

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



Interdenominational Conference

The Reformed Doctrine of Holy Scripture

See "All Around Us"—page 105

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In This Issue ...

A contribution by Rev. denHartog in this issue makes it possible for us to share, in a small measure, in what he describes as having been an exciting opportunity and privilege to labor for several weeks on our Jamaican mission field. Unhappily, our fields often seem rather far removed when we have no missionaries working in them and reporting to us regularly concerning the progress of the gospel as we are privileged to proclaim it. Fact of the matter is, this is not simply a matter of *perception*. What progress can there be in a field which is left to fend for itself ten months out of the year? What progress can there be in a field (like Larne or Venice) in which the best we can provide is "pulpit supply" for Sunday services? "One thing," writes Rev. denHartog at the end of his report "stands out above all." And that one thing is the "great need for a missionary." May we heed his exhortation to be fervent in prayer that God will provide! Meanwhile, our hope is that his report to First Church and the Mission Committee, revised slightly by Rev. denHartog for use in the *Standard Bearer*, will serve to bring this one field closer to home—to our minds, and to our hearts.

D.D.



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
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Charles Terpstra, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin
Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49418
PH: (616) 538-1778
(616) 531-1490
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed
Church
B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

Standing in God's Holy Place

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Psalm 24:3-5

Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah?

Who shall stand in His holy place?

These questions force us to examine our spiritual condition.

Are you ascending Jehovah's hill in order to stand in His holy place? I can't imagine a more personal yet more serious question.

Jehovah's holy place is the place where He embraces us, He speaks His word of comfort to us, He assures us that we are His dear children and He is our God.

It is heaven on earth and, in the future, heaven to be experienced in its fullness.

The only way to get there is to ascend Jehovah's hill.

May God use these words to excite us to such spiritual heights.

Yes, this passage is full of Old Testament typology. The Psalmist David, who penned these words through divine inspiration, had a spe-

cific place in mind. It was on top of a hill. He properly calls it "his holy place." Elsewhere in the Bible it is called "Zion's holy hill" (see Psalm 2:6). It was the place where the tent stood and where eventually the beautiful temple of Solomon was built. The people had to ascend this hill in order to enter the temple. Within this temple, God kept covenant with His people. Here heaven and earth embraced each other, as justice and mercy kissed each other. It symbolized all that God's covenant was meant to be, His tender friendship with His people as it was sanctioned in divine love.

Little wonder then that it is called Jehovah's place. It was not made by man, neither by a cooperative act of God and man. Rather, it was a place which God made in divine sovereignty. It is exclusively divine, and only those people inhabit this place who are divinely drawn.

Since this is Jehovah's place it takes on the character of His Being, it is holy! On the foreground here is not only the greatness of God as Creator. God's greatness is mentioned in verses 1, 2: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Verses 3-5, on the other hand, note more particularly the virtues of God as covenant friend. God's friendship is expressed perfectly within the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That covenant is holy, it is without sin and only good. The triune God is so consecrated to Himself as the highest and only good that His friendship is expressed within these boundaries. Outside of holiness, God is a God of

judgment and condemnation and He pours out His wrath unto destruction. This applies particularly to man. God's place for man is a holy place. How graphically this was portrayed at Mt. Sinai. A boundary had to be placed around the holy mountain, so that when God would come down to talk to Moses, no sinner would transgress that sacred ground. The lightning, thunder, smoke, earthquake all heralded the presence of the holy God. The Shekinah (the pillar of cloud and fire which accompanied Israel through the wilderness sojourn) came down upon the temple that Solomon later built (see II Chronicles 7:3).

And where is such a place today?

It was not God's purpose to preserve the temple; for when Jesus fulfilled all types, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and ended the typical holiness. Subsequently, the army of Caesar followed the example of his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar and destroyed the temple for all ages.

To the Samaritan woman, who had opined, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," Jesus said, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John 4:20-24. God has made the human heart His holy place. No

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

longer is it the outward place which is important; now it is the condition of the human heart which is important. The human heart has become the temple of God, and by the Spirit of Jesus man is able to worship God spiritually and in truth.

God in His wisdom has provided places in which man can express this worship. Ultimately, the hill of Jehovah and the holy place of God is in heaven. There the covenant of God is made perfect. There God reflects His holiness not only in the holiness of the angels, but also in the holiness of the people of God. Even the place itself is consecrated to God, for all evidence of sin is removed, the devils are cast out, and the sinful nature of God's people has been shed by death. This is not to say that we have to wait until we get to heaven in order to enjoy ascending the hill of Jehovah and standing in His holy place. We have a foretaste of this in our worship on the Lord's Day. When we gather to sing, to pray, to offer our gifts, to attend to the gospel, and especially to sit at God's table, we begin to enjoy the activity of covenant friendship with God. Returning to our homes from such holy activity, we continue to enjoy such friendship with God in our personal worship, our family worship, yea, in our entire life of consecration to God.

The question persists, "Who shall ascend and stand in this holy place?" As we mentioned, the ascending was literally walking up the hill that led to the temple, and the standing is a reference to worship. The people entered the court of the temple for worship, and they worshiped in a standing position. Who can do this? Who has a right to enter the house of God, to enjoy the preaching of the gospel, to sit at His table, and ultimately to enter into heaven?

The answer is, those who are perfect, who are holy.

Notice the detail: mention is made of the heart, the soul, the tongue, and the hands. From the inside out, the one who stands in worship of Jehovah is to be without sin. The heart is the inner spiritual source which

gives direction to our entire spiritual life. Just as the physical heart pumps blood (oxygen) to all the cells of the body to sustain life, so the spiritual heart pumps the energy of covenant fellowship, love, to all the parts of our spiritual being: our soul, our tongue, and our hands.

Each part of our being is described as having to be perfect. Who can ascend the hill? He that has a *pure* heart. Jesus included this as fundamental to the kingdom of heaven: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Such a person loves God with the best of motives — not to seek recognition for self, not to save himself, not to avoid the fear of hell, but rather for God's sake. He loves God because He knows God so intimately and so wonderfully that He readily acknowledges that His chief purpose in this life is to glorify God, to be used by God for His purpose, to advance His cause and kingdom in this world, and to bring praise and recognition to God alone. More follows: "He has not lifted up his soul to vanity." Our soul life is our thinking, our planning, that which makes us happy and in which we delight. The man who climbs Jehovah's hill must have such a soul that he is not influenced by the guile and deceit of fallen man which emphasizes the fun, the pleasure of sin, but rather he delights in God's law. His great joy is to walk with God. His songs are Zion's songs. His goal is not the wealth of this world, but to spend his money in the causes of God's kingdom and the advancement of the gospel. His friends are not the ungodly, but the people of God. Hence it is also added, "He has not sworn deceitfully." The oath, the promises made, are the real test of character. This man does what he says he will do. He is trustworthy and reliable, a man of his word. And finally, "He has clean hands." The hands represent our actions, our work. When we have clean hands, we are doing the right thing in our daily lives.

Does this describe you?

There is no more important place than Jehovah's holy place. And from

this description, there is no place harder to reach than this hill. From our natural point of view we know that the way to it is closed. No man can do what is required to climb this hill and stand in worship of Jehovah. Look at verse 5, where God is described as, "The God of His salvation."

Salvation is of the Lord.

He saves us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

David wrote this Psalm on the occasion of the ark being brought to Jerusalem. In verse 7 he expresses it, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the king of glory shall come in." The ark had the mercy seat on which the blood of the lamb was sprinkled every year. It typified Jesus on the cross and His ascension into heaven. Truly, He is the Lord of Glory! In Jesus our debt of sin is taken away, and we are made clean. By the Spirit of Jesus, our hearts are regenerated and made pure, our souls are edified by the gospel, our hands and tongues are sanctified for the purpose of glorifying God now, and in the day of our death we will have an even greater perfection in heaven.

In Jesus we are made fit for God's presence.

Rejoice then, O saints, in what we begin to experience already now. Proof of our holiness now is a sincere sorrow of heart for sins committed, and an effort put forth to walk in a new and holy life.

The covenant blessings which are ours for Jesus' sake are righteousness. That is, we are declared to be holy on the basis of His perfect work. And following this are the blessings of the God of our salvation, the forgiveness of our sins, the unction of His Spirit, and the joys of being the children of God, and ultimately the glory of heaven.

Is this Jesus yours?

Faith in this Jesus is the only way to climb the hill of Jehovah and stand in His holy place.

Now we begin to sing already, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

All praise to the God of our salvation. □

Editorial

The Standard Bearer: Holding the Traditions (3)

(The previous editorial closed by contending that a living, genuine holding of the traditions takes place only in the way of our constant, free interpretation of the Bible. The church holds fast what has been handed over to her by going back to Scripture. — Ed.)

When this free interpretation of Scripture goes on, it is possible that the tradition that has come down to a Reformed church is both corrected and developed.

Holding the traditions is not a static activity. It is not the same as preserving a family heirloom. We may not hold the traditions as the servant of Luke 19 kept his lord's pound, laid up in a napkin.

The Reformed tradition is not only to be preserved, but it must also, and can also, be developed. Then Scripture itself is not enriched, but the form in which the truth of Scripture has come down to us is purified and enriched. We may view this as the sanctification of the tradition: Error is purged and true knowledge is deepened and increased.

Herman Hoeksema urged the development of doctrine in the church. The duty of the theologian is "by means of the study of Scripture ... to enrich and to bring the dogma of the church to a fuller development" (*Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 4). What is more, there has been development of the Christian, particularly the Reformed, tradition in the Protestant Reformed Churches. I mention three outstanding instances: the particularity and sovereignty of grace; the

doctrine of the covenant of grace; and the holiness of the Christian life in marriage. In each of these areas of truth, there has been real development. Never before has the truth been so clearly expressed, so fully developed, and so purely confessed. Confusion and inconsistencies have been cleared up. There has been correction of the tradition as it has been held by the church in the past, including the PRC.

*The Reformed tradition
is not only to be preserved,
but it must also,
and can also,
be developed.*

During the doctrinal controversy in the early 1950s in which the PRC maintained the unconditionality of the covenant of grace, particularly with regard to the children of believers, some thought to move the PRC to a conditional covenant conception by finding conditional expressions in the early writings of the leading PR theologians. With some searching, these expressions could be found. But they were inconsistent with the heart and overall thrust of the theology of the PRC, as well as with the central concerns of the theologians who used these expressions. The PRC remained true to their own distinctive theology from the beginning, to say nothing of the historic Reformed Theology, when they confessed an unconditional covenant with believers and their elect

children. They applied sovereign grace to salvation within the sphere of the covenant. And one aspect of the development of the tradition was its purification from careless, or even inconsistent, expressions.

Correction of the tradition within the PRC themselves also characterizes the development of the doctrine of marriage in these churches. Early in his ministry in the PRC, Herman Hoeksema adopted the traditional Dutch Reformed stand that marriage was an unbreakable bond, except in the case of the fornication of one's mate. He held that the "innocent party" is at liberty to remarry. In 1933, Hoeksema defended this position in the *Standard Bearer* (cf. Volume 9, pp. 374ff. and pp. 424ff.). Later, however, he repudiated his former stand and ardently advocated the position that marriage is a bond that cannot be broken except by death, so that even the "innocent party" may not remarry while the original mate is living. The reason for his change, he himself tells us in his pamphlet, "The Unbreakable Bond of Marriage":

... without considering the matter very thoroughly I used to agree with the old stand.... At that time I did not confront the question very definitely, and did not consider it very deeply.... After considering the whole matter in the light of Scripture, however, I must now radically oppose this position. And against this stand I now take the position that marriage is forever unbreakable, is always for life, no matter what happens (pp. 12, 13).

His interpretation of the texts on marriage and divorce and his demon-

stration of the biblical comparison between the covenant of marriage and the covenant of grace between Christ and the church led the PRC to their present position, that marriage is an unbreakable bond between one man and one woman for life.

In these areas, and others, we believe, there has been real development of the tradition.

For us, therefore, holding the traditions means faithfulness to the Reformed tradition as it has developed in the PRC.

This bears on our relationships with "conservatives," especially in the Christian Reformed Church. Although personally we share some of their concerns and although personally we show brotherliness, there can never be ecclesiastical relationships that ignore the development of the faith over the past 65 years in the PRC, much less relationships that set aside this development in order to bring about a union on a pre-1924 basis.

This is out of the question for us. We are convinced that the Holy Spirit has been working in our history, unworthy though we are, to preserve and to develop the Reformed tradition. Through the controversies, the tradition has been purified and enriched. There is for us no going back. To do so would be disobedience to the ringing apostolic command, "hold the traditions."

But I dare say that in the end the

"conservatives" in the CRC will find it impossible to solve their present problems by turning the clock back 70 years. A pre-1924 position is no longer an option at the end of the 20th century. Just as the truth of particular, sovereign grace has been working for almost 70 years in the PRC, so also the contrary notions embodied in the doctrine of common grace have been developing in the CRC, as well as in many other Reformed and Presbyterian churches world-wide.

*The issue now is stark:
Is the one grace of God
in Christ
for the elect alone,
or is it for every man?*

The issue at the end of the 20th century for Reformed churches is not, and never again will be, whether there is a grace of God for the reprobate that is qualitatively different from the saving grace shown to the elect. The issue now is stark: Is the one grace of God in Christ for the elect alone, or is it for every man? The issue is pure particularism versus sheer universalism.

The issue now is a firm, defiant opposition to the ungodly world and its ways (the antithesis), denying any grace operative in that world, or hoist-

ing the flag of surrender to the world as though the Spirit of God is found in the world rather than in the church. Is not this what it means to accept the world's judgment of Scripture as a human, fallible book against the Reformed church's creedal confession that Scripture is the inspired Word of God? Is this not what it means that evolution is accepted as the explanation of the origin of the universe, rather than the church's doctrine of creation? Is this not the meaning of the embrace of feminism for the regulation of home and church, rejecting the apostles' teaching — foundation of the church! — concerning the headship of the husband in the home and the government of the church by qualified men?

The hard facts of church life today show that restricting remarriage to the "innocent party," whose mate is guilty of fornication, is not any longer a realistic option, if indeed it ever was. Now it is either the "hard-nosed" stand of the PRC that marriage is a life-long bond in every case or the permission of divorce and remarriage for "innocent" and "guilty" alike.

Since these are the issues and since we view these issues in light of the apostolic warning that a falling away precedes the coming of Christ, we are all the more determined to hold the traditions. □

—DJE

A Cloud Of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

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

Francis of Assisi: Medieval Saint

The legends began the day Francis died. He was sainted (1228) by the medieval church; artists and poets added to this beatification by granting to Francis an almost unparalleled place in the history of Christianity.

The painter Giotto depicted him as the one who most suffered the wounds of Christ. Dante placed him above the doctors and founders of medieval orders in his *Divine Comedy* (c. 1305). Francis was so cel-

ebred as the perfect imitator of Christ that the Protestant Reformers believed memory of him usurped the place of Christ in popular piety.¹

The story of Francis of Assisi is one of those strange and troubling stories that create in one who reads it admiration mixed with puzzlement. His life was in some respects what the Christian life ought to be; it was in other respects so contrary to genuine piety that one shrinks from it with some revulsion. It was the life of an unusual medieval saint.

Francis was born in an important town in central Italy called Assisi to wealthy parents in the year 1182. His father, Pietro de Barnadone, was a textile merchant who travelled extensively, mostly to France, to increase the family fortunes. His mother, aristocrat by birth, was named Pica and enjoyed the society life of her city, while having little, if any, significant influence on her eldest son's spiritual development. Francis was baptized Giovanni, but renamed Francisco, apparently to express Pietro's love for France.

Francis received an education open to the wealthy and elite, but profited little from it. He was much too involved in the gay life of a wealthy merchant's son and the youthful exploits of those who have little else to do with their time than get into mischief.

Italy was by no means a unified nation, and the rivalry between various commercial cities was fierce. So bitter was the rivalry between Assisi and Perugia, a nearby commercial city, that war broke out. Francis quickly joined the forces of Assisi and rode forth to battle. He was captured and held hostage for a year, but was released when a ransom was paid for him. He was about 21 at the time.

It seems as if Francis entered a period of spiritual struggle and se-

vere self-doubt. While wanting to fight again, he was dissuaded by inner turmoil which made his past life seem empty and useless, but which gave him no direction as to his future.

In 1205 Francis journeyed to Rome on a pilgrimage and spent some delightful hours among the holy shrines in the center of Christendom. But one incident disturbed him beyond reason. Meeting a begging leper in the streets, he was moved by the destitution of this despised member of society, and, after steeling himself to kiss the leper's hand, he exchanged his own clothes for the rags of the leper to experience himself what destitution was.

Returning to Assisi, Francis was praying in the church of St. Damian when he heard Christ telling him to rebuild the house of God. This seemed to make some sense to him, for the small chapel of St. Damian was humble, rudely furnished, and in some disrepair. Later he was to realize that Christ was referring to the corrupt medieval church rather than the chapel in which he was praying. But for the time being he decided that he would devote himself to rebuilding that chapel and to ministering to the needs of the outcasts which lived on the edges of Assisi.

The trouble was that he needed money for this project; and so, to finance his work, he sold all his possessions and some of the textiles of his father. His father did not think too highly of this and was, in fact, disgusted with a son who seemed to him to be a lazy ne'er-do-well. Pietro brought the matter to the local bishop, accusing his son of theft. Francis was ordered by the bishop to restore the money that belonged to his father and make proper restitution. In what can only be interpreted as a gesture of defiance, Francis stripped every stitch of his clothing from his body, tossed everything he owned on to the pile, and told the bishop to give it to his father, while he left the house stark naked. His words as he left were: "Up to this time I have called Pietro Barnadone father, but now I desire to serve God and to say nothing else

than 'Our Father which art in heaven.'" So far as we know, he had nothing more to do with his parents from that day.

The incident was, however, a turning point in his life. After spending some years with lepers in the nearby village of Gubbio, he returned to Assisi to rebuild some churches and live as a hermit. Poverty now became for him a way of life. In 1208 he was listening to a sermon on Matthew 10:7-19, a few verses of which read: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat." Especially the call to preach and the call to live a life of poverty struck like fire into his soul.

From that day on he was to be a traveling preacher who literally owned nothing. Others, attracted to him, soon joined. The first to join was an extremely wealthy town councilor called Bernard who doubted Francis' sincerity. As the story goes, he invited Francis to his house to spend the night. He gave Francis his own room in a lavishly furnished villa and watched what Francis would do in the night hours. Francis arose from his luxurious bed as soon as the house was quiet and spent the rest of the night on his knees in prayer. Bernard was persuaded, and, selling all his possessions, joined Francis as a traveling preacher. When others joined, they called themselves "The Little Friars" and requested from Pope Innocent III permission to be recognized as a monastic order. The story is told that Pope Innocent III (the mightiest pope the world has ever seen, and the clearest picture of Antichrist up to today), unimpressed with what appeared to him to be nothing but a group of beggars, told Francis to go wallow with the pigs and preach to them. Even though Innocent may have been expressing his contempt,

¹Quoted from *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, ed. by John D. Woodbridge; Moody Press, 1988; p. 160.

Francis followed his instructions and returned with the same request, which then was granted.

So began one of the greatest of all monastic orders, the Franciscans. It became known as a "Mendicant Order" because of its vows of absolute poverty which required its members to obtain their daily needs by begging. The rules of the order were very simple. While like other orders with their vows of obedience and chastity, the Franciscans distinguished themselves by vows of absolute poverty. Francis insisted that no one in the order own anything at all. Personal property was absolutely forbidden. Even their clothes which they wore were to be given to others in greater need than themselves. They might not carry with them the smallest coin. They might not keep the least crumb of bread; if any food was left after their meal they had to give it to the poor. They might own no buildings or shelters. They even had to walk barefoot.

Francis was convinced that poverty was the great way of following the example of Christ and the lofty ideal of the imitation of Christ. Given the fact that the corruption in the church was due to its immense wealth, they sought reform through poverty.

Francis, however, hated idleness; and so he insisted that his fellow monks be constantly busy. They were to be busy traveling, preaching, administering to the needs of the poor and outcasts of society, washing the dirty lepers, feeding the starving, and helping the downtrodden. They were to do their work cheerfully and they were to treat every man, even their enemies, with courtesy. They were to avoid all pomp and outward show and be happily content with their poverty. This latter was demonstrated vividly when a well-known follower of Francis was greeted at the entrance of a city with a large and magnificent parade of clergy and prelates. He promptly went into a nearby field and played on a see-saw with some small boys until the entire parade disbanded in consternation.

Two other sub-orders were

formed during Francis' lifetime: one was for women who wanted to practice the same ideals. It was organized by Clare Schifi in 1212 and was called, "The Poor Clares." The other was an order for laymen who wanted to live in poverty along with Francis and his brothers, but who were not permitted to preach.

Francis himself was a very simple person. He feared education as a spiritual threat and discouraged his followers from pursuing it. He, though often hungry and dressed in rags, though living in a body wracked with pain, was himself always cheerful. He had a deep appreciation and love for God's creation, and one could find him from time to time in the woods alone talking to the birds and the squirrels about the things of God. He once told the birds: "Brother birds, you ought to love and praise your Creator very much. He has given you feathers for clothing, wings for flying, and all things that can be of use to you. You have neither to sow, nor to reap, and yet He takes care of you." He had the ability to laugh at himself and he could recognize the foibles of human nature. He called his body, "Brother Ass," and often gently chided it for its apparent weaknesses.

The brotherhood spread like wildfire throughout Europe and soon went beyond the control of Francis. While Francis was off to try to do mission work among the Mohammedans in Egypt, unscrupulous prelates in the Romish hierarchy gained control of the Franciscans and organized them into a much more rule-bound and controlled organization than Francis wanted. They also forced the movement to change its rules so that the members could own property — the one thing Francis feared the most. When he returned from Egypt, he found these alterations destroying all he had wanted for his movement. Unable to summon the energy and verve necessary to fight the dark and powerful forces of the church, he lived in sadness the remaining days of his life and died of a broken heart at the age of 44.

One of his enduring master-

pieces was his "Canticle to the Sun." Written when he was under severe temptation and going blind, it expressed his great love of God's world. A few lines will give us some sense of it.

O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to Thee belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all His creatures, and specially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a very great splendor: O Lord he signifies to us Thee!

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind and for air and cloud, calms and all weather by the which Thou upholdest life in all creatures.

Praise ye and bless the Lord, and give thanks unto Him and serve Him with great humility.

This song was the inspiration for the well-known hymn: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation."

Francis himself was the closest one could come to the monastic ideal. I think sometimes such a life can conceivably appear to be attractive to those who are concerned about spirituality in the midst of carnality and worldliness. It may seem to be the way to piety, and, indeed, it may, because of its great difficulty, seem to be the path of godliness. In fact this is not the case. God does not call us to express piety in poverty, and godliness in a denial of this earth's goods. As a matter of fact, the way of Francis is not the hard way, but the easy way. The hard way to which we are called is the way of being in the world but not of it; of taking God's good gifts and with thanksgiving using them in God's service; of possessing a house and clothes, but seeking in all things, even with our earthly possessions, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is the hard way, but the way of obedience and the way approved by God. □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

Conference on Holy Scripture

As most of our readers know, the Protestant Reformed Seminary



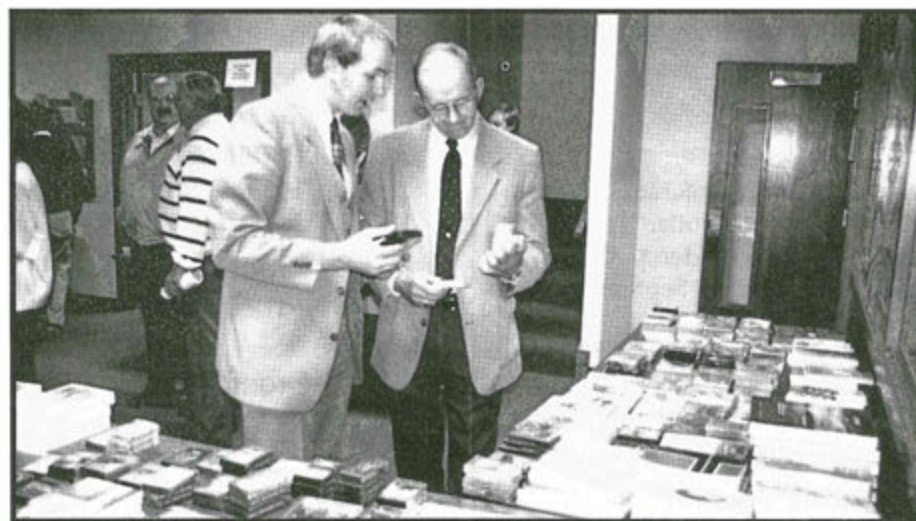
Rev. Audred Spriensma leads devotions

sponsored a conference on the Reformed Doctrine of Holy Scripture. The conference was convened on October 30 and adjourned Friday, November 1. It was held at the South-west Protestant Reformed Church, which is located just to the north of the seminary. The sanctuary was full, or nearly so, for all of the lectures and discussions. Prof. Decker gave an introductory lecture on "The Reformed Doctrine of the Inspiration of



Dr. Nelson Kloosterman lectures

Holy Scripture"; Prof. Hanko spoke on "A Reformed Hermeneutic"; Dr. Nelson Kloosterman (Professor of Ethics at Mid-America Reformed Seminary) lectured on "Holy Scripture and Ethics"; and Prof. Engelsma concluded with a lecture on "Genesis 1-11: Myth or History." Various denominations were represented.



Roelof Janssen (Inheritance Publications) displays wares

Ministers and lay people came from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the Protestant Reformed Churches. Attenders came from as far away as Georgia, Missouri, New York, Colorado, Mississippi, Iowa, and Washington.

The response to the conference was overwhelmingly positive. Some of those in attendance are urging the Seminar to sponsor such a conference annually.

CRC Losing Churches

At its annual synod in June of 1990 the Christian Reformed Church in North America, which numbers some 900 congregations with a total membership of some 315,000 in the U.S. and Canada, decided to open all offices of the church to women. This decision came after some twenty years of studying the issue. The decision will be implemented in 1992, assuming that the CRC synod ratifies its decision of 1990 and makes the necessary changes in the Church Order. The synod of 1991 voted by a sizable majority to maintain its decision of 1990, in spite of the fact that it was faced with numerous overtures objecting to this decision.

The CR synod of 1991 also adopted a study committee report on the creation/science issue which exonerates the Calvin College professors whose teachings and writings precipitated the study.

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

These two decisions have caused no small stir among the membership of the CRC. Several sizable congregations have decided to sever relations with the CRC and exist, at least for the time being, as independent congregations. Among these are First CRC (Pastor, Rev. Jelle Tuininga) in Lethbridge, Alberta and Trinity CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario. Each of these churches numbers some 150 families. Earlier 17 families from Calvary CRC in Flamborough and from Calvin CRC in Dundas, Ontario withdrew from these congregations and formed an independent Reformed Church. This congregation called Rev. Jerome Julien to be their pastor. Julien accepted the call and left the CRC (Flamborough). The congregation now has some forty families. There are other congregations who have publicly stated that if and when the decision on women is ratified in 1992 they will leave the CRC.

Within the CRC some of the conservative ministers and consistories have formed the Christian Reformed Alliance in an attempt to foster unity among themselves and to combat the liberalism in their denomination.

Will another Reformed denomination be formed? How many will actually follow those who have already left the denomination? Only the Lord knows. We shall have to wait and see.

From the Protestant Reformed Churches' perspective, we do not glory in the troubles experienced by the mother church and by our concerned brothers and sisters in that denomination. Our fervent prayer is that God will yet work a miracle, causing the CRC to re-examine the history of 1924-1926 when three ministers and their consistories were unjustly suspended and deposed (expelled from the CRC) because they in the interest of maintaining the particular character of God's sovereign grace in Christ for the elect and the doctrine of the antithesis refused to be silent on the issue of common grace. The fact is these men — Herman Hoeksema, Henry Danhof, and George M. Ophoff — were cast out of

the church even though according to the synod's own testimony they were "reformed in the fundamentals, but with a tendency to oneness." "

*The Banner
Christian Renewal*

Hunger and Starvation

Did you know that:

- Thirty million Africans are facing starvation this year?
- Eleven million people starve to death each year?
- Thirty-four million U.S. adults are overweight?
- Americans spent \$52 billion eating out in 1980; \$236 billion in 1990? North Americans consume an average of 3,500 calories daily; Africans consume 2,100?
- Nineteen percent of American adults are currently on diets? Those who are constantly hungry in Ethiopia, 20%; in Sudan, 20%; and in Mozambique, 30-40% of the population?
- Five and one half million children under 12 years of age in the U.S. are regularly hungry?

In the light of the above statistics we ought to be profoundly grateful to God who provides us with work so that we have more, much more than the "bread for today" for which Jesus taught us to pray. More than this, are we concerned about the hungry and starving peoples of this world. Are we laboring with our hands in order not only to receive our daily bread, but also that we "may have to give to him that needeth"? (Eph. 4:28).

Pulse

Paul K. Jewett

Dr. Jewett, professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California since 1955, died on September 10 at the age of seventy-one.

A native of Johnson City, New York, Jewett was a graduate of Wheaton College and Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). He received the Ph.D. from Harvard University.

When Jewett went to Fuller he took a strong stand on the doctrine of

Holy Scripture. Rejecting the suggestion that the Bible contained imperfections, Jewett wrote, "Jesus appeals to Scripture, to each part of Scripture, and to each element of Scripture as to an unimpeachable authority."

Later in his career his views changed radically. Jewett, in fact, was influential in the shift of Fuller Seminary from an exclusively evangelical position to a neo-evangelical position which denies the inerrancy of Scripture. At the time of his death Jewett was a member of the liberal-dominated San Gabriel Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA). □

*Christianity Today
Evangelical Times*

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Contribution

Rev. Arie denHartog

Report on Jamaica

For a long time I had been hoping for the opportunity to visit the church in Jamaica with which our churches have been laboring for a number of years. I counted it an exciting privilege therefore when Rev. Joostens and I were sent recently to the island for the purpose of conducting a seminar for the leaders of the churches there according to the decision of Synod 1990. Synod approved the holding of two such one-month seminars each year for four years. The seminar in which I participated in August and September of this year was the second to be held thus far.

I have at times seen slides and presentations of Jamaica by former missionaries and emissaries, as most of our churches in the United States have. But there is nothing like a visit to Jamaica and to the churches there to experience what life is really like on the island.

One is immediately overwhelmed by the hardships of life in Jamaica. Most of the country is very poor, especially the people of our churches. Transportation and communication is such a great problem that it is hard for us in modern America to imagine. We take so much of our way of life and prosperity for granted. The Jamaican roads are quite unbelievable, especially the mountain roads. There are potholes so big that often our little rented Mazda scraped bottom on the rocks. The driving is treacherous, even more so during the

night than in the daytime. (Just imagine narrow roads, lined on both sides with sugar cane, no street lights, cars meeting you at high speeds and not always keeping to their side of the road, pedestrians walking close to the side of the road, and more). Public transportation is by small and extremely crowded mini-buses. The buses are not very dependable. They do not run on Sundays at all. Because these privately operated buses are on such a tight budget they often have to wait in one place for enough passengers, in order to make their trips economically feasible. Very few homes have telephones. Phones are usually found only in business establishments in the cities. There are no regular mail deliveries (at least not to the homes in the countryside).

*While we in America
work to get ahead,
many of the Jamaicans
work just to exist.*

The only way you can contact the members of the churches is by visiting them. We did a lot of this the first couple of days on the island, so that I could see all the churches and become somewhat acquainted with the people and the circumstances of life in which they live. This also was the only way to talk with the leaders of the churches about our coming conference meetings.

The economy of the whole island is in a very bad way. I read in the papers that inflation was running at an annual rate of more than 120%. It takes ten Jamaican dollars to buy one

American dollar. Many people cannot find gainful employment. It is tragic to see so many able-bodied men roaming the streets. The people of the Jamaica Protestant Reformed Churches are for the most part subsistence farmers. They have very little money. The only money they have is what they can make by selling a bit of produce here and there. Food is not very plentiful. One of the pastors' families I visited in the afternoon did not eat lunch because they could not afford more than two meals a day. There is little hope in the country for economic progress. While we in America work to get ahead, many of the Jamaicans work just to exist. One of the hard facts of life is that medical care is only for the few who can afford it, no matter how urgent the need is. Many of the people of the Jamaican churches have medical needs that are not taken care of.

Much of this, I know, has been told before. I mention it all again however because one cannot understand the difficulties of the work in the Jamaican churches without always keeping this in mind.

It was most interesting for me of course to visit the churches. All the buildings of the Jamaican Protestant Reformed churches are very primitive, even compared to other churches on the island. There is certainly no evidence of their having reaped great financial gain from their relationship to our churches in America. They simply have not. The churches are in the jungle, some on the mountainsides, so that some can be reached only by walking some distance. I had before heard of cancelled worship services because of stormy weather. This became easier to understand when I

Rev. denHartog is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

was walking up the slippery rocks to Cave Mountain Church in the middle of the night. Most of the people come to church by walking, some of them quite a distance.

The worship services are radically different from anything we have ever experienced. They are quite disorderly. People do not come on time. There are drum beats to call the people to worship. The services can last more than two hours. The singing is by Jamaican tunes. There is no musical accompaniment; or, if there is any, it is drum beating. There are few song books, since many worshipers cannot read. The singing is often led by one of the relatively more educated women in the audience. When there is a minister present he will lead the singing by singing a line at a time with the congregation, then repeating the line. The audiences are usually made up of between twenty and thirty people, about the same number of men and women, a number of younger children, and here and there a few young people.

On the first Lord's day I decided just to sit in the pew so I could get a little bit of the "feel" of the situation in the churches and how to adapt my preaching to this situation and these kinds of people. We were in Cave Mountain Church on the first Lord's day. There were quite a number of discouraging things in the worship services, things we would certainly like to see changed, such as the disorderliness and the testimonials, etc. I was however pleasantly surprised and impressed by the preacher and the sermon. Young Pastor Brydson preached on Revelation 22:17. The sermon was sound and edifying. It was most thrilling to hear the distinctive influence of the Protestant Reformed training which the preacher had obviously received. I count the hearing of this sermon as one of the greatest highlights of our visit to Jamaica.

During our stay in Jamaica, Rev. Joostens and I tried to preach in as many of the churches as possible, each of us going to different churches for both the morning and evening

services. I felt the need of using quite a different style of preaching in order to be on the level of the people and to enable them to follow the messages. When I did this there was apparent contact with and understanding on the part of the audience. Attention to the preaching was good. There were always many expressions of appreciation for the Word preached. Preaching for the saints in the churches was an enjoyable experience.

*I went to Jamaica
to meet God's people there.
God's people are there
in the Jamaican churches.*

Often it took a long time for my transportation to arrive after the services (Rev. Joostens in the Mazda), since my colleague had to come quite a distance from the church in which he had preached. This too was in the Lord's providence, since it gave good opportunity for me to fellowship with the people after the services. When one does this he discovers the genuine spirituality of the people. To me this is still the bottom line of everything. I went to Jamaica to meet God's people there. God's people are there in the Jamaican churches. They are different from us. They are, for the most part, uneducated and very poor, but they are God's people. No, this is not evident in all who come to the service; but it is evident in many. There are saints of God who have been in the churches for all the years that the Protestant Reformed Churches have labored there. They expressed deep appreciation for what we have done for them. They have spiritually benefited from the years of missionary labors and other work of our churches.

The greatest part of our work was of course the teaching at the conferences. About 16 to 18 brethren attended regularly. Most of them were pastors, elders, and deacons of the churches. In keeping with our mandate, we gave instruction in the

six loci of Reformed doctrine. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching the brethren. The courses were very intensive. Meetings were from nine to five every day, with short morning and afternoon breaks, as well as one hour lunch breaks. We all stayed at the Orchard Great House, where we also had our meals together. So we had ample opportunity to get to know the brethren in an informal way as well. It does not take long to come to love these men as brethren in the Lord and to enjoy Christian fellowship with them.

The teaching sessions went well. The attention was usually quite good — except sometime in the middle of the hot afternoons when people understandably got a bit sleepy. There were times of lively and interesting discussion and debate. What impressed me the most, and even at times overwhelmed me, was the fact that, though these men are mostly simple and uneducated, they could converse on Reformed doctrine. There was a good measure of understanding of Reformed doctrine, and an unmistakable love of and appreciation for the Reformed faith. Let us not underestimate the wonder of this — first of all because it is God-wrought, and secondly because this is the clearest evidence of the fruit that the Lord has given upon the years of labors of our churches in Jamaica. There is a real desire to grow in understanding of the Reformed faith.

In addition to the daytime sessions there were also several evening sessions on topics that Rev. Joostens and I considered necessary and worthwhile. We had, for example, a session on Christian family living. There was great interest in this subject, though it had been addressed often by missionaries and emissaries in the past. Jamaican society in general has very few traditional families. Fornication and adultery are rampant. The churches are struggling to teach Christian principles for family living that are quite foreign to what one finds in the world around them. The people that are presently in the Jamaican churches have been gathered from

the world. They do not have strong family backgrounds. Most of them came from homes where mother ruled and father was gone, or even where there never was a marriage. To establish Christian homes in a culture such as Jamaica's is very difficult. Most of the young people are not staying with the churches. They must go to school in the cities to advance their education. For obvious reasons, few return to the country after they are educated. If any do remain with the church, they attend city churches which are, of course, much more progressive. Anyway, we stressed again the great importance of families for the continuation of the church. But this remains an extremely difficult problem for the Jamaican churches.

We also had a special session on "Principles of Reformed Worship." This subject generated such great interest and discussion that we spent two evenings on it. We made an outline of some of the main principles of Reformed worship and discussed with the brethren the need of continued diligent work to eliminate from their worship services things that are not biblical. One has to be in Jamaica to appreciate how hard this is to do. One can condemn many things that are wrong in the worship services. But then work also has to be done to replace what is condemned. This is not always so easy. We can try to eliminate all the drums. But then there are no musical instruments at all, and few that know very much about music. Even if we would supply all the churches with instruments, we would still have to do extensive work to train someone in each congregation to play them. There is, to my knowledge, no one in any of the churches who has ever had any lessons to play any sort of musical instrument. We drew up a basic order of worship which we urged the brethren to work hard at implementing in all of the churches.

We also had evening sessions with just the pastors of the churches, to discuss the various problems in the churches. These were good sessions. The ministers are very definitely of

differing abilities. Most still need a lot of help in their ministry. We still need to give them much more instruction. At these sessions we also discussed at length the need of the churches themselves and particularly the pastors to do community evangelism. This is, of course, as difficult in Jamaica as it is in the United States. We did find the rural people in general friendly and ready to talk with us, something which could be of great advantage for community evangelism.

The matter of the support of the ministers remains a really difficult problem. The congregations are just so poor they can contribute very little to support their ministers. This is not so much because of their unwillingness as it is just because of their extremely limited resources. Furthermore, all the congregations are as small or smaller than the churches in our own denomination that receive subsidy. Because the ministers have to work to support themselves, they have far too little time for sermon preparation and other work in the church.

The great need for the church of Jamaica is the gospel ...

I could write so much more about what we experienced in the three very busy weeks we were in Jamaica, but this article is already very long. There is certainly reason for us to continue our work in Jamaica, mainly because God has His people in the churches there. Furthermore, there is great need for continued instruction in the Word of God and development of the truth in all the churches. The leaders of the churches need further instruction, guidance, and help. The need of the churches in Jamaica should be the greatest reason for us not to abandon them but to help them with the resources and the heritage of the truth God has given to us. There were instances where the brethren literally begged for more help. There were

those who asked the question, "Why do our churches who have such a wonderful truth not do more to help on the island of Jamaica?" That was a question we found difficult to answer.

The great need for the church of Jamaica is the gospel, and the truth of God's Word to grow in and be strengthened and encouraged with. We remain convinced also that we should continue to seek ways in which we can help with the material need that is in the churches and among God's people there. We may not with hard and callous heart turn away from the very obvious and real material need. We have learned a lot over the years about one of the most difficult aspects of doing mission work in a country such as Jamaica, that is, how to administer material help in proper relationship to the preaching of the gospel. We must, however, continue to be very careful that we do not deny the gospel that we preach by a careless attitude toward the material need of the saints in Jamaica. It is my opinion that the danger of doing this is far greater than the danger of giving too much money or of sometimes making a few mistakes in how material assistance is administered.

There is one thing that stands out above all. There is a great need for a missionary or, better, two missionaries for Jamaica. There is great need for doing much more extensive work among the churches in Jamaica than we have done in the past. Our work is not finished. The need of the churches in Jamaica is very great. We must be in earnest prayer that the Lord will send a missionary to Jamaica. As long as there is no missionary, the conferences that have been held and are planned for the future serve a good purpose, at least in a limited measure, to continue the training of the leaders of the churches. They also serve greatly to encourage the saints in the churches and to do much to maintain the bond with our churches. □

Guest Article

Rev. Richard Moore

Unbelief's Attempt to Dismiss Sin (1)

The occasion for this paper is the notification given to me that an acquaintance of mine had, in his words, "come out of the closet," after having spent a good part of his life as a practicing homosexual undercover. At the time that he informed me of this, he said that he could no longer live the life of duplicity, and that if by notifying me he lost my friendship, it would still be worth it to him.

However, at this time he addressed a letter of 12 single-spaced pages in an attempt to justify his actions. It became evident as I read this document that it really was an attempt to escape the consciousness of the judgment in which he stands as he continues to walk in this sin. And thus, by taking some time to examine this man's defense of his walk, we gain a clearer insight into the life of unbelief, and the depth of iniquity of which natural man is capable. As we do this we should note that it does not really matter what the sin itself is. Whether it be the sin of homosexuality, or of adultery, thievery, drunkenness, or whatever, the sinner who is not willing to repent must of necessity use similar arguments to attempt to justify before himself and others his walk in sin.

Further, the purpose of bringing this topic forward for these articles is not to focus attention upon any particular person. This could be a response to a letter of any sinner who is for the time determined to walk in his sin, no matter what that sin might be. In fact, when we ourselves walk in sin, many of the same arguments could

pass our own lips. Our prayer is that such sinners may come to see their sin and repent, as also we ourselves must repent of any walk in unbelief. But rather, the purpose is that we might see the way of unbelief, *from the point of view of unbelief*, and by this grow in our appreciation of the creeds, which God has been pleased to give to us to guard us from such a walk in unbelief, and to enable us to see how very clearly the Scripture speaks of unbelief, and of the hatred that unbelief has for the truth. And, still more, that which is set forth by this sinner walking in unbelief reveals to us the terrible apostasy that is taking place in the church world today. Many of the same arguments that are set forth by one obviously walking in most crass unbelief are the same arguments that we hear in the "church world," which calls itself Christian, and even Reformed, as it brings into the church, as proper, the life of adultery through remarriage after divorce, the breaking of the fifth commandment, and others, in giving the offices of Christ to women and in denying creation.

By this article, then, may we find warning against the sin of unbelief that is becoming so prevalent in the church today, and may we be comforted by the truth that God has given us an infallible and inspired Word to fight the spiritual battles of faith.

When this acquaintance began his defense of his "life style," he told me that he did not want me to respond to this information, for he has no interest in doctrinal games. He stated that he thinks the "concentration on doctrine within your denomination to be absurd to the point of making your 'gospel' one of fear rather than love." He said that he would not expend any more resources to any

debate of the matter beyond that of the present letter. The truth is that I had to respond, pointing out that he was walking in a sin that leads to condemnation if not repented of, and further expressing my conviction that he was attempting to justify his sin by involving himself in the greater sin of unbelief itself. And then he in turn responded with a ten-page letter. But notice that, even before having received any response from me, he was attacking the doctrines of the faithful church in order to make a defense for sin that the doctrines of Scripture condemn. *Unbelief attempts to put the child of God on the defensive, in order to justify its walk in that unbelief.*

In the first place, he brings up the matter of guilt. He says that he carries no guilt baggage about his walk. (Then he spends 11 more pages attempting to justify his walk.)

Secondly, he states that he had to do some hard thinking, as a "professed" Christian, regarding his beliefs about God in the light of his gayness. He does elaborate upon them later, but at the first mention of them he says that he had been gay (again, we could substitute adulterer, glutton, drunkard, or any sin here) for all of his adult life. And God, he says, did not once hinder his service to Him. He adds, "If God had been displeased with my gayness, it seems that He would have acted negatively toward me." He also mentions AIDS and denies that it is a judgment of God. He says he does not believe he is at risk of contracting AIDS. In the next sentence he says that he has had periodic tests for the HIV virus and they have all been negative. This is the foolishness of sin. Whether one encounters the physical consequences of his sin or not does not change the

Rev. Moore is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

fact that one cannot escape the spiritual consequences of his sin.

The First Attempt to Justify the Sin

In the first place, he says "there is much profitable in the Bible, and in the way that it is taught in the church I attend; but because I am gay, there is some material that I cannot believe or take literally as do most conservative believers today."

In the second place, he states he did not become gay, but was made gay. To support this he insisted that he believes in a higher entity, and says that it takes less faith to believe that there is a Creator than to believe that the creation came by accident — a point that he later denies in many ways. However, on this basis he proceeds to say that he was created, as the Bible says, in the image of God, and that God created him to be gay.

He points out too that he does not believe that the devil made him do it. He is convinced that he is gay by creation, that God willed him to be gay. To prove this, he says that he had spent much time in prayer that he might yield his life to God, by overcoming his gayness, if that were God's will. But it never happened. So he decided to live as God willed. And thus he casts away all guilt feelings.

Finally, he points out that he is convinced that some sections of the Bible are, indeed, either miswritten, mistranslated, or misinterpreted. And he concludes that, just as he cannot bring himself to believe that God has chosen His elect before the foundation of the world, he cannot believe that God would create and then condemn a segment of His creation because of the method of expressing their love and affection which He instilled in them. He goes on to say that he is convinced that God is not committed to what many believe is the biblical absolute in regards to homosexuality. He states, "I believe in God, but I believe that the mainstream of believers are wrong in their interpretation of the New Testament teaching on homosexuality; and that God indeed affirms homosexuality as a truly acceptable state."

Evaluation of the Sinner's Position

In the first place, we should understand that sin hates the Word of God. This is evident in several ways in this example of the sinner's justification of his walk in sin. This is seen immediately in the attack that this sinner makes upon the Reformed faith. It is the same reaction as was brought against Christ when He taught the precious truths of the Scripture to the people, as we see from the words of Matthew 12:24: "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." This tactic of the unbelieving Pharisees is still used today, as is evident from this case. Yet we must not be cowed by this attack, but ever bring the Word to bear upon the sinner; perchance our God will use it to bring to repentance. In the meantime, be thankful that Christ might count you worthy to suffer for His sake.

*... the natural man reacts.
He either accuses others
in order to divert attention
from his sin,
or else excuses that sin
by rationalization.*

Secondly, we should note that though the sinner will deny that he has any feelings of guilt while he walks in his sin, yet he finds the need to justify himself. This also does not surprise the child of God, for he knows the Scripture that teaches us that even the reprobate wicked have a conscience that accuses them, although they surely attempt to deny it. Romans 2:15 says of unbelievers that they "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another...." This is indeed the way that natural man reacts. He either accuses others in order to divert attention from his sin, or else excuses that sin by rationalization.

Indeed this was the course followed in the example that we are considering. The sinner turns to the

reason of men in order to excuse the sin in which he walks. He states that God makes him to sin. God created him the way that he is. He even uses (misuses) the Bible in doing so. He says that God created him in the image of God; and he concludes from this that, because he walks as a homosexual, he must have been made to be such by God Himself. We do well to remind ourselves, in this connection, that when there is brought an attack against the truth we have wonderful creeds that lead us to recognize the attack in order that we might have a defense against the same. Our attention is drawn to the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 3, where the catechism intercepts this idea of unbelief. In question 6 the catechism questions, "Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?" and answers, "By no means; but God created man good, and after His image...." The sinner may attempt to make God the author of his sin, but to no avail. God created man good. The sinner cannot blame God for his walk in a sinful way. This sinner, like all men naturally, will not admit the fruit of the fall, and the absolute loss of the image of God. Naturally man can do no good, and this is the result of our own disobedience. We must answer the sinner thus, that God did not create you in sin or as a sinner; sin is of your own volition and making.

Of course, if the above argument does not hold, then the sinner turns to the Word of God itself, and contends that it is not infallible, and certainly is wrong as it addresses his sin. The Bible cannot mean what it says, when so many men say the opposite. But if one denies a part of the Bible he denies all of it, whether he does so in connection with this particular sin, or with respect to the denial of creation, or whatever. Thus, it must be said to such a one, you walk in unbelief, repent of your sin. How often are we not also tempted to use these same means to justify our own walk in sin. May God give us grace to repent and to hear what Christ saith unto the church. □

(to be continued.)

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

Malachi

Lesson 2

God's Love: Questioned, Proven, Confessed.

Malachi 1:1-5

The very first words of this prophecy deserve serious and concentrated study by every believer. Why? First of all, the words "I have loved you" stand as the foundation of the entire book, as well as the ground on which God brings His complaint against His people. All of the terrible spiritual indifference, the weariness of worshiping God, the violation of God's covenant in the married state, which were prevalent in Malachi's day, were at heart this: insensitivity and coldness to the love of God. God's first word in this prophecy strikes to the very heart of the problem of the spiritual apathy and carelessness of that day and of our day. Second, these first five verses reveal the truth of PREDESTINATION, the heartbeat of the gospel. Sovereign Predestination, eternal election and reprobation, is the truth which ascribes all glory in our salvation to God, and God alone. This great truth is here taught by God, not as mere abstract, cold dogma, but specifically as the battering ram against spiritual lukewarmness, and for the purpose of comforting God's people. Indeed, what greater word from God could

we possibly hear in all our life than, "I have loved you, saith the Lord."

Malachi shows that the people of his day were questioning the reality of God's love to them (v. 2). Judging from what could be seen, they were sorely tempted to doubt that love. The Samaritans, the people who lived to the north, had been bitterly hostile and had opposed the building of the temple. They accused the Jews of disloyalty to Cyrus. Also, there had been severe crop failures, droughts, and plagues which had consumed the harvests. And they had become the plaything of the nations. Thus, with almost a cynical tone, they asked: "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

We must look at ourselves, as we too, in the light of sickness, pain, trials, depression are tempted to ask the same question.

The proof of His love towards His people is found in the word of God to Rebekah (Gen. 25:23). The Holy Spirit in Malachi and later in Paul (Rom. 9:13) show that these words to Rebekah speak of the truth of eternal, sovereign election and reprobation. Election is God's choosing from all eternity the persons who will be saved, and that not based on anything in them, but only out of His grace and mercy (see Eph. 1:1-4; Rom. 8:29, 30; I Pet. 2:9; John 6:39; Canons of Dort, Head 1, Art. 7, 9, 10). Reprobation is God's eternal and just damnation of the persons who will perish,

and that in the way of their sins (see Rom. 9:17-22; Matt. 15:13-14; I Pet. 2:6-8; Canons of Dort, Head 1, Art. 15; Belgic Confession, Art. 16).

It is vital that we see that Jehovah speaks these truths in the context of *comforting* and *confirming* His people. Further, Jehovah God, in proving His sovereign and unconditional love for us His people, refers to the well-known history of Jacob and Esau, the twin brothers born to Isaac and Rebekah (see Gen. 25; Rom. 9:10-13). The sovereignty, graciousness, unconditionality, and justice of God's predestination are shown in this biblical example.

God's predestinating love is to be confessed by us! "And ye shall say, the Lord be magnified." Cold indifference to the God who has said to us unworthy sinners, "I have loved you"? God shame us if that is ever the case in our hearts. Rather than sickly indifference, we who believe and experience the Reformed and biblical truth of predestination ought to sound forth the praise of God for His fatherless and unquenchable love.

Memory Work:

Romans 9:10-13

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not

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

of works, but of him that calleth;)

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Questions for Study:

1. The idea of the burden of the word of the Lord (vs. 1).

a. Do other Old Testament prophets use this terminology?

b. What is the meaning and significance of the word "burden of the word of the Lord"?

c. How is God's Word a burden to us?

2. God's love questioned:

a. Look up what the following verses teach about God's love: Ephesians 1:4, 5; Deuteronomy 7:7, 8; I John 4:19; I John 4:8-10; Romans 5:5-11; Isaiah 38:17; John 15:9; Revelation 3:19; I John 3:1; Deuteronomy 10:12.

b. Now give a definition of God's love.

c. In what ways do we question the love of God towards us? Be specific.

d. How ought the knowledge of God's love to be our daily comfort?

e. Discuss these two statements:

1) The love of God towards His people is not measured in things or absence of things, but solely in the cross of Jesus Christ.

2) God's love towards us may not be questioned.

3. God's love proven:

a. How does Paul use this verse in Romans 9:13?

b. After reading the Articles of the Canons of Dort mentioned in our introduction, and carefully reading the scriptural passages in support of election and reprobation, explain what is meant by ...

1) Unconditional election.

2) Sovereign election.

3) Gracious or free election.

4) Just reprobation.

5) Particular election.

c. Why is the example of Jacob and Esau so appropriate in proving God's sovereign predestination?

d. How does God's hatred of Edom (Esau) prove His love for Jacob (His people)?

e. What ought to be our response to these truths? (See I Tim. 2:19; II Thess. 2:13.) Explain how these truths ought to produce ...

1) Humility

2) Assurance

3) Adoration of God

4) Thankfulness

5) A zeal for missions and witnessing

f. Who is Edom? (Look up the word Edom and Edomites in your Bible Concordance and give a brief review of Edom and its significance.)

1) What attitude do they express in verse 4?

2) Do we see this attitude today?

3) Do we fight it even in ourselves?

4) What do we learn in the strong answer of the Lord to this boast of Edom?

4. God's love confessed:

a. What did God promise they would see in verse 5? Anything more than Edom's destruction?

b. What does it mean for us today?

c. In what ways ought the confession of God's gracious love towards us be evidenced in our lives and words?

5. Can you write from memory the verses we have learned in Romans 9:10-13? □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

The Answer to a Growing Worldliness

How shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?
Romans 6:2

When Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Dr. Klaas Schilder met in 1939, they were two men of kindred spirit. Both of them in their own circumstances had spent their lives striving against the worldliness which was overwhelming the Reformed faith, in the United States as well as in the

Netherlands. In turn, they were basically agreed as to the underlying cause for this, although they tended to differ in their emphasis. Hoeksema had had his battle over Common Grace, the view that some of what the world does is good and usable by the church of God, while Schilder was more concerned with the Presupposed Regeneration view that those who live without evidence of grace in their lives

Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

may still be presupposed to be regenerated on the basis of their baptism, at least for as long as they continue to live within the sphere of the covenant. But generally they were so much agreed on the commonness of their enemy that they parted as close friends, determined to maintain contact with each other and to support each other in their future battles.

That, however, was not to be. The Second World War intervened; and Dr. Schilder, due to his valiant opposition to the Nazis, spent most of those years either in prison or in hiding. The result was that he was prevented from speaking out publicly, and certainly from making international contact with others. But this did not mean that either he or Hoeksema ceased working with the problem.

Between these two men there were some remarkable similarities. Both were strong defenders of the confessions, and of the Reformed faith which they contained. Both were stunning orators; they could gather large audiences and hold them in rapt attention through long and sometimes complex sermons. And both were thoroughly exegetical in their approach, although with a difference. Dr. Schilder was a man of strong artistic tendencies, and his exegetical approach was often based on poetic insights which few others would have perceived and which could hold his audience in rapt attention, even when his overall thought could be very difficult to follow. (I can remember well that, when I was a child, those who had heard him would continue to reflect years afterward about the sermons he had preached when visiting us in 1947, and even those of 1939. They seemed never to forget them.) Rev. Hoeksema, on the other hand, was a clear and careful speaker who used few poetical flourishes, but went into the depths of the doctrines of Scripture and unfolded them in terms which even the most common listener could understand. Accordingly also their approaches to the problem of growing worldliness were quite different.

Schilder, in his effort to meet this problem, reached back into the past, from which he picked up a view of the covenant which had essentially been around for a long time. This was the view that the covenant is essentially a two-sided relationship, with promises and curses on one side and conditional obligations on the other. He was ready to grant this covenant to be one-sided in its origin. In fact, he strongly insisted that every child baptized within the church has an absolute assurance of salvation as long as he is a child. Nevertheless he insisted that, once this child is come to years of discretion, it is necessary to present him with the conditions and the responsibilities of covenant life in precise and concrete terms. The result then will be that the individual covenant child will either respond positively and continue in the promises of

*Christian life
does not arise
from invoking imperatives
and warnings*

God, or, failing to do so, fall under the covenant's curse and become a covenant-breaker. He firmly believed that when this kind of an emphasis is maintained within the churches, worldliness will be kept at bay and the strength of the church maintained. (And it should be recognized that, in the years following, those in The Netherlands who have followed the teachings of Schilder have remained spiritually much stronger than those who have maintained the Presupposed Regeneration view of Abraham Kuyper. One may debate whether it has been their covenant view which has brought this about; but their relative spiritual strength should be recognized. The terrible apostasy of the followers of Abraham Kuyper, the Gereformeerde Kerk, is certainly one of the great tragedies of church history; and the continuing faithfulness of the followers of Schilder, the Liberated Churches, is something for which

we must not fail to thank our God.)

Nevertheless, the approach which Rev. Hoeksema took to this same problem was quite different. He had watched as the Christian Reformed Church, after having adopted its position on Common Grace, tried to withhold the effects of worldliness by adopting rules and preaching warnings and threatenings against those who did not keep them. And it had not worked. Being a diligent student of Reformed theology, and of the Heidelberg Catechism in particular, Hoeksema was much more convinced of the Catechism's approach to sanctification. Christian life does not arise from invoking imperatives and warnings, but from true spiritual convictions gendered by hearing and learning the truths or doctrines of the Word of God. Once these are known and held in true faith, application to life will follow. And in turn, if this grace is not there, all the insistence upon responsibility and warnings of consequences will not change the unbelieving soul.

It was this view of sanctification that Rev. Hoeksema accordingly assimilated into his covenant concept. The covenant of grace he saw to be a bond of friendship which God establishes with His elect children through the gift of faith. It is a faith which can exist only when implanted directly by the Holy Spirit; and, when fed through sound instruction in the doctrinal teachings of Scripture, it will recognize the value and necessity of godliness in life and follow it. Imperatives and warnings have their place, but only as they appear naturally in the practice of biblical preaching, and not as the key to sanctification in themselves. In turn, if a child or grown adult is not first transformed by the elective grace of God, all of the insistence in the world will not change him. Sanctification is a part of the covenant gift; and the covenant is exclusively the work of God.

As it was, however, due to the war, these two views continued to develop in isolation from each other, and without the mutual interchange which had been hoped for. And the

war brought about terrible experiences for Dr. Schilder and the churches in the Netherlands. Not only were there the atrocities of the German occupying forces; but those who had felt threatened by Dr. Schilder's growing influence before the war took advantage of the cover of war to expel him and his followers from the church in a way similar to that which Rev. Hoeksema had experienced in 1924.

Thus it was that, no sooner was the war over, than contact was again made between those old friends. And now, with a new commonality of experience, the bond of friendship was even stronger than before. Dr. Schilder's followers had rallied around him and reorganized themselves into a new Liberated Reformed

Church; and our churches were quick to applaud them in this and give all the encouragement they could. In fact, as soon as possible, Dr. Schilder was invited to visit us once again, now with the anticipation that we would be able to create close fraternal relationships, and work together in the future. This trip was planned for the summer of 1947.

But also here the providence of God intervened. Shortly before Dr. Schilder's visit could take place, Rev. Hoeksema suffered a massive stroke, and was left almost completely incapacitated. When Dr. Schilder came, Rev. Hoeksema was recovering; but he was not able to participate to any great degree in the activities which

took place. Dr. Schilder traveled throughout our churches, and was generally welcomed everywhere. And there were few who were willing to suggest that the differences of our covenant views were significant or important — only Rev. Ophoff. At a final conference held with Dr. Schilder, Rev. Ophoff presented him with some 15 questions which he felt had to be answered. Dr. Schilder looked at his list, promised to answer them in his paper, *The Reformation*, and put them in his pocket. Sadly they were never heard of again, while within them lay the key that might well have prevented a great deal of future misery and pain.

To this we shall return. □

From Holy Writ Rev. George Lubbers

Introduction to I Corinthians 8:1ff.

"If any man love God, the same is known of him" (I Cor. 8:3).

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

After much prayerful study and reflection, we now take up our pen to write a few articles on what is often called the "liberty" of a Christian. A Christian, you must remember, is not "under law" but "under grace." We are not any longer servants under tutors and governors; we are no longer living in the Old Testament time when the church was "non-age," but we are now the church which is free from the law, which served as the "tutors and

governors" of all our minutest actions. The fullness of time has come. Christ was born from a woman, "under law," that He might redeem them who were under law, that "we might receive the adoption of sons." And "because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The great fruit of Christ's redemptive work is that we are now no more in the legal status of being a "servant," but we are now "a son" with all the duties, privileges, of legal children of God (Gal. 4:1-5; John 1:12).

We are, in a word, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

It is from this lofty vantage-point that the Corinthian believers are addressed by Paul in I Corinthians 8:3. Unless we see this we will be bogged down in the quagmire of those who are still "under law." But notice that Paul addresses these Corinthian believers as those who "love God," and who are such lovers of God because

God loved them in sovereign grace and in divine mercy which is exceedingly rich (Eph. 2:1-10)!

Ours is the liberty of those who are under the royal law of liberty. James speaks of this in chapter 2:8: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scriptures, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well" (cp. Matt. 7:12). Yes, he who keeps one of these commandments from the heart in love keeps the whole law (Rom. 13:8, 9).

Furthermore, one more basic observation which we must keep in our heart is that, when we were called efficaciously out of darkness into God's marvelous light, we were called to do God's commandments willingly. The law was written in our hearts (I Cor. 3:2-4). Such trust Paul has in this Corinthian church which he is addressing on a certain problem "touching things offered to idols." Paul appeals to the love that they have for God, the God of their salvation. He says this in verse 3, which we have

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

quoted at the heading of this article. We must not only never forget this, but we must have this principle of love for God and for our neighbor as the spiritual principle of all our dealings with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Why must we be reminded of this? This question must be asked and also answered with a believing heart. For the end of the commandment is "charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (I Tim. 1:5). Our Reformed fathers believed with the heart and confessed with the mouth that Christian "good works" are ever those which proceed from them who walk in true conversion (H.C., Questions 88-90). And, therefore, only those works are good which "proceed from a true faith, and are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory, and not such as are founded on our own imaginations, or the institutions of men" (Rom. 14:23; I Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:2, 10; I Cor. 10:31).

It was no one less than the very Paul who defended the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:5, 14), namely that we have liberty in Christ Jesus from the curse of the law, who equally defends this same truth of the Gospel that we are to walk in the faith which works by love, so that we with a grateful heart love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. Thus we will not use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh, to walk in all the works of the flesh which are manifest: adultery, fornication, idolatry, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Yes, they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:13, 14; 19-21).

The way of the new life in Christ is full of temptations. Satan, the world, and our flesh do not cease to assault us. But we are assured in I Corinthians 10:13 that there is no temptation of ours which is not common to man. Paul writes, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

* * * * *

When we look at the teaching of the Spirit in these three chapters, I Corinthians 8, 9, 10, we notice that Paul is waging a marvelous polemic against all those who are not very much filled with loving compassion for those who have "a weak conscience." The believers in Corinth, both men and women, had a real problem of conscience. It is noteworthy that Paul does not add the word of warning to these: "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:26). Fact is, Paul writes "fully persuaded in his own mind," does he not?

We need to observe that the cases spoken of in Romans 14:1ff. and the case in I Corinthians 8:7 are not alike. They differ in the following points:

a. Those who are referred to as being weak do not have a weakness of conscience as such. In fact, they are stated to be weak as to "the faith." They are weak in the plain teaching of the Scriptures regarding the matter of keeping of days—the Old Testament feast days and sabbaths—as well as of the ceremonial laws concerning meat and drink. Such is not the case with those weak as to their "conscience," as we read in I Corinthians 8:7.

b. In I Corinthians 8:1ff. those who are weak in conscience "eat with conscience of the idol." That was a deep and painful memory which these redeemed Gentiles would never forget. In I Corinthians 6:9ff. we read, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God." Twice this ultimatum is stated by the Spirit. And then we read the soul-searching words, which laid their conscience open and naked before God: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Now, Paul is speaking to every man's conscience before God in Romans 14:1ff., but the believers at Rome must have their conscience stirred up. Here in I

Corinthians 8:1ff. Paul is coming to the defense of those "weak in conscience, men and women for whom Christ died." Writes Paul to those who walk in cold-blooded license: "...and through thy 'knowledge' shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?"

c. The matter here in I Corinthians 8:1ff. is so serious that those who eat of meat offered to idols verily eat at the tables of idols in their consciences, and thus experience that they are having fellowship with devils, that is, with the demon-world of the fallen angels who are being kept by God in pits of darkness till the judgment of the great day (I Cor. 10:20; Jude 6). Of this "depth of Satan" those addressed in Romans 14 have no spiritual experience. Paul does not need to remind those who had this great temptation while eating things offered to idols, whether they are "fully persuaded in their own minds." Both those who kept the Old Testament Sabbath day and those who rejected this day must be fully convinced in their own minds. But here in I Corinthians 8:1ff. the men who eat with the conscience of the idol experience what the demons experience. They have the fear of hell and the torment which no human tongue can express!

d. Finally, the believers who are weak "in the faith" have the problem of conception of the difference between the Old and New Testaments. They *take issue* with the Gospel of liberty. Doctrinally they are not correct. They err in the faith. But those who eat with the conscience of an idol have no doctrinal squabble. They wholly agree that their God is alone God, who has saved them for Himself, and that they are in the one Lord Jesus Christ. But their conscience is weak when they eat that which is offered to idols.

We shall learn more of this deep problem of those who eat with the conscience of an idol as we proceed.

We close with the observation that Paul used this particular "case study" to enlarge upon the entire field of what is called "indifferent things."

He writes about this matter in chapters 8-10. He touches on the following matters: 1) The loving and considerate respect that the strong owe the weak (chapter 8:1ff.). 2) That in love

for the brother and for the Gospel we forego our imaginary "rights" (chapter 9). 3) The lesson of Israel's temptations in the wilderness (chapter

10:1ff.). 4) The grand application: we must not walk so that we tempt God (I Cor. 10:21ff.). □
to be continued...

A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

Tradition

The word tradition is used five times by Jesus and four times by the apostle Paul. In addition, there is one occurrence where it is translated "ordinances" (I Cor. 11:2). It is not to be found in the Old Testament, although the idea of tradition is implied in such phrases as "sayings of old which our fathers have told us" (Psa. 78:2,3); "the rock whence you are hewn" (Isa. 51:1); and "the ancient landmarks" (Prov. 22:28). The Greek word is composed of a root with the meaning of "to give, to commit, to deliver," and a prefix which slightly changes the meaning to "entrust, transmit, give over."

Jesus never spoke of tradition except to condemn and warn against it (Matt. 15:2ff., Mark 7:3ff.). Paul also used it in a negative way (Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8). In all these passages the Lord and His apostle speak of a body of doctrine and practice which men invented, foisted upon the people as grievous burdens, even though these traditions transgressed the Word of God and made His commandments of none effect. These precepts of men were made equal to the Bible; in fact, they possessed an authority greater than the Word of God in the minds of the elders and the Pharisees.

Paul also used the term in a positive, salutary sense. In II Thessalonians 2:15 he commands that the church stand fast, and "hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." The context shows that tradition refers to a definite body of doctrine that God has ordained, revealed to Paul, and passed on by him to the church. In II Thessalonians 3:6, he enjoins the brotherhood to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." Here the reference is to a definite way of life which God has laid down as acceptable in the church. We may safely say that this tradition of doctrine and walk is the Bible. It is the sole rule, the only authority, for faith and life.

The Roman Catholic Church makes much of tradition. Authority for Rome is the Bible, *and* developing tradition (the apocryphal books, writings of Greek and Latin church fathers, decisions of church councils, and papal decrees). And the church determines what the Bible teaches and what tradition means. All the dreadful distinctives of Rome are based on the traditions of men, all of them: purgatory, the priesthood, the mass, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, indulgences, penance, worship of Mary, use of images in worship, holy water, rosary beads, celibacy, the papacy and its claims. Not only do these doctrines lack biblical warrant, but they are often in direct contradiction to Scripture. For example, Paul writes that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ. Rome introduces a host of mediators such as Mary, priests, hundreds of saints, and thousands of angels. The Romish church has followed hard in the footsteps of the Pharisees, falls under the condemnation of Jesus, and is a false church (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). We cannot be thankful to God enough for Martin Luther, whose thrilling words before the Diet of Worms left that august assembly spellbound: "Since then your Majesty and lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant any thing, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." *Sola Scriptura!*

The devilish echo of Romish tradition is heard in many churches today, where we find a growing church hierarchy which rules from the top down (Synod, Classes over local councils), and where it is evident that the science of the world is elevated above Scripture, if ever we are to discover what the Bible means.

As churches we have our traditions; every church does. We preach the Heidelberg Catechism every Sunday, and we hold services on various, significant days throughout the year. So strong are these traditions that they are embodied in our Church Order. Our Three Forms of Unity belong to the Reformed tradition. Now we do not suggest that there are errors in our Creeds! We love them, believe them, and use them every day. But all traditions decided upon by men and councils must always be subjected to the biblical tradition, laid down by God Himself. And if anything in our tradition does not agree perfectly with Scripture, it must be let go of and changed in the proper way. In this way a Reformed church is always reforming. □

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

BOOK REVIEW

Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?, by Winfried Corduan; Zondervan Publishing House, 1991; 150pp., \$14.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

Anyone interested in mysticism in the church will probably want to consult this book. While it is somewhat philosophical and psychological in the first part of the book, especially the last two chapters are well worth reading.

The book starts out by examining very broadly mysticism as a universal phenomenon found in all religions, and it asks such questions as: Does mysticism have a common core? Does mysticism have an objective referent? Can language describe mystical experience?

But at the end of the book the author zeros in on a brief history of mysticism in Christianity, and he faces, in the final paragraph, the question of mysticism as a legitimate experience within the Christian and Evangelical tradition.

Early in the book, mysticism is defined as an unmediated link with the absolute, which, in the Christian tradition, means an unmediated link with God. It is here that the book grabs our interest.

An unmediated link with God as a means of acquiring knowledge is rightly condemned as being contrary to the principle of *Sola Scriptura*. But a mysticism which confirms biblical truth is approved.

The author correctly explains

that the Scriptures surely teach that the believer enjoys *union* with Christ, and that this union with Christ is effected by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This union with Christ can be said to be mystical because, through Christ, we are brought into fellowship with the triune God. And this union with Christ is brought about by faith.

All of this is surely sound, biblical teaching.

The problem comes in the author's definition of faith. He never really defines faith carefully, and seems to suggest that the mystical union which faith works can be apart from knowledge. In two statements on page 137 this is affirmed. "But it would also be a mistake to fall into the error of rationalism, namely, that God works only through our rational response to verbal messages," where "rational response" apparently means, "a response by means of knowledge." The second statement is: "Any wholesale dismissal of everything 'mystical' in favor of the purely cognitive would direct us away from these supernatural facts."

I am aware of the fact that the word "purely" in the above sentence modifies "cognitive"; it leaves room for something which is partially cognitive, i.e., partially involving the mind, and therefore knowledge. But the author seems nevertheless to ignore that line of reasoning. He seems to be saying that faith which brings us into union with Christ and thus with God is a faith which need not operate

on the cognitive level in every instance.

What then does faith do? The position of the author seems to be that such mystical union with Christ and God can be, and sometimes is, purely a matter of *feeling*, feeling which defies description and cannot be described by mere human language.

It is here that we dissent. Our Heidelberg Catechism defines faith as the bond by which we are engrafted into Christ and thus placed in "mystical union" with him. But in a further definition of faith in the very next question and answer the Heidelberg Catechism insists that faith is a sure knowledge by which we hold for true all that God has revealed in His Word. And, having said that, the Heidelberg Catechism goes on to define faith as *trust* in Christ by which we rely completely upon Him.

That feelings or emotions are involved in faith goes without saying. Love for God and our neighbor is an emotion; trust has emotional implications. We are told in Scripture to come to God with a broken spirit and a contrite heart — all of which are intensely emotional. We are admonished to rejoice in the Lord always — again profoundly emotional. But never can or may any of this be separated from the sure knowledge of faith. Our emotional experiences in which we have union with God through Christ are always mediated by knowledge.

This point the author seems to deny. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

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

Denominational Highlights

On October 11, 1991, Southwest Church honored Rev. and Mrs. Herman Veldman with a program

commemorating a double anniversary of the Veldmans: 60 years of marriage and 60 years in the ministry. Mr. Phil Lotterman read a tribute to



Rev. and Mrs.
Herman Veldman

the Veldmans on that occasion, and he has subsequently shared it with us. We are happy, in turn, to share some of it with you, the readers of the *S.B.*

Rev. Veldman was born in Chicago on April 22, 1908, the third son in a family of thirteen children. After completing school and four years of the work-a-day life, he decided to pursue the ministry, and so in 1928 entered the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI. The influence of his uncle, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, and the encouragement of a godly mother, led him to this high and holy calling.

After accepting the call to Pella, IA, but before his ordination to the ministry, Candidate Veldman and Miss Flora Ezinga became husband and wife, on September 9, 1932. Then it was on to Pella, to begin his life's calling, on September 23, 1932.

In 1937 Rev. Veldman accepted a call from the Creston PRC in Grand Rapids. The Veldmans stayed there until 1941 when they accepted a call from the Kalamazoo, MI PRC. It was in Kalamazoo that Rev. Veldman finally finished his high school education, and also taught history in the Christian high school there for one year.

In 1950 our congregation in Hamilton, ON, Canada called, and

the Veldmans went. However, less than a year later the congregation there released him because he insisted on the doctrine of the covenant of grace. The Veldmans returned to Grand Rapids and both taught at Adams St. School until he received a call from the congregation in Edgerton, MN in 1953.

In 1959 the parsonage of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA became home to the Veldmans. They stayed there until 1963 when Rev. Veldman accepted a call to the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

This call was followed in 1966 by a call to the Hudsonville, MI PRC, and in 1971 Rev. Veldman took his last call and served as pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI until his emeritation in 1978.

It is the earnest prayer of our churches that God may continue to bless both Rev. and Mrs. Veldman as they enter their sixtieth year together in married life as well as in their service to God in His church.

Mission Activities

It has been a couple of months since Revs. Joostens and denHartog returned from Jamaica. But I thought that you might nevertheless be interested in learning about some of their accomplishments. Ten large duffle bags of clothing, bed linens, eye glasses, and books accompanied the Joostens luggage to Jamaica, free of extra charges, courtesy of Northwest Airlines. The crated motorcycles went by truck to Miami. The airline then removed the gas tanks and shipped them separately. Nearly a cubic yard of shoes were shipped in the crated of the motorcycles, thereby saving shipping costs. About four hours were required to re-assemble the cycles and get them running. The crating lumber was used by Rev. Joostens to make repairs in the Belmont parsonage and church as well as to make a bed frame in the parsonage.

Books sent included workbooks for *Suffer Little Children*, and copies of *Come Ye Children*, the "Essentials" catechism book, *Knowing God*, and large print, soft-cover Bibles.

Rev. denHartog writes, as part of his closing remarks in a report to the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI that "there is a very great need for a missionary on the island of Jamaica. The problems in a field like Jamaica can be overcome only through prolonged, consistent, and patient labor." Rev. denHartog also wrote to his congregation in Redlands, CA that "the people are very poor and the church buildings very primitive. Nevertheless we found God's people there, many of whom were eager to hear the preaching of the Word."

Let us pray earnestly that God will provide a man from our churches to work on the island.

News from Singapore

The congregation of Grandville, MI PRC has arranged a unique way to communicate with their pastor, Rev. J. Kortering, and his wife while they are in Singapore. Beginning October 20, there was placed in the narthex a basket in which either typed or handwritten messages to the Korterings could be placed. Then once a week these messages were to be faxed to the Korterings in Singapore.

Congregational Highlights

The Consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC decided to conduct a Study Class for the men of the congregation, beginning with the government of the church. The purpose of this class will be to educate all the men in the faith and practices of Reformed churches. A side benefit will be to educate present and future elders and deacons. Rev. Gritters was going to teach the class, with the possibility of guest teachers, perhaps from the Seminary.

We also extend our congratulations to the congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI which celebrated their 75th anniversary as a church with a program on the evening of October 25.

Ironically, this program was held in the Southwest PRC, since Hope's sanctuary is still going through a major face-lifting.

Ministerial Calls

The congregation of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Haak, one of their former pastors, to become once again their pastor.

Rev. R. Moore declined the call he was considering from First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI to serve as missionary to the island of Jamaica.

And Candidate M. Dick declined the call he had been considering, to serve as pastor of the Hope PRC in Isabel, SD. □

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 14, 1991, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JOHN C.
FLIKKEMA,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them and also thank our gracious Lord for the years they have shared. We are grateful, too, for the covenant instruction, love, and guidance they have given us. Our prayer for them is that they may continue to experience the blessings of our faithful God in the years to come. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

John and Ruthanne Flikkema

John IV, Amanda, Christian, Hannah

Steven and Karen Ophoff

Steven Charles

Tom and Amy Flikkema

Don and Gail Kuiper

Emily, Michael

Steve and Pam Flikkema

Jeremy

Southeast Church, Grand Rapids, MI

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, CA extends its Christian sympathy to its fellow officebearer, Bernard Meelker, in the loss of his mother,

HILDA MEELKER,

whom the Lord took home to glory on November 2, 1991 at the age of 80. We also extend heartfelt sympathies to Mr. Ben Meelker (husband), Hilda Sansom (daughter), Etta Mulder (sister), and all the grandchildren and great grandchildren. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more" (Psalm 16:11, 12).

Pastor Arie den Hartog, President
Elder John Feenstra, Clerk

NOTICE!!!

To encourage our young people to write and to glean the wisdom of their elders, the *Beacon Lights* is sponsoring a writing contest for all ages third grade level and above.

The winning submissions will be published in upcoming issues of the *Beacon Lights* magazine. And, winners will receive a book certificate to be redeemed at the Reformed Book Outlet.

For more details and contest rules, see the *Beacon Lights*, December issue. We look forward to your participation.

Sandy Storey,
Beacon Lights Secretary

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 1992, at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hand of the Stated Clerk by December 10, 1991.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the Holland Protestant Reformed Church extends their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Camminga in the death of his mother,

MRS. VAN TUINEN.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

Elaine Bonzelaar, Secretary

*Still time
for a
CHRISTMAS
GIFT
SUBSCRIPTION
to the
Standard Bearer.*

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for
first-time
subscribers!*