

School Activities

Dr. Arden Ruth Post, Education Professor at Calvin College, spoke for the P.T.A. of Hope PRC Christian School on February 7, and one week later she spoke for the P.T.A.

of Heritage Christian School. She spoke on ways to improve your child's learning at home. She stressed what she called the five "A's." 1. Attitude, 2. Atmosphere at Home, 3. Attention to Need, 4. Acceptance of child, and 5. Ability to communicate.

Ministerial Calls

The congregation of our Randolph, WI PRC called Rev. S. Key to be their pastor. With Rev. Key on the trio were Revs. M. Kamps and G. VanBaren.

The Council of our Hudsonville, MI PRC formed a new trio from which one was to be called to serve as missionary in Northern Ireland. This trio consisted of Revs. C. Haak, S. Key, and D. Kuiper. A congregational meeting was to be held February 24.

At a Congregational Meeting after the evening service on Sunday, February 17, the congregation of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI called Rev. Haak to serve as missionary to Jamaica, from a trio of Revs. B. Gritters, C. Haak, and R. Moore.

Rev. Haak declined the call he was considering to serve as pastor to the congregation of Hope PRC in Isabel, SD.

And, finally, Rev. Cammenga received the call to serve as missionary to the Venice, FL area from the Kalamazoo, MI PRC. On trio with Rev. Cammenga were the Revs. Korter and Moore. □

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

TEACHERS NEEDED

Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of an elementary grade teacher for the 1991-1992 school year. If interested, please send resume to the school (1150 Adams St. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507) or contact Mr. Peter Hoekstra, administrator, at the school (616) 452-0523.

NOTICE!!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan is offering up to \$200,000 in notes to finance the renovation of the school.

5-year notes: 8.0%;

10-year notes: 8.5%

These notes will be issued in multiples of \$1,000, payable on demand with interest paid semi-annually.

For further information, please call or write:

Gordon Schipper
3007 Willow Creek Dr.
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 531-2322

or the school office:
1545 Wilson Avenue S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
(616) 453-9717

NOTICE!!!

All standing and special committees of Synod, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1991, are hereby notified that all material for the 1991 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to the Stated Clerk:

Rev. M. Joostens
2016 Tekonsha S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

"Jehovah Tsidkenu"* "The Lord Our Righteousness"

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load;
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage.
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,
Isaiah's wild measure and John's simple page,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul;
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree
"Jehovah Tsidkenu": 't was nothing to me.

When grace awoke me, by light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die;
No refuge nor safety in self could I see,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my Savior must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet name,
My guilty fears banished with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free;
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" is all things to me.

"Jehovah Tsidkenu!" my treasure and boast,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu!" I ne'er can be lost:
In thee I shall conquer, by flood and by field,
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate, and shield.

Even treading the valley, the shadow of death,
This "watchword" shall rally my faltering breath;
For if from life's fever my God set me free,
"Jehovah Tsidkenu" my death song shall be.

*Jer. 23:6, margin—SB, 1929