

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

If the *SB* serves
no other purpose
than to promote
the knowledge of
and esteem for
the old standards
of our faith,
it has rendered
Christ's church
and people
an invaluable service.

See "Committed to Exposing Old Wolves
in New Wool" — page 209

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In This Issue ...

Have you ever wondered why your children's school teachers do not make more use of educational games in the classroom? In this issue Mr. Fred Hanko looks at the pros and the cons of such use. After noting that educational games can serve a number of useful purposes, he concludes, in effect, that, if all that a teacher had to be concerned about was his students' mastery of subject matter, he might very well be quite enthusiastic about the myriads of games which flood the market today. But, bearing in mind that education involves also the teaching of values and the communicating of attitudes, a Christian teacher is compelled to take another, more critical, look at all of the enticing advertising put out by the manufacturers and distributors of the games. For a better appreciation of this question, read "The Education Game."

* * * * *

In this issue's Meditation, Rev. Gritters probes the essence of friendship. Rather than examining the many psychological factors which are undoubtedly involved in establishing close friendships, Rev. Gritters advises that a child of God who is faced with a question of how, properly, to maintain or restore a friendship does well to look to the cross, where one will discover "the model, the motive, and the power for friendship among us." Read "Love's Covering of Sins."

* * * * *

Of special interest in this issue will surely be the printing of Rev. Koole's address at the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. After presenting compelling evidence that apostasy is enveloping the church world today, and pointing out the urgency of a defense of the Reformed faith, also by polemics in the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. Koole offered this word of advice to those who are weary of, or question the propriety of, our ministers flying all over the globe to preach to small groups of believers looking desperately for help: "Stop the silly printing presses." Ah yes, you won't want to miss "Committed to Exposing Old Wolves in New Wool."

D.D.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer,
P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49418-0603.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezeema

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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. Barrett Gritters

Love's Covering of Sins

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love: but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Proverbs 17:9

Love for the church of Christ implies love for the brother in the church. Every good Christian has a heart of love for the church. This means he will be a member of the church institute. It means that in every way he will live the love he professes to have in his heart.

If we love the church, we will love the members of the church. Why, the church is made up of its members. Apart from the members, there is no church. It would be as foolish to say that you love the church but do not love the individual members of the church as it would be to say that you love your body but you do not love your arms, legs, head, torso. That is nonsense. If we love the church, we love the members of the church. And we will demonstrate that love in our dealings with them.

One of Scripture's reminders to us how that ought to go, specifically, is the wisdom of God in Proverbs 17:9. "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."

Emphasis is placed here on the good life that the child of God must live in the communion of saints. How?

By assuming there is friendship among the members of the church. By assuming that there is love among these friends. This is the way it ought to be among us: that we assume there is friendship and assume that these friends love one another.

Great gift of God! Friendship and communion! If "repeating a matter" separates very friends, then to refrain from doing so promotes close friendship. Friends are close in the congregation.

Friendship is intimate fellowship. By definition, friends are familiar with each other, are accustomed to each other's company, know one another in an intimate way. This is the way friendships in the church ought to be.

If it will be that, friendships must be among saints. Apart from holiness, there can be no intimacy that pleases God, no familiarity that finds the blessing of God on it.

What drives this friendship and communion is love. "Love covers sins." In these friendships, the friends give themselves to each other. Instead of asking what we can receive from the friendship, and instead of determining the value of the friendship on that basis, love asks, "What can I contribute for the help of my friend?"

Ah, friendship and love in the church! Blessed friendship! Delightful love!

Do not say, "Bah, I don't want to hear about that love stuff. That's what all those other churches are talking about!" It may be the other churches are talking about that, or only about that. Let them be lopsided. Failing to emphasize love and

friendship will send one off unbalanced and lopsided as well. Let us not make the same mistake and not speak about this greatest of gifts in the church.

Delight of married life! Joy of family life and children! The pleasure of being close to a brother or sister in Christ is love and friendship!

Love and friendship rooted in God! No mere morals, these! Communion exists among us because there is communion in God! Intimacy exists among us because of intimacy among The Three in One! The holiness possible in our circle of friendship finds its spring in the Holy One! As for love? "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God; for God is love."

God's great love He showed to us in Jesus. By it He reconciled us to Him. Through it we have friendship with Him. Delightful friendship, intimate friendship, holy friendship, driven by and lived in the sphere of love!

And since we are friends of God, that friendship is reflected among us: Friends with each other because God is Friend of us. Intimate with each other because Jehovah God is intimate with us. Sanctified friendship because of the sanctity of God's with us. Able to be driven by love in these friendships, because God first love us.

Love and friendship! What a blessing!

* * * * *

Reality is that sin separates friends. Poisonous gossip! Pernicious backbiting! Venomous tongues! Oh, for the antivenin of love, true love, to heal the wounds! Oh, for the

Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

covering of love, to avoid the damage!

Love covers sins. But he that repeats a matter, separates very friends.

The repetition of a sin, the digging up of old transgressions, separates friends. Not so much the act of repeating, but the bringing back of the sinful behavior into the heart and soul of the friends is what wreaks havoc in friendships.

Even children know the destructive power of repeating a story about someone's sins. Every newspaper editor knows the destructive power of a "juicy story."

Behind his back, a child's friend speaks mean of him. If the child never hears it, little damage is done. But when another tells him what his friend said, it will take some time to muster up the courage to speak to his "friend" again. If we hurt a friend in some way, and apologize for that hurt, but the friend keeps on bringing up that hurt, talks to other people about that hurt, refuses to bury it as it ought to be buried, our friendship with him is strained. If a husband deals foolishly with his wife, and she keeps on resurrecting that matter, pretty soon a barrier is raised between these closest of friends. Why? Because sin separates friends!

Some important implications of this truth bring it close to home.

First, we cannot really have friendships with unbelievers. Certainly the Bible says that we may not have them. It also says, "we cannot have them." The only way true friendships can survive is by dealing with sins properly: confessed, forgiven.

Second, living in sinful practices in our earthly relationships does not nurture friendships, but damages them, breaks them. There is a warning here for young people on dates: sin separates (does not bring closer!) friends. There is a warning here for all God's people in their dealings with each other: for God's sake and thus for your friendship's sake, flee sin!

Third, this is why public announcements are made in the churches regarding repentance from public sins. Brought out by these

announcements is the painful truth that sin creates a barrier that must be removed. And, far from being an announcement to inform the congregation or alienate and hurt the member, the announcement is to inform the congregation of repentance! Even though so and so has fallen so hard, God has given the grace of confession and repentance. And then fellowship is restored! The sin is buried under the mercy of God and, by the same mercy of God, is never resurrected by us again!

Oh, let us cover the sins of friends.

The demand of the Scriptures that we harmonize Proverbs 17:9 with Matthew 5 and Matthew 18 brings us

To overlook a sin is not love.

to see that this is not a call to ignore the sins of friends. Avert our eyes when the friend breaks the covenant of God? Turn our head the other way when he violates the commands of our Lord? Some may wish this were God's way. The Scriptures tell us otherwise.

Even sanctified wisdom of God in Jesus Christ that dwells in our hearts tells us that it cannot be so. To overlook a sin is not love. To let our friends go on in their sin is not seeking their good. No real friend winks at another's impenitence. Why, to think that God would fail to deal with my sin because he did not want to offend me is to think the unthinkable. To imagine that God would leave me in my sin, hoping that our friendship would somehow stay on track, is to imagine a God without love for me. Unthinkable!

Love covers sins!

Love goes to the brother to seek his repentance, prays for his godly sorrow that brings him to the cross.

Love does not tell another soul about it, not even the pastor who "surely would not tell anyone else." Love does not get on the phone and say, "I really shouldn't be telling you this, but I needed to get it off my

chest...." Love does not bring it up over coffee on Sunday night. Love keeps its mouth shut. Love hides the sins of its friend. In our own heart and our own life they stay!

Then love covers sins by forgiving them, by going out of its way to make sure that it *can* forgive them. Love does not say, "Well, he never asked me for forgiveness, so I can't. I'll just stew in my heart against him for the rest of my life." Love says, "I'll go to my friend and tell him of his sin so that I can work with all my might to forgive him." And then, even if forgiveness is impossible, love wants to forgive.

This way of love is built right into the official life of the church. The elders must cover sin as far as possible for them, too. They expose no brother when he sins. Not a soul in the church must know. Warned repeatedly in consistory rooms that matters raised there stay there, the elders are under solemn oath before God to hide sins. They do.

This principle is built right into the official life of the church. When a member commits a sin that is reported to the consistory, there is "Silent Censure," barring the member from communion without any knowledge by the congregation. If repentance does not follow, an announcement is made to the congregation that a member is caught in the clutches of sin — without a name mentioned! Why? To cover the sin of the brother! Only when he is obstinate and the congregation must become involved is the name publicized — and then

... in love we will put the best construction on what we observe in or hear from others.

only in order to call the members personally to exhort the sinning member to come to God, to know His friendship.

This is the way love and friendship work in the church.

Thus, in love we will put the best construction on what we observe in

or hear from others. In love we will believe all things, bear all things, hope all things, endure all things. We think no evil. Rejoicing not in iniquity, we rejoice in the truth.

*... we seek to cover,
in the earthly manner
that is possible for us,
the sins of our friends.*

The model is God's covering of our sins in Jesus Christ. In the cross, the loving purpose of God with us was revealed — His will to cover, forever, all our sins. Now His love is such that, by the power of His grace, He covers them in our lives. And by His grace that love is reflected in our lives. Not that we bear the punishment for the sins of our friends; but

that we seek to cover, in the earthly manner that is possible for us, the sins of our friends.

As well, God's love is the motive.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son, so that His people could be one in Him. Sinning, by exposing the sins of other members, is schism — ripping the body of Jesus Christ. We may not seek to destroy God's work.

Obedying this call is thankful obedience—for what Christ has done for us. In eternity He chose us to be His friends, and willed for us to have friends through Him. We love Him for that. At the cross, He gave us the right to live in this friendship with Himself and with others. And we love Him even more for that. Through the Holy Spirit this friendship is actu-

ally and powerfully realized in our hearts, so that we know the friendship of God and experience friendship with others. And our love for God knows no bounds!

So we obey this call. We do not repeat a matter, fanning the flames. Out of love, we cover sins.

But there is no way we can do that of ourselves. To look at the example of Christ and say, "I will do it," is hopeless. To be moved merely by observing the love of God is not possible. By the power of the love and friendship of God working in our hearts, by faith, we are able to have friendship in this way.

Observe the cross, in faith, where our sins were covered. Find there the model, the motive, and the power for friendship among us.

Believe! □

Editorial

Church Unity, Reformed Synods, and Independency (1)

An astute reader of the *Standard Bearer* in England asks some penetrating questions about Reformed church government (cf. the letter, "Reformed Synods and Independency," elsewhere in this issue). Basically he asks for a defense of the synod, or general assembly as it is called in the Presbyterian churches, in the system of Reformed church government. He is moved to do this by the attack on the synod within Reformed circles today and by instances, real or alleged, of the abuse of their authority by synods to the detriment of the local churches and their members. He also asks the practical question, whether

the apostasy of a Protestant Reformed synod would not force the faithful congregations into independency.

These questions about synod and independency are timely. About the same time that the letter from our correspondent in Liverpool arrived, the *Evangelical Times*, a leading evangelical paper in England, ran an article entitled, "Biblical Presbyterianism" (January 1992, p. 6). The author, Eric Alexander, attacks the position that holds that presbyteries (classes) and general assemblies (synods) are an essential aspect of true Presbyterianism, that is, essential to genuinely Presbyterian, or Reformed,

church government. For him, the essence of biblical Presbyterianism is a body of elders governing the independent congregation. True Presbyterianism is perfectly compatible with independency. Alexander rejects the connection of local churches in authoritative broader assemblies as unbiblical. He notes that the Westminster Confession of Faith supports its teaching of "synods and councils" in Chapter 31 with only one biblical passage, Acts 15. He concludes with a call to Presbyterians in the British Isles to "look again at what makes us biblical Presbyterians." This is a challenge to do away with the

denominational bond. The *Evangelical Times* thinks that this is a "thoughtful and challenging article."

As our English correspondent observes, with reference to articles that have recently appeared in the (Christian Reformed) *Outlook*, those Christian Reformed people who are now threatening secession advocate independency as the solution to their problem with synods that adopt unbiblical decisions.

Rejection of synodical union for independency becomes more and more common in the United States and Canada. Individuals leave Presbyterian and Reformed churches for the large, flourishing, popular, independent churches. Congregations break away from apostatizing denominations and decide to remain independent. Or congregations begin with the determination to exist outside of any denominational connection.

*... synodical union is basic
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view of the church.*

There is talk that we are seeing the end of denominations. Like the dinosaur, the denomination becomes extinct. Many are ready to say about the passing of the denomination, as about the extinction of the dinosaur, "Good riddance!"

What is called for by these ominous developments is a clear, strong testimony that synodical union is basic to the Reformed, or Presbyterian, view of the church. Since the Reformed view of the church is biblical, synodical union is a fundamental aspect of the Bible's teaching about the church.

It is passing strange, some would say wildly incongruous, that this testimony must come from the Protestant Reformed Churches. Throughout their history, for almost 70 years, the PRC have vehemently insisted on the autonomy of the local congrega-

tion within the denomination. Each local congregation is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. Through the body of elders chosen out of the congregation by the congregation herself, each congregation is self-governing (autonomous). It is the congregation that preaches, administers the sacraments, and disciplines.

The jealousy of the PRC for the rights of the local congregation is evident in the name of the PRC. The name of the denomination is Protestant Reformed *Churches* (plural), not *Church* (singular). If I had a dollar for every time that the former editors of this magazine patiently corrected those who referred to the denomination as Protestant Reformed *Church* and explained why the name is *Churches*, I likely could take my wife to dinner at a fancy restaurant.

The local congregation is the instituted church of Jesus Christ. The denomination is the federation, or union, of autonomous churches, which do not surrender their autonomy by membership in the denomination.

With an urgency born of their own suffering at the hands of hierarchical major assemblies, the PRC have unceasingly warned against the evils of denominational hierarchy. These include the major assemblies' exercising the key power of discipline, the usurpation by synodical committees (boards) and personnel of power that belongs to the congregations, a tyrannical, sheep-scattering manner; and the intrusion of the major assemblies into the life of the congregations by taking up matters that are not rightfully before the assemblies. Underlying all this is the notion that synod is the church, whereas the local congregations are merely branches and parts of the church.

Thus a hierarchical "Reformed" denomination comes to resemble the Roman Catholic Church. Not only does the synod with its increasingly intricate machinery, its permanent personnel, and its all-powerful committees lord it over the congregations from the top down, but also the synod

is the church to which the congregations ought to be subject and which they must serve as members of a body serve the head.

Against this departure from Christ's government of His church, the PRC have protested, even though their protest has fallen on deaf ears. But the protest of the PRC has always been against synodicalism, not against synod. Therefore, today, when a clamor for independency arises from Reformed churches that have lately come to realize the evil of synodical hierarchy, there is no incongruity in the PRC's rising to the defense of synod, and thus of the denominational bond. The deepest concern of the PRC, as a Reformed denomination, is neither for the authority of the local congregation nor for the authority of the broader assemblies, but for the government of the true church by "that spiritual policy which our Lord has taught us in His Word" (Belgic Confession, Art. 30).

Synods are Reformed. General assemblies are Presbyterian. Rejection of authoritative broader assemblies is un-Reformed. Refusal by congregations to unite with like-minded congregations in a church federation that is realized in presbyteries and general assemblies whose decisions have binding authority is un-Presbyterian, even though the congregations rule themselves by a body of elders. The loose association of local churches in an organization that meets sporadically and whose decisions are not binding on the local churches is no different and, therefore, no better.

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an authoritative role
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This is not even a debatable issue. It may not be. For the standard that determines what is Reformed, or Presbyterian, is the creeds and church orders. And they plainly affirm that

genuine Presbyterianism is synodical. The Reformed church order of Dordt declares that good order in the church of Christ requires classis and synod as well as consistory (Art. 29); ascribes to classis and synod a jurisdiction (Latin: *auctoritas*) over the consistory (Art. 36); and states that the decisions of the major assemblies are to be "considered settled and binding" (Art. 31).

In addition, the Dordt church order so structures the life of the churches that the major assemblies have an authoritative role in vital aspects of the life and work of the congregations. One instance is that the congregation may neither call nor dismiss a minister without the advice, or approval, of the major assemblies (Articles 4, 5, and 11). Another is that the congregation may not excommunicate a member without the advice of classis (Art. 76).

This defines Reformed church-life and government.

The Westminster Standards define Presbyterianism similarly. Chapter 31 of the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches that "for the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils" (Art. 1). Article

3 of the same chapter affirms the authority of these denominational assemblies:

It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His church; to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same

The Westminster Assembly's "Directory for Church Government" (not to be confused with the "Form of Presbyterian Church Government") states that "it is lawful, and agreeable to the Word of God, that the church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are presbyteries and synods; or assemblies congregational, classical and synodical." The "Directory" explicitly condemns and forbids independency:

To gather churches into an independent form of government out of churches of a presbyterial form of government, upon an opinion that the presbyterial government is unlawful, is not lawful and warranted by the Word of God (for this "Directory," cf. Wayne R. Spear, "The Westminster Assembly's Directory for Church Government" in *Pressing Toward the Mark*, ed. Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble).

It is possible that Reformed congregations renounce synodical union and thus the denominational bond. It is also possible that they do this because they suppose synods to be unbiblical and independency, or congregationalism, biblical. They are mistaken. Carrying out this erroneous idea, they sin against the unity of the church of Christ. Still it is possible that formerly Reformed churches make this decision. But it is not permitted that they yet consider themselves Reformed, or Presbyterian. The creeds and church orders, official standards, judge that by forsaking the synodical union they have abandoned Presbyterianism and are no longer Reformed churches.

I do not refer to congregations that find themselves temporarily alone because a denomination has wickedly expelled them, or because faithfulness to the Head of the church has compelled them to separate from an apostatizing denomination. But I refer to congregations that repudiate synodical union as a matter of settled policy.

To be Reformed, or Presbyterian, is to be synodical. □

— DJE

Letters

● Reformed Synods and Independency

May I request clarification on the editorial titled, "The Binding Decisions of a Reformed Synod" (*Standard Bearer*, June 1, 1991)?

It is clear that many Christian folk regard the whole matter of how the church is organized as a matter of little consequence. For this reason it is good to see church power and church polity being taken seriously. As it happens, a friend lent me the March, April, and May 1991 issues of

the *Outlook*, which contain articles called "Synod-ocracy: Cause and Cure." The writer's complaint is that the synod of his church (the Christian Reformed Church) had opened the doors of local church office to women. His solution is virtually a modified form of independency, unless I read him wrongly.

Consider some of the other occasions, thankfully few in number compared with the multiplied injustices and unhappinesses inside independency. What of the Free Presbyterians in Scotland dividing because one of their members, a government

minister, attended a requiem mass, perhaps as an observer? The synod handed down an arguable decision. In the Church of Scotland, the general assembly or synod, has authorized female ministers. The deposition of Schilder in 1944 was an objectionable event surely, even if the doctrinal issues relating to baptism and covenant are in dispute. Sometimes the synod does not accept the Word of God, so it is no use arguing that we will prove the synod wrong using the Word of God.

Now just suppose that the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

became corrupt and handed down a decision contrary to the Word of God. I assume that you are going to tell me that local presbyteries (called classes in the Reformed churches—DJE) and local churches need not, indeed must not, accept such decisions. That turns your local churches into independents, does it not?

I must add that I am strongly persuaded that only connectionalism leading to synod is Scriptural. The problem comes when the synod acts in a way not warranted by the Word of God. What is your response to that? And have you read the articles in the *Outlook*? I would value a response to "Synod-ocracy: Cause and Cure," unless you agree with the articles, of course.

D. J. Stephens
Liverpool, England

Response:

For my response to this letter and its questions, expressed and implied, see the editorial in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

— Ed.

● Ban the Book

I never thought that I would see a book by Lewis Sperry Chafer favorably reviewed in your magazine (the *Standard Bearer*, Dec. 15, 1991). Are there not truly Reformed writers who can tell us about the wiles of Satan? I wonder what the devil has in mind when he uses the pages of the *SB* to promote a book that tells of his great lie of dispensationalism. Does not the Word itself tell us about Satan and what he will and can do? I also saw writings of Dr. James Dobson and other Arminian psychologists promoted in Protestant Reformed publications. How clever the devil is. If it were possible, even the elect would be deceived. Why are Reformed people helping the Arminians out?

Erika H. Lavender
Lee's Summit, MO

Response:

It has never been, and is not now, the policy of the *SB* to review only books written by "truly Reformed writers." The *SB* reviews books by authors who are heterodox, as well as who are orthodox. The criterion is that the book may possibly hold some interest for, or be of some use to, our readers. Regarding the book that contains error, it is the duty of the reviewer to point out the error. The reviewer of the book at issue did this: "It has one great weakness that must, in our opinion, be pointed out. It is dispensational in its perspective...."

The review of a book in the *SB* in no way constitutes promotion of everything taught in the book, or even of the book itself. I remind our readers what was said about book reviews in the January 1, 1989 issue of the *SB*:

Reviewing religious books has always been, and will continue to be, a regular feature of the *SB*.... It will be our policy to review only those books that seem to us to be of real interest to Reformed men, women, and children, usually books that some will want to buy. (It hardly needs to be stated that a review, or even a recommendation, does not imply approval of everything the book teaches.) Even if a reader has no intention of buying the book, he will profit from reading the review in that he learns what is being published today and in that a reviewer often treats issues raised in the book that are of concern to the reader....

— Ed.

● The Genealogy of Jesus: A Reply to Prof. David Engelsma

In an article in the *Standard Bearer* of December 15, 1991, Prof. Engelsma called attention to the genealogy of Jesus (or, Jesus the Son of Nathan). In this article the writer contends that Jesus and Mary were not in the royal line of David but that Joseph was a physical descendant of Solomon, Rehoboam, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jehoiachin. With this presentation I cannot agree.

First of all, is it not a bit strange

that the professor, in the title above his article, speaks of Jesus as the son of Nathan? This, of course, is understandable in light of the fact that the writer does not believe that Jesus and Mary were in the royal line of David. However, Scripture surely emphasizes that Jesus is *the* Son of David, and that He is this Son in the royal sense of the word.

Secondly, we will not call attention to the fact that Nathan and not Solomon is mentioned in the genealogy of Luke 3, whereas Solomon and not Nathan is mentioned in Matthew 1. Frankly, I do not understand why this is as it is in these genealogies. However, I do not consider it necessary to do this in this letter. I do wish to focus attention upon the fact that our editor contends that neither Jesus nor Mary is in David's royal line, the line that brings forth the Christ.

Thirdly, Prof. Engelsma calls attention to Mary's astonished reply to the angel, as recorded in Luke 1:34: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" As we all understand, this statement of Mary is vital in this discussion. Prof. Engelsma interprets the word "know" in this statement as referring to sexual intercourse. With this interpretation we cannot agree. It is, of course, true that this word does have the meaning of sexual intercourse in Holy Writ, but it is also true that it also has another meaning in the Word of God. Now we must note that Mary does not say here: "I have not known a man," but, speaking in the present tense: "I know not a man." As of that moment, Mary does not know a man. If Joseph were of David's line, not in the royal sense of the word (which is possible), then Mary certainly knew of a man. She was espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. Now, there had been nothing in what the angel had said to her to suggest that the Holy Ghost would overshadow her and that, through the Holy Spirit, she would conceive and bring forth a son. Was it, therefore, not natural of Mary to think that, marrying Joseph, she and he would have a son together? Nevertheless, Mary is aston-

ished, replying to the angel: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" This can only mean that Mary did not know a man who was in the royal line of David, that there was not such a man. Joseph, therefore, was not of David's royal line. And Mary is astonished because how could she conceive and bring forth a son without a man?

Fourthly, we must bear in mind that it is Prof. Engelsma's contention that Mary was not of David's royal line but that Joseph did belong to that line. If this be true, then we cannot escape the conclusion that David's royal line runs dead in Joseph without bringing forth the Christ, inasmuch as Mary was not of David's royal line but Joseph was. However, Joseph was not the father of Jesus; hence, David's line comes to an end in Joseph without bringing forth the Christ. Now Prof. Engelsma attributes this failure of David's royal line to bring forth the Christ to the sins of Jehoiachin, to the fact that David's royal line had become unfaithful, disobedient and apostate, that the judgment of God upon it was that it would not produce the everlasting King who establishes the kingdom of God.

Finally, we cannot harmonize this presentation of Prof. Engelsma, that the royal line of David may not produce the Christ because of the sins of Jehoiachin, with the Word of God as recorded in Psalm 89:20-37. O, yes, we are quickly reminded in this connection of another Word of God, Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Notice: *the scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh come*. Shiloh is the Christ, the Restgiver. Now notice in this passage in Psalm 89 the following. First, the Lord's mercy Jehovah will keep for David forevermore; the Lord will make his seed to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven (vss. 28, 29). Secondly, this passage speaks of David's children as forsaking Jehovah's law, walking not in His judgments, the breaking of His stat-

utes, and the keeping not of His commandments (vss. 30, 31). Prof. Engelsma calls attention in his article to these sins, the sins of Jehoiachin. And the Lord declares, in verse 32, that He will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Thirdly, now notice what we read in verses 33-37: *The Lord will not forsake his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. Once has He sworn by His holiness that He will not lie unto David. David's seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before him. Indeed, it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven.* I cannot, therefore, agree with Prof. Engelsma's presentation. I have always believed that Mary was of David's royal line, not Joseph, and that the royal line of David ran out in a virgin, Mary, the mother of our Lord.

Prof. Engelsma, concluding his article, calls attention to certain implications of his view. May I conclude my letter by calling attention to a more wonderful implication of my view which I consider to be Scriptural. Is it not more wonderful that God fulfills His promise of the Messiah out of utter hopelessness (born of a virgin as the sole survivor of David's royal line), that He alone saves His people when everything has become, humanly speaking, impossible and hopeless, that He calls life out of death, and that His faithfulness to preserve David's royal line remains unbroken? Indeed, the Lord will not lie unto David; David's seed will be preserved forever, culminating in Christ, the Royal Seed of David, Israel's Redeemer and Savior. O, brother Engelsma, I know that you maintain that God's saving of His people in Christ is almighty, irresistible, and sovereign. But I surely prefer my view which I believe to be in harmony with the infallible Word of God.

(Rev.) Herman Veldman
Jenison, MI

Response:

Rev. Veldman makes no effort to solve the problems inherent in the view of Jesus' genealogy that he ad-

vocates. These problems include the harmony of the two genealogies in Matthew 1 and in Luke 3; the tracing of Jesus' descent from David through Nathan in Luke 3:31; the listing of Joseph, not Mary, in the register of the "royal line" in Matthew, as one begotten of the kings of Judah and Israel; and the express declaration of God in Jeremiah 22:30 that no one descending from King Jehoiachin, who appears in the genealogy of Matthew 1 as Jechonias (v. 11), shall sit upon David's throne. (This last is a problem for the view held by Rev. Veldman in that if Mary was in the "royal line," Jesus was a man of Jehoiachin's seed, so that a descendant of King Jehoiachin sits on David's throne, seemingly in flat contradiction of God's Word in Jeremiah 22:30.) Rev. Veldman's objection to my explanation of Jesus' genealogy consists of a different interpretation of Luke 1:34 from that which I gave and of an appeal to the Davidic promise in Psalm 89:20-37.

The difference over Mary's response to Gabriel in Luke 1:34 centers on the word "know" (Greek: *ginooskoo*). I explained it of sexual intercourse. Rev. Veldman understands it as Mary's awareness of a suitable candidate for marriage. The lexicons explain the word in Luke 1:34 as referring to sexual intercourse (cf. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* and Arndt and Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Calvin, Geldenhuys, Greijdanus, and Hendriksen, with virtually all other commentators, explain "know" in Luke 1:34 as sexual intercourse (cf. Calvin's *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, Vol. 1; N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*; S. Greijdanus, *Lucas*, in *Korte Verklaring*; and W. Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke*). Hendriksen is representative of the commentaries:

She (Mary) has correctly interpreted the angel's message to mean that without the assistance of a husband she is about to conceive a child. So far so good. But *how* was this pos-

sible? Among humans conception without insemination was unheard of (p. 88).

There is also the fact that the word is used elsewhere in the account of Jesus' birth to refer to sexual intercourse between Joseph and Mary: "And (Joseph) knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Matt. 1:25).

Has Rev. Veldman considered the difficulty involved in his explanation of Mary's, "I know not a man"? Mary has determined that she is the

"sole survivor of David's royal line" and that there is no male in that line to beget the Christ. Nevertheless, she permits herself to become engaged to a man who cannot produce the Christ, thus ensuring, as far as she is concerned, that the Christ will never come.

As for the appeal to Psalm 89, the assumption that underlies the appeal is that God promised David the Messiah *out of the "royal line,"* that is, the family of Solomon. Neither in Psalm 89 nor in the historical

passage upon which Psalm 89 depends, II Samuel 7:11ff., is this stated as part of the promise. The Davidic promise was that the Messiah will be David's seed, proceeding from David's bowels (II Sam. 7:12). This promise is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, even though He descends from David through David's son Nathan rather than through Solomon. In this case too, Jesus is Son of David the King. By blood, He is royalty. By divine election, He is *the* royal child. □

— DJE

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

● Cults in Eastern Europe

With the collapse of Communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union came an open door to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. As reported earlier in these columns the Back To God Hour of the Christian Reformed Church will be heard on Soviet radio. Other churches are sending missionaries to Eastern Europe. Bibles and other Christian literature are being widely distributed throughout these countries. A growing number of Soviet students and professors are linking up with U. S. Christian colleges as part of an exchange program adopted last year by the Christian College Coalition (CCC) and Russian universities. Twelve students from Yaroslavl Polytechnic Institute spent three weeks this January at two CCC-affiliated schools in Pennsylvania: Geneva College in Beaver Falls and Messiah College in Grantham. Last December, three business professors from Gordon College in Wenham, MA presented

fifteen lectures to students at Leningrad Technological Institute in St. Petersburg. They taught principles of free market economics as well as how Christian ethics can be incorporated in the business world. Last year when the exchange agreement was formulated a top Russian official asked the CCC to help Russian schools restructure their business and economic curricula to include an emphasis on free enterprise. The CCC is now close to completing an MBA (Master of Business Administration) curriculum which will be used in twenty-seven Russian institutes and universities.

For these open doors to the gospel we ought to be thankful. No one would have dared to imagine that this could happen one year ago. It is now possible to preach the gospel freely and openly in countries which promoted Atheism and persecuted the church for decades.

Regrettably the cults are also aggressively at work in these same countries and gaining adherents among their peoples.

Kathleen Mickelsen's eyes panned the crowded music hall in Leningrad as her church choir performed. "Half-way through the concert, my eyes were drawn to a woman in the audi-

ence — and I noticed her eyes were drawn to me," recounts Mickelsen. "She just melted at our singing of 'Love So Amazing, So Divine,' a song about Christ on the cross. We kept looking at each other through the rest of the concert — and I sang the songs as my testimony to her with all my heart." Mickelsen's testimony? She's a Mormon, a member of the famed Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which completed a highly successful tour through Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union last summer.

As of October 1991, the Mormons reported six to seven hundred active members in the former Soviet Union. The Mormons had missionaries to Eastern European refugees in Vienna before the Berlin Wall fell.

The Jehovah's Witnesses reported that altogether more than 370,000 attended conventions in the summer of 1991 in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union. A total of 18,293 converts were baptized during thirty convention gatherings.

Unification Church founder Sun Myung Moon, an avid opponent of communism, met privately with Mikhail Gorbachev on April 19, 1990, and promised to help finance the ailing Soviet economy. In exchange, Moon was allowed to fly an estimated

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

1,400 "elite students" from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Tashkent to the U.S. for field trips and indoctrination in Moon's teachings.

A number of New Age groups are already based in Moscow alone. Among them are five National UFO study centers; four astrology study centers; the Russian Theosophical Society; two national parapsychology schools; eight centers for studying folk medicine and natural healing techniques; and five yoga training centers.

Soviet Armenian psychiatrists now recommend transcendental meditation to their population for dealing with stress and pain. In February of 1990, a group of Western experts trained over 12,000 Armenians in TM. As of the end of 1990, there were more than 1,000 avid practitioners in Moscow.

The Hare Krishna cult and the Christian Scientists have also made deep inroads into Poland especially, but also elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

While we regret the influence of these aberrant and unorthodox groups on the peoples of Eastern Europe, we are certain that God has His church in these countries. Jesus Christ will also gather His church out of these nations by His Word and Holy Spirit. But Jesus will do that by means of the preaching of the Word. Our prayer is that the church will be faithful to Jesus' call to make disciples out of all nations, the nations of Eastern Europe as well!

Christianity Today
National and International
Religion Report

● The GKN and The Reformed Ecumenical Council

At its meeting in Harare in 1988, at the request of several member denominations, the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) instructed its Interim Committee to examine, in four major areas, the position of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (the

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, hereafter RCN. This is the denomination where many of us have our spiritual roots).

First the committee considered the documents on Scripture which the RCN has published in recent years.

Second, it examined the RCN's current position with respect to homosexual members. The REC had requested the RCN to rescind its acceptance of homosexual practice. The RCN decided not to rescind the advice it gives its churches. The RCN will continue to encourage its congregations to accept those homosexual members who are living in loving and faithful relationships. They declare that they want their church to have "room for homophilical brothers and sisters."

Third, the Interim Committee discussed and analyzed the RCN's response to the REC Hermeneutics and Ethics report.

Fourth, the committee discussed the RCN's own view of its future within the REC. The RCN pointed out that the REC is the only confessional body that it belonged to. They repeatedly told the Interim Committee that the RCN wished to remain in the REC.

In the last section of its report, the Interim Committee concludes that the RCN has not violated the Constitutional Basis and Purpose of the REC. The committee noted that there had been a departure in "some degree," but the committee declared it "could not say without any doubt that we have reached the limits in regard to RCN membership in the REC." The Interim Committee is advising the REC to continue discussions of these issues.

Already several denominations, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church among them, have withdrawn from the REC because of its persistent refusal to terminate the membership of the RCN. We wonder, will others follow suit after the 1992 Assembly of the REC meets?

REC News Exchange

● A Church Split?

A new nationwide diocese, led by conservative bishops, was announced at a meeting of the Episcopal Synod of America (ESA), November 8, in Fresno, California. The ESA claims there are two religions in the Episcopal Church, "one accepts the gospel, the other the ways of the world." The ESA is opposed to liberal theology, to admitting homosexuals to the ordained ministry, and to ordaining women. It claims not to be schismatic, but Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and his nine-bishop Council of Advice called on the ESA "to cease from implementing this plan which clearly points toward schism."

Will this cause a split in the Episcopal Church? We shall see. □

National and International
Religion Report

*All my life I still have
found,
And I will forget it
never;
Every sorrow hath its
bound,
And no cross en-
dures forever.
All things else have but
their day,
Only God's love lasts
for aye.*

Standard Bearer,
March 15, 1933

In His Fear
Mr. Fred Hanko

The Education Game

Bang! Pow! Johnny is busy repelling the alien enemy invaders. He does not even hear the call to dinner. When we finally go to get him, he snaps at us, "I can't come now. Can't you see I'm setting a new record?" He remains totally concentrated on the game until it is over and Johnny has run up a record-breaking score. We wonder: why cannot Johnny show a fraction of such intensity upon his school work?

Perhaps in the hope that education can become so absorbing, games have become more and more a part of education in recent years. Although when we were young we also played our little games of "streetcar," and held our spell-downs, games are now a part, it seems, of nearly every subject. Computer games give us practice in mathematics and a variety of other subjects. Simulation games give us "experience" and understanding in social studies. Other games offer easy ways to master the facts of geography, history, and any other subject you might choose. In school and out we are becoming more and more a games-oriented society. Sometimes it seems that education itself has become a game.

The manufacturers and educational materials suppliers offer seemingly endless choices of games of all sorts that are practically guaranteed to motivate your students, arouse

their lagging interests, stimulate their desire for learning, solve your classroom discipline problems, and prepare students to march on further educational triumphs. It looks as though education is becoming an enormous game.

It is exactly this that I am concerned about: are our students treating education as though it were a huge game, and are we encouraging them to think so? Now please do not misunderstand me. I have a number of educational games in my classroom. Some of them I use regularly, especially for drill purposes. I also use games now and then to try to illustrate a particular principle, or sometimes even for a change of pace to break out of routine. Educational games have a useful place in education.

Some schools have become places where students learn primarily through games. Suddenly, children who used to hate school now love it. Children who used to be inert and inactive in school are full of ambition, activity, and enthusiasm. Manufacturers of school supplies love it. Parents love to see their children having fun in school. It seems that the only ones who are reluctant are a few reactionary teachers who just don't want to change their ways.

I think, however, when we realize what this implies, we may not be so enthusiastic about it.

One of the greatest problems with making education a game is that we educate by the modern rules of games. You know that it is becoming more and more true that the goals of games are these: defeat your oppo-

nent (the means or methods are less important than the result); obtain the highest score you possibly can (the level of the score is the only thing that is important); enjoy the instant gratification (move up in the "Hall of Fame," earn "big money," or gain a promotion).

Consider the kinds of problems that we have when these ideas are promoted in education: The goal is to get the highest possible number or letter on the top of that paper. To gain this most efficiently, of course, one must avoid being delayed by time-consuming learning along the way. You get the right answers to the problems in your math lesson. If you can do that without doing calculations, so much the better. If you can get answers to the questions without reading the assignment, so much the better. If you can say, "I passed the test and never cracked the book," you have gained many points in the game. Education is a contest between the student and the teacher, in which the student tries to win the highest grade possible while expending the least amount of effort.

Although you will say it has always been thus, and I will agree, I insist that there are signs that working for good grades is becoming more unfashionable, and the methods by which one obtains those grades more acceptable. As in the games we play in real life we rarely consider how we won, only whether we actually won, so in the game that education has become we do not ask whether something has been learned, but what scores or grades resulted. I do not mean that all students cheat (although cheating

Mr. Hanko is a teacher at Hope Protestant Reformed School in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

seems to be becoming more acceptable because, after all, it does not matter in the games we play). I do mean that few students accept the fact that the goal of education is learning, not gaining grades.

There is another difficulty that arises from making education a game or a series of games. We are doing much more in education, I hope, than learning a collection of facts and accumulating a large quantity of information. Please remember that the accumulation of facts and information is extremely important in education, contrary to many current educational theorists. But, perhaps more important, we are also teaching the children habits and attitudes that we hope will also serve them well throughout their lifetimes.

It seems to me that games are very weak in teaching habits and attitudes. In fact, they are positively harmful at times. Besides promoting the idea that the final score is all that counts and that winning is the most important thing, they sometimes seem to encourage the idea that if it is not entertaining, it is not worth doing. "I'm not interested," seems to be sufficient reason to excuse students from obligations.

The fact is that one of the things we want students to learn is that in life there are some things that we have to do even though they are tedious and boring and hard to do and are things we cannot do as well as others, but we have to do them anyway. We have to do them even though they are not any fun and we do not get any recognition in the Hall of Fame. We will not make "big money" from doing them, nor will we accomplish them to the cheers of thousands. I am talking, of course, about teaching children about duty and about work, two concepts that have disappeared from the objectives of modern educators.

*It is important
for our children to know
the satisfaction that comes
from having worked hard
out of a sense of duty
and having accomplished
something for the benefit
of the Kingdom of God.*

I am constantly amazed that educators can seriously talk about

"educating children for the real world" and then go on to exclude from the classroom anything that might not be sufficiently exciting. Games are fun, and they are useful, but they are not like the real world; and there are some things about the real world that cannot be taught with games.

It is important for our children to know the satisfaction that comes from having worked hard out of a sense of duty and having accomplished something for the benefit of the Kingdom of God. In our peculiar society the game has become an end in itself and not, as it ought to be, a means to something with real value. In our schools we are teaching for life — the Christian life. And the Christian life means many things that are unpleasant in worldly terms because it means self-sacrifice, self-effacement, dedication to the cause of the Kingdom, and work, all characteristics that are not learned through games. "Oh," you say, "but those things aren't any fun." Perhaps they are not — or perhaps we ought to reexamine our definitions. But somehow we need to teach our children that real joy lies in work for the Kingdom of Heaven and the people of God. □

The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

When Eliezer, Abraham's servant, asked Rebekah's parents for permission to take her to Isaac the very day after he had come there

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

All is Well

seeking a God-fearing wife for Isaac, Rebekah's parents called her and asked her whether she would be willing to go that day. They had, we read, told Eliezer that they wanted her to stay with them at least ten more days. For after her departure they would never see her again. In effect it would be as though she had died, for, as pointed out last time, without mail service, telephones, or trains and planes, they would have no contact

again, but instead complete separation.

When they called Rebekah and asked her whether she was willing to go that day, she replied, "I will go." She was willing to go because she had been informed not only that Eliezer had come for a wife for Isaac, but also of the astounding work of God whereby He had moved Eliezer to ask for a woman who would draw water for him and his camels. For that,

Eliezer had prayed to God. And do not overlook the fact that Eliezer, although an aged man, had taken servants with him. And they could have drawn that water. Our God did work an amazing thing here; and Rebekah realized that it was not merely Abraham's desire to have her be Isaac's wife, but also God's plan which she must not ignore or reject.

So they did leave that day. And a few days later they met Isaac in a very striking way. By God's providence and grace Isaac had been caused to go out into the field to meditate. Undoubtedly he did not expect Eliezer to come back so quickly with a wife for him. Very smoothly and quickly our God arranged all things for the fulfillment of His covenant promises to Abraham. There can be no doubt that Abraham had told Isaac why Eliezer was sent to Mesopotamia. We do not read of such a revelation to Isaac by his father; but we can be sure that he did tell Isaac that Eliezer was getting a wife for him.

Let us not forget that there was no God-fearing woman there in that land of Canaan for Isaac to have as a wife. Recall what an unbelieving wife Lot had obtained there in Canaan. Abraham was not fussy and concerned about facial beauty. He did not send Eliezer to go and look for that kind of woman. There were several there in the neighborhood where Abraham lived. He wanted a believing child of God. He was not interested either merely in getting a blood relative for Isaac. He sent Eliezer there because he wanted Isaac to have a believing wife, a child of God who would with Isaac train up their children in the fear of God.

*Behind all love
and seeking of a loved one
is the call to love God.*

Our children must also be thus trained, and therefore we must have Christian schools where they can be taught the truth, and where they can

have contact with believing children of God. Our young people also must hold fast to the truth that their calling is to seek a husband or wife who will help them, not hurt them, in training children in the fear of God's name. Behind all love and seeking of a loved one is the call to love God. THAT comes first! Indeed it is a good motive to want to build up someone else in spiritual strength. But never overlook the fact that our own spiritual life must be strengthened day after day and year after year; and we should take no step that would turn our lives the other way.

In that light Isaac's meditation, while he was there in the field, was a spiritual meditation. We may be sure that he meditated and prayed to God that Eliezer would bring him a wife who would not harm his spiritual life, but help him in it. And we find in Genesis 24:67 that, having met Rebekah and having known and learned about her spiritual life — not her physical beauty, which is not at all mentioned here — Isaac loved her, and was comforted. This was not a physical comfort and delight in her appearance, but in the fact that they were one from a spiritual point of view, and could help each other in service to the almighty and holy God who brought them into being.

We may believe that Isaac loved Rebekah and was comforted after his mother's death, not merely because now he did not have physical loneliness, but because he found her to be a believing child of God; and he would then enjoy fellowship with her because they believed in the same God and wanted in all things to serve Him together. God gave Isaac a blessed wife; and they strengthened each other spiritually because of their common faith in God, and were able to bring up children in a faith in Him.

Sarah, his mother, had died; and spiritual companionship was gone in the degree that he had before enjoyed it. And there were no believing young men or women for Isaac to have companionship with, and join in spiritual matters. We therefore can also be sure that when Isaac saw a host of

camels coming in the distance, he was very interested in seeing whether this was Eliezer coming back already, and whether he did have a wife for him. He may even have wondered whether perhaps Eliezer had failed in his mission and was therefore returning so quickly because things were different over there than they had thought.

We also read that Rebekah saw Isaac in the distance, and asked Eliezer who that man was. Then, learning that it was Isaac, whom she was being brought to marry, she got off her camel and put on a veil to cover herself. Then when Isaac came before them, Eliezer told him "all the things that he had done." He told Isaac how he had been led by God to know that Rebekah was to be his wife. Rebekah's physical beauty was hidden by that veil, and Eliezer did not call Isaac's attention to what a beautiful woman he had brought to be his wife. Notice that simple yet profound statement. "The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done." He told Isaac basically what he had prayed to God, and wanted as the sign that this was His, that is, God's, choice of a wife for Isaac. Isaac must know that God has sent Rebekah to be his wife.

And by all means note that it was not a case of love at first sight when Isaac saw her. He may have been very pleased that Eliezer succeeded in getting a wife for him; but Isaac must know that this is God's will and that she was a spiritual woman who agreed to become his wife, because she knew that she was the fulfillment of Eliezer's prayer unto God.

We read that Isaac took her unto his mother's tent, and that shortly thereafter Abraham died. Abraham had, according to Genesis 25:5, given Isaac all his earthly possessions. Plainly Isaac was to take Abraham's place, and he was the one through whom God would fulfill His covenant promise, and would therefore bring forth covenant seed.

When Abraham died, Ishmael, that other son of Abraham, came for his burial. This must have been quite an experience for Isaac. For one thing,

we read that Ishmael begat children while Isaac and Rebekah remained childless for some time. In Genesis 25:13 we read that Ishmael was given twelve sons. We read in Genesis 25:21 that Isaac prayed to God because Rebekah was barren. And that prayer of Isaac was answered. Rebekah begat a set of twins whose names were Esau and Jacob. It was because he believed God's covenant promise that Isaac prayed for a son.

And let us bear in mind that, in our two previous installments in this department of The Day of Shadows, we noted that the church is Christ's bride. In Isaiah 61:10 we read, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

There are then truths for us to hold on to for our comfort, and for the strengthening of our faith. First of all, there is that truth that our God made us to be Christ's bride. By nature we do not want that. Genesis 3:15 presents two people in this world, namely, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. There, too, we

are clearly taught that there is by God an enmity implanted in the seed of the woman against the devil and his spiritual seed. Our God implanted that new life in us in order to make us Christ's bride. And as Rebekah was brought from Mesopotamia to Canaan, we will by God's grace and power be brought out of this vale of tears and sorrows, and away from sins of every kind, into that heavenly Canaan where we will love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and enjoy fully His love. As Rebekah was by God's grace brought to be Isaac's wife in a different land, we will by that grace be brought to be Christ's bride in a new creation which our God will bring into being.

Then, too, let us take hold of that other comforting truth, namely, that all this will happen because our almighty God decreed it eternally, and most assuredly will cause it fully to come to pass. He moved Abraham to go to the promised land. He caused him to want a believing wife for Isaac. He implanted in Eliezer that for which he prayed as a sign indicating what woman he was to bring to Isaac. He caused Rebekah to go with Eliezer to be Isaac's wife. He moved Isaac to receive her and love her.

Enjoy then that truth in Revela-

tion 21:1, 2 that we shall be Christ's "bride," adorned for Him as our husband. And make no mistake about it, ALL is well for every elect child of God. For that union between Isaac and Rebekah presents to us a picture — a shadow, if you will — of our being brought out of the Mesopotamia in which we now live, and of our being brought unto the heavenly land of Canaan where Christ now is. Our souls will come there the moment we die. Be sure of that! Be sure also that even as God wrought all this for Isaac and Rebekah, we will with our bodies soon be brought to live with Christ in that promised land presented in Revelation 21, where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. That new heaven and earth, that holy city, the new Jerusalem, where as Christ's bride we will live with Him in a bliss and blessedness, our present words cannot fully now present.

All IS well! All that God promised us will come to pass in minutest detail. Goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our earthly life, and we will dwell with God, and with His Son as our Bridegroom, and as His bride. All is well and working together for our everlasting good. □

Malachi

Lesson 5

Judah's Treachery Against the Marriage Bond

(Malachi 2:11-17)

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

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

In the first part of chapter 2, Malachi beautifully describes God's covenant, the bond of friendship He makes with us in Christ. Malachi showed that this was an eternal covenant established by Jehovah out of

pure grace. In the covenant God blesses His people with life and peace. And those in the covenant have the calling to walk with God, turn from iniquity, oppose evil, and love God's truth.

Against this background the sin of the people of Malachi's day stood out in all its naked ugliness. Their religious attitude was cold and indifferent. A corrupt priesthood failed to teach God's law. They dealt fraudulently with their brothers.

Now we learn that their sin against the covenant of God was especially in the evil practice of mixed marriages, divorce and remarriage. This is the burden of the Word of the Lord in verses 11-16.

The sinful abuses of marriage were twofold:

1. The young men of Judah had profaned the covenant of God by marrying the daughters "of a strange god" (vs. 11, 12). This was not new to Malachi's day. From the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the sons of God had been warned against this and exhorted to marry in the Lord (see Gen. 24:1-9; 26:34, 35; 28:2). It was especially this sin which led to Israel's problems and to a generation which knew not the Lord or His mighty acts (Ex. 34:15, 16; Deut. 7:3, 4; I Kings 11:1-13). As late as the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, Israel had committed this sin. No sooner had God brought Judah back from Babylon's captivity than the men of Judah began to marry heathen wives (Ez. 9:1-12; Neh. 10:30; 13:26, 27). Now, some 60 years after Ezra, the men of Judah were again looking for their wives outside the boundaries of Israel. They contracted mixed marriages, spiritually mixed. They built their marriage on the sand and mire of carnal lust and set aside the rock of spiritual oneness in the promise of Christ (Mt. 7:24-27).

2. The sins against marriage were not confined to the youth, for the married men violated the sacred bond of marriage in divorce. Literally, verse 13 reads, "And a second thing ye do." That second thing was the sinful practice of "putting away," divorcing "the wife of thy youth." The men of Judah grew tired of their wives. The weaknesses and problems which every marriage encounters were not overcome with God's Word. Rather they let their personal desires and the difficulties of mar-

riage overrule the Word of God.

We should ask the question as to why Malachi zeros in on this evil rather than some other. There were certainly other gross violations of God's law present (see ch. 3:5). Why does he concern himself especially with the sinful abuses of the marriage bond? The answer is this: Marriage is a picture of Jehovah's covenant. It mirrors God's intimate bond between Himself and His people (Hosea 2:19, 20; Eph. 5:21-33). By establishing mixed marriages and being unfaithful in marriage, they had profaned the covenant of God. Because of what marriage is, God requires holiness of His people in the marriage bond. This He loves. All profaning of marriage He hates (vs. 16).

Jehovah looked upon these abuses as treachery (vss. 11, 15, 16). Treachery is being false to the one you confess to love, and secretly working to destroy them. Judah's treachery was saying, "I am God's friend" (note vs. 12 mentions they still offered to the Lord), and yet making a mockery of that confession in the way they married and lived in marriage. You could not see devotion to God in the way they selected a wife, or in the way they lived with their wives. It was "an abomination" to the Lord, something He "hated." God would "cut off the man that doeth this" (vs. 12).

How urgent this Word of God becomes to us today! In our passage God shows how sacred the bond of marriage is, how pleasing it is to Him, and how He hates and punishes all violation of the marriage vow. God will uphold marriage. He will aid and support married persons, even when we are the least deserving, because it is an institution pleasing to Him. (See the *Form for Marriage*, in the back of *The Psalter*.)

"Take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously" (vs. 16). Love the sacred bond of marriage! This means we will *daily* desire to be clean before God in all we do in marriage. We must remember that the Lord stands witness over our marriages (vs. 14). Then, rather than establishing our marriages carnally and living

in marriage selfishly, we will live consciously for His approval and glory.

Verse 17 stands somewhat in isolation from verses 11-16. It is yet another complaint of Jehovah against His people. This time it is directed against their attitude. The Jews thought that Jehovah favored the wicked in that He did not punish them. They accuse God of injustice (cp. Ps. 73). Most likely this stemmed from the fact that they were experiencing severe economic hardships and the lack of any national prominence.

Memory Work:

Hosea 2:19, 20

And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord.

Questions for Study:

1. First, we must remember what marriage is and how it serves as a picture of God's covenant with us. Only then can we see the "treachery" of mixed marriage and divorce and remarriage. Only then can we see how we must live in marriage.

- a. Look up the following texts and state briefly what they say about what marriage is:

Genesis 2:24 (I Cor. 6:16)

Proverbs 18:22

Ephesians 5:32

I Corinthians 11:11, 12

I Timothy 4:1, 3

- b. How is marriage a picture of God's covenant? (See Hosea 2:19, 20; Eph. 5:21-23)

- c. Explain how the following elements are necessary for marriage if it is to picture the covenant of God. (Find texts to support your answer.)

- 1) Spiritual oneness

- 2) Faithfulness

- 3) Forgiveness

- 4) Companionship (friendship and communication)

2. The treachery of mixed marriage (vss. 11, 12)

- a. Look up the following pas-

sages to determine whom a child of God is to marry. Also, state the importance for this restriction:

Genesis 24:1-9

Genesis 26:34, 35

Genesis 28:2

Deuteronomy 7:3, 4

Exodus 34:16

I Corinthians 7:39

II Corinthians 6:14

b. Why is spiritual oneness a necessity for marriage? (I Pet. 3:7)

c. What does the Word of God mean in verse 12, "The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this...."?

d. How can we teach our children the necessity of establishing solid Christian marriages?

3. The treachery of putting away the wife of thy youth:

a. Explain what is meant by the expressions used in verse 14 to describe marriage, and then apply them to marriage:

1) "wife of thy youth"

2) "thy companion"

3) "the wife of thy covenant"

(Prov. 2:17)

b. Explain what verse 15 means and tell how it is such a powerful argument against "putting away." (A little help. God is referring to Genesis 2:18-24 and the fact that He created *one* woman for the man, even though He could conceivably have made more. "Yet had he the residue of the spirit.")

c. "He hates putting away":

1) Look up the following passages and take brief notes on what they teach.

Matthew 5:33

Matthew 19:3-12

Mark 10:3-13

Luke 16:18

I Corinthians 7:29

Romans 7:2-4

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

2) Answer now the following:

Is divorce ever permissible?

Is remarriage ever allowable while one's first spouse lives?

Why is it important to maintain that marriage is a lifelong bond broken only by death?

d. The women who were wrongly divorced brought their anguish to the Lord (vs. 13).

1) Explain verse 13.

2) Compare it to I Peter 3:7.

3) Explain how our own spiritual life and health are tied to our marriages.

4. Verse 17:

a. Explain what this verse means.

b. Compare it with Psalm 73, and then express how we often give this same complaint and thus weary the Lord.

5. Can you write from memory Hosea 2:19, 20? ☐

Committed to Exposing Old Wolves in New Wool

Contribution

Rev. Kenneth Koole

After his address last fall at the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. (the publishers of the *SB*), Rev. Koole was asked to submit a transcript of the speech for publication in the *Standard Bearer*. This "Contribution" is that address.

I do not intend to say much that is new this evening. The theme of my speech should indicate that. The very theme ties us in with the past. It

speaks of old wolves clothed in new wool — the teachings of the latest theological fashion.

As the theme implies, however, it is our contention that these new teachings, though of the latest theological fashion, are not so new after all. Contrary to what modern-day theologians assert, what they are teaching is not the advancement and development of the timeless Word of God at all. Rather they are teaching doctrines the roots of which can be traced back to old errors, heresies which the church of Christ has exposed and rejected again and again. We think of the Gnostics (and their

dualism and mysticism), of the Arians, the Pelagians, the Arminians, *et al.*

The *Standard Bearer* in its inception was committed to promoting the Reformed faith and, hence, to opposing such errors and those who taught them (as well as warning against doctrines compatible with such errors). This ought to continue to be its function in present times.

Today there are false teachers who are new in the sense that they are our 20th century contemporaries; but, for all that, their hearts, their intentions, their ingratiating procedure, and their root error are the same as that of their predecessors, the old

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

heretics. Underneath it all they and their teachings, despite all their disclaimers, are cut out of the same cloth, namely, anti-truth. They must be exposed and renounced in uncompromising terms.

There is today great evil loose in the protestant church world.

The last thing the church needs is more watchmen who, when they lift the trumpet to their lips, blow an uncertain sound.

This has been brought home to me with special force by a couple of recently published books which served for summer reading. The one is entitled *Setting Our Sights By The Morning Star*, by Hendrik Hart. It is a book written in popular fashion, and is meant to shape the manner in which the Bible is to be read, interpreted, and preached. It also makes clear in alarming fashion the extent to which agents of Satan have been permitted not only to infiltrate Reformed Protestantism, but also to occupy seats of leadership.

Dr. Hart is of the ICS — the Institute of Christian Studies (once known as the AACCS), which in the past has been associated with Reformed, conservative scholarship. His book is an evil book. It is a book that shows how far the darkness has advanced. I intend to quote a few brief sections to give you the flavor of this midnight darkness in which all the light of God's Word is effectively quenched. The audacity of it is that Hart does so in the name of Christ, the Morning Star. The other book is called *Process Theology*, edited by Ronald Nash. It is a bit more technical in nature, dealing with issues that pertain to God's own Being and attributes. It consists of responses of scholars from a variety of theological backgrounds to this most recent innovation and aberration in the field of dogmatics, called "process theology."

I make mention of these two books because their pages make clear just how far the darkness has advanced in the historic Christian church.

Let me acquaint you with process theology first of all. In his intro-

duction (p. ix) Editor Nash (who opposes this theology) writes: "What is process theology? To its proponents, process theology is the most important development in Christian thought since the first century. It is significant, they think, because the movement gives sophisticated moderns an intellectually and emotionally satisfying reinterpretation of Christianity that is compatible with late-twentieth century ways of thinking." (In reality it gives these theologians an umbrella under which to hide in order to save their academic reputation in sophisticated, modern circles.)

"Moreover, they add, process thought finally removes from christianity the dominating influence of Greek and Hellenistic notions that have, in their view, distorted the essence of Christianity for almost two millenia." (For "Greek and Hellenistic notions" read — "creedal theology." The Reformed creeds are, these men allege, "scholastic," which is to say that the Reformed theologians who drew them up simply applied Platonic and Aristotelian concepts to the Being and attributes of God.)

We note that these nincompoops, for all their alleged scholarship, are unable to distinguish between the Romish, Thomistic creeds (which are indeed Aristotelian in approach), and the Reformed, biblical creeds (proving just how unscholarly and dull their thinking actually is). Unbelief has such blind spots!

"To its critics, process theology is the most dangerous heresy presently threatening the Christian faith.... Process thought is a total capitulation to paganism." In this last assessment its critics are absolutely correct.

In simple terms, process theology, for all its being a recent innovation, is a return to an old error. It is the application of Darwinism, evolutionism, to the being of God. God Himself (itself?) is in the process of flux and development (hence the name, process theology).

With respect to God, then, faith is not the confession that Jehovah God is the great "I AM," but that He is the great "HAS BEEN," because He is

not anymore what He once was.

Concerning God you can not say, "He is," but "He is becoming." He is not the eternal God with respect to time, but is Himself "temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing" (pg. 17). He is growing with His creation, and developing in His response. What is this but the old pagan pantheism, that God Himself is part of the creation process, part of an awakening mind? There is nothing new here. This is return to early Greek notions.

But what an audacity to say this, while claiming to be a Christian theologian. And then to think that this finds a hearing in the church! That in itself is a scathing indictment of modern protestantism. I could think of no greater honor than to be called upon in the judgment day to usher these theologians into the presence of Jehovah God as His glory is in the face of Jesus, and to say, "Gentlemen, I introduce you to the Great I Am. Now let us hear you theologize!"

Why do men posit such a "god?" Let's be clear, not because they are attracted to or comforted by such a being, or because they are moved to magnify his glory, but for one reason and one reason only, because they are dead set against Jehovah God, the God of the Scriptures, the God of Elijah, and of Paul, Augustine, and Calvin. His power, knowledge, and holiness they dread and hate.

Now, I remind you that Nash states that there are those who say this theology is the greatest threat to the Christian faith of our day. That in itself should show how weak, limpid, and without defense the vast portion of Protestantism is today. Who will speak for the Lord's side? Who will withstand evolutionism in all its forms? Who will declare the Creator God in all His power, "who in six days created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is"? Who will bear the reproach of the "learned" of our age, and encourage the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to this Baal? In this area the *Standard Bearer* has a service to render. (Interestingly enough, in its Au-

gust 1, 1991 issue you will find a review [by the editor] of a book by Ronald Nash, "The Concept of God," which deals exactly with this new theology.)

But now I want to give you a taste of what this Hendrik Hart is teaching. Hart's articulation of the modern assault against the historic Christian faith is being met with "great delight, and with thorough-going agreement" (Nicholas Wolterstorff, back cover). What Hart's agenda is is not so difficult to detect. He speaks of mankind being threatened by a great darkness, and of the church's calling to be a light in the world and to lead men out of this darkness. We are called to "embody the light that Jesus is" (p. 13). In fact, on page 12 Hart speaks of the church's calling "to continue incarnating God to save the world"! What is this but incipient process theology?

But how are we to embody the light? Listen: "...we need to focus our faith on practice rather than on theory, by walking in the light rather than an understanding doctrine" (p. 13). Again, "...[In] chapter three [I argue] that the Bible can be read as a book of light better than as an infallible text of objective truth" (p. 16). What is this but the ongoing assault against propositional truth and biblical inerrancy? Again, "In the Bible truth is related to being on the right way, more than to (our western) having the right information" (p. 30).

Notice the asininity of this wolf — we must follow the right way, but without a reliable road map! Or again, "So the Bible and Western tradition do not simply coincide. Truth in the Bible cannot simply be understood as what is the case, the right view, the correct formulation, the one acceptable articulation, objective information, historical accuracy" (p. 31). How do we know what this truth is? He points us of course to John 14 and 16 and the Spirit of truth. "But in giving such specifics (as you find in the New Testament Scriptures — KK), the Spirit primarily gives directions and directives that go beyond these specifics... the Spirit is not limited by existing

roads and vehicles" (p. 28). So, the Spirit leads apart from Scriptural propositions.

In fact, Hart makes explicit reference to Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." His exegesis? "Literally, this text does not refer to the Bible.... God's Word, *not the Bible*, is called a lamp" (emphasis mine — KK) (p. 22).

What is this but the age old heresy of subjectivism? It is the continuation of the theology of a man like the late Karl Barth, who made a distinction between God's authoritative Word and the Bible. We will 'hear' the Word of God as we confront things out there and bring forth our own truth as we respond by faith and love.

Now let me quote a passage that demonstrates how clever this wolf in sheep's clothing is. Hart writes of God's wrath spoken of in the latter part of Romans 1 and the first part of Romans 2. These passages you probably have understood to be an apostolic word against the prevailing sins and immoralities of the age. But guess again. According to Hart this is an indictment against "our confessional, doctrinal, church-orderly, synodical heritage" (p. 58). He then goes on to assert that those who stand for such a heritage are against God's grace.

"We shall not experience grace, because grace is a fruit of justice as mercy. A psychologist described Christian families neglecting the mercy of God's justice as rigid and rule bound, male dominated, legalistic about church attendance and Christian behavior, interpreting the Bible literally, disciplining harshly, and intolerant of change in church or society. This is the tradition which sternly warns: repent! God accepts you in Christ; if you repent. No real grace here, no awareness that the Heidelberg Catechism knows the law as rule of *gratitude* and obedience as *fruit* of new life; obedience of faith, as Paul calls it (Romans 1:5)."

Mercy! Are you all ready for the psychiatrist's couch (and psychiatric treatment) or what! Brethren, we may treat such as a joke now, but you must realize that the day is coming

when that will be the charge which is going to be lodged against you by men who are dead serious. You, with your dogmatic Christianity, are what has been wrong with the Christian faith for centuries. Away with you!

The upshot? As one man pointed out at the close of J. Gresham Machen's kangaroo-court trial by the apostatizing PCUSA, and his consequent deposition from office, "Dr. Machen was tried for the heresy of opposing heresy." This is the situation in most of which goes by the name of Christ's church. There is only one heresy, namely, to oppose the wolves and their heresies. Those who do are heretics. That's the charge that is going to stick.

And this is Dr. Hart.

"God achieves [repentance], says Paul, by tolerance.... Tolerance is God's way to repentance.... We must learn to trust God's tolerance."

That will not only help us become receptive to others, but we'll also find it easier to believe God is kind toward us. God is tolerant and patient, God is kind and ecumenical. Though there is a limit to this tolerance. In Romans 2:5 God visits with wrath those who show contempt for divine tolerance. Otherwise, says Paul in 11:6, grace would no longer be grace (pp. 58, 59, 60).

If you go to the last chapter you will find that this tolerance is especially to be displayed towards those of the church who are living in the sin of homosexuality.

But you see what has happened. The man has stolen our biblical vocabulary. And we be those who teach the doctrine of devils. They are the angels of light and love. And if in the end they must put us away, it can only be because we, beyond all endurance, have tried even their patience and tolerance. And so they will at last be compelled to put us away, but it will be with tears, weeping all the while that we have rejected their overtures of love in our hard-headed way. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how we in love would have gathered you, you children of the pharisees...."

So what can they do except in

their patient and kindhearted way put us to death at last. That's the spirit behind this book.

And now permit me but one more brief quote to lay bare the very darkness of this Hart.

"An orthodox confessional tradition measures its faithfulness in part with the yardstick of a doctrinal statement called a confession. The doctrinal statement articulates the confessional content of the faith. [But] To be loyal to or subscribe to such a confession is very different from following the person of Jesus" (p.122).

*The vast majority
of Protestantism
has capitulated.
Shall we?*

And then Hart goes on to say this is an impediment. In our modern age the creeds stand between the believer and the living Word of God. This is the heart of the thesis, and it represents the agenda of the day. It is nothing less than a lurking enmity against the creeds of the historic Christian faith. This is where the battle rages. This is the heritage at stake, and such must be publicized.

However, there is one problem: men of Hart's calibre assure you they are not interested in detroying anything, much less maligning the creeds. It is simply that the creeds, for which they have highest esteem and admiration, and which have served a most commendable purpose in the milieu of a bygone era, have now outlived their usefulness, and must be laid to rest. Let us bury them, then, with highest military honors, and let the trumpet sound be that of the blowing of taps, as we garnish the sepulchres of the prophets.

The vast majority of Protestantism has capitulated. Shall we?

Why do these men stand against the creeds? Why? Because the historic creeds without exception have a certain view of Scripture, and they forbid any other view. Let that never

be misunderstood. These men do not want to get rid of the creeds *in order to return to Scripture*, as they so piously state; they want to get rid of the creeds in order to get rid of that view of Scripture, namely, that the Bible is God's Word. Not, it contains man's response to God's Word, but, it is God's Word, and as such it is infallible, inerrant, and filled with Apostolic precepts that apply to 20th century man and 21st century society in the same authoritative way as they did to first century men and women.

These men want liberty to spout their unbiblical and ungodly teachings at will without the looming presence of the creeds threatening them, to be used at any time by the least-schooled member of the church to label their teaching for what it is — false doctrine; and to expose them for what they are — heretics. It is all black on white. These wolves want the license to interpret the Bible any way they please without opposition. But the creeds will not let them, not as long as these men want to claim that they are Reformed or Calvinistic. The creeds remain a witness against their re-definitions.

These men are after the jugular of the present day church, namely, her living confession of the God-breathed scriptures. It is this and nothing less that is at stake in this battle over the binding power of the creeds.

This, of course, stands as a cause dear to your hearts. You are the *Reformed Free Publishing Association*. This is what you are committed to promoting. The *SB* itself does not claim to be promoting theology of some recent vintage, but theology of the 'older, wiser sort,' namely that found in the great Reformed creeds. What motivates us to write, in great measure surely, is the assurance that the creeds have not outlived their usefulness, but that these venerable documents have something vital to say to the new forms of errors.

It is the Reformed faith as it wields the Calvinistic truth that is still the most deadly and powerful opponent of those who at heart are wolves,

and who for all their double-talk want to bring an end to the Apostolic Word ruling in Christ's church. It is this Faith that penetrates their deceit most effectively, and, where applied, makes their yammering ineffective, and prevents many from being led astray to be devoured in their generations.

If the *SB* serves no other purpose than to promote the knowledge of and esteem for the old standards of our faith, it has rendered Christ's church and people an invaluable service.

And now one final question, namely, what purpose do we hope to accomplish in all our polemical writing? Do we write in the hopes that perhaps we can persuade propagaters of this or that error to see and recant their position? No, that is doubtful to the extreme, and almost without exception an exercise in futility. But there are others, as should be obvious, who have an awakening interest in true Calvinism and are looking for answers, consistently Reformed answers, to questions of doctrine confronting themselves. There is nothing like the printed page to allow them to weigh the evidence.

So we persist in writing and publishing in the interests of the Reformed truth *consistently* set forth. We stress that word "consistently." There are many who are basically Reformed, but with whom we differ at some point, as for instance Klaas Schilder. The points of difference have been and are to be examined and, if inconsistent with the one whole, rejected. As the earlier writers in the *SB* never wearied of stressing, *beginselen werken door* (principles work through)! What could be plainer than the theory of common grace!

Our confidence, then, has to do with the power of the printed page. Surely the 16th century Reformation demonstrated just how God honors truth on the printed page, and uses it for gathering, defending, and preserving His church with its members. There is evidence that He is doing that through our written material.

The evidence? The amount of preaching our seminary professors

have had to do the past year, and are scheduled to continue.

Why is this? Because so many of our area pulpits are vacated by pastors who are flying hither, thither, and yon preaching to small groups scattered, it seems, all over the globe, groups of believers who are taking us by violence and who persist in pleading for preaching.

You weary of these contacts and your pastors being gone?

*Now is not the time
to retreat
within our own walls ...*

Well, I have the solution. Stop the silly printing presses. It is your own fault. If you would but roll up the *SB* and stop your support of publishing endeavors, perhaps all this clamor for help would cease, and we pastors and professors, and you el-

ders assisting in their absence, could be left in peace. We as churches, at least, could be free of this drain on manpower, and others could carry on the work. For who in the wide world would ever hear of us or know what in the wide world we stand for and defend? The trumpet blast would scarcely be heard outside our own walls.

And this will please the Lord Christ in these last times? as God's own are confronted by the Harts of darkness and the doctrines of ravenous wolves??

The very stones would testify against us. Now is not the time to retreat within our own walls, and to let the wolves scatter and devour out there whom they will. Now is the time to put the trumpet to the lips, the trumpet that blows the clear, certain sound of the truth of all the ages, the truth embodied in the clear notes of the creeds, echoing the timeless Messianic words of the Scriptures. This is the urgent need of the hour, until the

true Dayspring comes again from on high.

This is what the *SB* has endeavored to do in the past 60+ years.

The Lord has blessed the endeavor, warts and all.

There are few enough who are committed to true Calvinism. God's universal church needs to know that there are others, like us, who also see the wolves for what they are (and, I am tempted to say, who nail their hides to the wall). But I will content myself with a free translation of Paul's words in Galatians 2 as he opposed the Judaizers: To whom we give place by yielding our Reformed inheritance, no, not one inch, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you and all those who love the truth as it is in Jesus. And He shall come as a refiner's fire, and who shall abide the day of His coming? Surely not any who have either added to or taken away from the Words of the Book. □

Book Reviews

The Book of the Revelation, by Philip E. Hughes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. 242 pp., \$17.95, hardcover. [Reviewed by Rev. Charles Terpstra.]

Profitable commentaries on the last book of the Bible are hard to come by, especially those written from a conservative, amillennial point of view. This volume is an exception however, and that is what makes it a welcome addition to commentaries on Revelation.

The author, who was an Anglican clergyman and a New Testament scholar who spent part of his career teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary (he died in May of 1990), has written a very helpful exposition of this difficult book. Not only is his standpoint conservative and amillennial, but his style is biblical, i.e., expository, and popular. Hughes

takes a verse by verse approach, carefully explaining the text in the light of the whole of Scripture, yet without technical jargon and cumbersome sidetracks. It is an "eminently straightforward biblical commentary," to use the words of the publisher's blurb. For this reason it can be used by the layman as well as by pastors and Bible study leaders.

There are other strengths to this commentary. It is based on the premise that the book is relevant and applicable to the church throughout the New Testament era; hence many good points of application are made, also in connection with the letters to the seven churches. The author has properly captured and conveyed the positive outlook of Revelation, stressing the sovereignty of God and the victory of Jesus Christ over all the powers of darkness, so that His goal

of perfect salvation is achieved in the new creation. Hughes has done an excellent job of relating the prophecies of Revelation to those of the Old Testament, showing how the latter are fulfilled by the former. His treatment of the symbolism of the book is careful and adequate, free of far-fetched interpretation and sensationalism.

This is not to say that there are not weaknesses and even points of error in this commentary. The author believes that the first horseman of chapter 6 represents a wicked power of despotic rule with a lust for power and world domination, not the powerful march of the gospel throughout the world. In his explanation of the expressions "names written in the book of life" and "names not written in the book of life" Hughes is weak on sovereign election and reprobation,

speaking instead merely of the "regenerate" and "unregenerate."

Knowing that Hughes has been charged by certain evangelicals with denying the doctrine of eternal punishment and teaching in its place annihilation (that the wicked reprobate are ultimately destroyed), I deliberately watched for this as I went through this commentary. And sure enough, I found enough evidence to substantiate this charge. Hughes repeatedly avoids using the word "hell" and its implicit idea of a place of everlasting torment, even when Revelation speaks of everlasting punishment and torment for the enemies of Christ and His church. And in several places Hughes explicitly sets forth his view of annihilation.

For example, in connection with Revelation 1:18 he writes that in His second coming Christ will raise all the dead, "both the impenitent to judgment and *destruction* and the regenerate to life and glory," (p. 29). In explaining the concept of the "second death" (chap. 20:6, 14), he writes: "Thus the second death is total death, the utter *destruction* of final judgment executed against the obdurate enemies of God," (p. 215). And in connection with God's final defeat and punishment of Satan and the antichrist described in chapter 20:9, 10, Hughes speaks of this as "their *elimination* from God's creation," (p. 217) (emphasis mine in all three quotes, CJT).

Even though this view of Hughes does not dominate his interpretation and destroy the general value of his exposition, it is a serious error. It stands in sharp opposition to the clear teaching of Scripture concerning hell and it takes away from the authority and justice of God in the punishment of the wicked.

With these weaknesses in mind, the Reformed Christian can nevertheless profit from the use of this otherwise fine commentary. ♦

Discourses and Sayings of Our Lord, by John Brown. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990 reprint. 3 vols., approx. 528 pages per volume, \$74.95, cloth. [Reviewed by Rev. Charles Terpstra.]

As the title to this three-volume set indicates, this is an exposition of both the extended discourses and the short sayings of Jesus Christ. It may be classified therefore as a commentary on selected parts of the four gospels. Volume 1 treats John 3-6, Matthew 5-7 and 15, Luke 11 and 12, and Mark 7; volume 2, John 7, 8, 10, 12, and 13; and volume 3, John 14-16.

John Brown (1784-1858, "of Edinburgh," as he is known, to distinguish him from other John Browns) was a Scottish minister and professor of theology. He has been called "one of the finest biblical expositors of his own or any age," with "outstanding

intellectual powers ... married to a genuinely pastoral heart," (from the front jacket cover). He is also the author of a commentary on the book of Hebrews, likewise published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

Brown's exposition is in the flavor of the Puritans of the century before him — detailed explanation of the text and rich practical application. In other words, his concern is to reach both *head* and *heart*! Here is a sampling from his treatment of John 12:27:

What a wonderful display of character is here made by our Savior, in this exercise of that love which is the fulfilling of the law! Love to God, in the form of entire submission to his will — devotedness to his glory; love to man, in a readiness to suffer the extreme of shame and agony, in becoming obedient to death — death under the curse — the death of the cross — for our salvation. If we have a particle of spiritual discernment, such calm, principled, disinterested, self-sacrificing love, must call forth the sentiments of adoring esteem, gratitude, and love, II, p. 219).

Those who are looking for a good supplemental commentary on the gospels, or those who are looking for a devotional work through which to become better acquainted with the Person and work of their Savior, will find these needs abundantly met in these volumes. □

Report of Classis East

January 8, 1992

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 1992 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan. Each church was represented by two delegates. Also present for an hour of the morning's proceedings were the church history students of Calvin Kalsbeek from Covenant Christian High School. Rev. M. Joostens was

the chairman for this session.

The business, for the most part, was routine. Classis did, however, spend a considerable amount of time discussing the report of the church visitors, particularly their visits to Wyckoff and Norristown. The action taken by classis with regard to this report was to appoint a special committee to make recommendations as to the proper procedure to be followed regarding Norristown and their

failure to implement a decision of classis regarding the use of *The Psalter*.

In other business, Classis was informed by the consistories of Southwest and Grandville that they intended to appeal to synod the decisions of the September/October classis regarding their protests. Classis also granted Covenant's request to ask the churches in Classis East to take collections for their Build-

ing Fund. A similar request will be sent to synod to ask Classis West to do the same.

Classis adopted the following appointmentschedule: SOUTHEAST (PM service only): Feb. 9 — Woudenberg; Feb. 16 — Kamps; Feb. 23 — Koole; March 1 — VanBaren; March 15 — Kamps; March 22 — Joostens; March 29 — Koole; April 5 — VanBaren; April 19 — Bruinsma; April 26 — Gritters; May 3 — Joostens; May 10 — Kortering; May 24 — VanBaren; May 31 — Koole; June 7 — Joostens; June 14 — Kamps, VENICE:

Feb. 16, 23 — Bruinsma; March 1, 8 — Flikkema, LARNE: Feb. 16, 23, Mar. 1 — K. Hanko; Mar. 29, April 5, 12 — Slopsema.

January is the time classis spends much time in voting. The following results: Delegates *ad examina*: Rev. G. VanBaren elected to a three-year *primus* term; Rev. J. Slopsema elected to a three-year *secundus* term. Classical Committee: Rev. M. Kamps elected to a three-year term. Synodical Delegates: MINISTERS: *Primi*: W. Bruinsma, M. Kamps, J. Kortering, G. VanBaren; *Secundi*: B. Gritters, M.

Joostens, K. Koole, J. Slopsema. ELDER: *Primi*: C. Doezeema, D. Engelsma, P. Miedema, K. Schipper; *Secundi*: H. Boer, D. Harbach, H. Langerak, T. Looyenga. Church Visitors: Revs. Kortering and VanBaren were elected to serve with Revs. Kamps and Slopsema as alternates.

Expenses for this classis amounted to \$2,310.20. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, May 13, 1992 at Hudsonville.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

News From our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

At a congregational meeting on October 15, the congregation of the Peace PR Church of Lynwood, IL decided to purchase 3.5 acres of land. Presently, Peace is meeting in the auditorium of the Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, IL. It goes without saying that any congregation desires to have its own home church sanctuary. Doubtless this is also true of Peace. This purchase represents the first step down that road to a church home.

Also concerning Peace Church we should mention here that in mid-December their Choral Society invited the congregation to their annual Christmas program.

The Church Choir of the Loveland, CO PRC presented their Christmas program on Sunday, December 15th. This year's program was comprised exclusively of selections from Handel's "Messiah." Not only were there several chorus selections, but there were all the usual soloists: soprano, mezzo soprano,

alto, tenor, and bass. All this from a choir which, according to our 1991 yearbook, consists of just 24 members. Definitely no small accomplishment. The student body of Loveland Christian School also sang three songs as a special number.

The Council of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI approved the public signing of the Formula of Subscription before the congregation at the time of installation of officebearers into the office of Christ. By doing so, Southwest intended to underscore the responsibility of the officebearers to uphold the truth of God's Word interpreted in our Three Forms of Unity.

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA recently sponsored a lecture given by Rev. Dale Kuiper, pastor of the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada. Rev. Kuiper spoke on the subject, "The Will of God: One or Two?" While Rev. Kuiper was in Redlands for this lecture he, along with Rev. R. Moore, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, conducted church visitation there on that same weekend. And both of the visiting ministers preached one service in Hope Church on Sunday.

The congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC approved a proposal to replace their church's furnace and air conditioners.

Young People's Activities

The evening of December 22, the Young People's Societies of our churches in Illinois (Bethel, Peace, and South Holland) met at South Holland for a combined Christmas meeting. Each society gave a special number. There was carol singing and a group discussion of Matthew 2:1-12, as well as refreshments afterwards.

News from Singapore

We thought our readers would like some more highlights from one of the Kortering's letters written to their congregation in Grandville, MI.

In a recent letter, Rev. Kortering writes that he will be preaching at a combined service on Christmas morning. He writes: "This will be quite special for us, because it will be my first experience presenting the message in English and having it translated into Chinese Mandarin. Quite a number of young members have parents who are not Christians and can speak only Chinese. They like to take advantage of these opportunities to have them hear the message of Christ. I plan to make a sermon on Luke 2:11, 'A Savior is Born.'"

School Activities

On December 19 the students of the South Holland, IL PR Christian

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

THE STANDARD BEARER

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

School presented their All-School Christmas Program. The students developed the theme, "Worthy is the Lamb."

Mission Activities

Rev. Cammenga, pastor of the Loveland, CO PRC showed slides of his recent trip to Northern Ireland to his congregation after an evening service in late December.

We should also mention here that Rev. Kamps, pastor of the South-west PRC in Grandville, MI filled a classical appointment the first two

Sundays of the new year in Venice, FL.

And Rev. G. VanBaren, of our Hudsonville, MI PRC, filled a classical appointment of three Sundays to the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Larne, Northern Ireland.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC reported recently that they received their first letters from Russia.

Several months ago it was reported here that the Hudsonville, MI

PRC began taking video recordings of their services for the purpose of sending them on to Larne, Northern Ireland. Well, since that time the video program of Hudsonville has expanded so that now videos are regularly sent not only to Northern Ireland, but to Tasmania, and Ft. Wayne, IN as well.

Ministerial Calls

Only one call to report on for this issue. Prof. H. Hanko declined the call he had been considering from the Southeast PRC of Grand Rapids, MI.



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

NOTICE!!!

Bible Study at Dordt College

A group of students dedicated to the historic Reformed Faith is meeting together again the second semester for a Bible study. The meetings, sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches in the area, are held on Monday evenings at 7:00 in the Dordt College library. Any student at Dordt is welcome to attend. The discussions last semester on the first three chapters of Genesis were excellent. We plan to begin our discussion at Genesis 4. If you have any questions, please call Rev. Russ Dykstra (712) 726-3382.

IN MEMORY OF HILDA MEELKER

Our beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, whom the Lord called home on November 2, 1991 to praise our God perfectly before the throne, with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

When I in righteousness at last
Thy glorious face shall see, When all
the weary night is past, And I awake
with Thee To view the glories that
abide, Then, then I shall be satisfied.

Ben Meelker

Hal and Hilda Sansom

Bernard and AnnaMae Meelker

Tom and Gretine Bodbyl

Berend and Janine Meelker

Henry and Karen Meelker

Roger and Hilda Gritters

Dan and AnnaMae Bodbyl

Gerrit and Bonnie Meelker

Bert Meelker

and 22 great-grandchildren

Redlands, California

CONFERENCE ON THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORDT

When:

Tuesday, March 3, 1992,
beginning at 9 AM

Where

Doon Protestant Reformed Church,
Doon, IA

Keynote Address

"The Value of the Church Order
Today"

by Rev. Ron Cammenga

Sectionals:

"Questions of Article 41"

Rev. R. Dykstra

"Erasure of Baptized Members"

Rev. C. Terpstra

"Deacons' Meetings," (Art. 40)

Rev. R. Moore

"Censura Morum," (Art. 81)

Rev. W. Bekkering

"Consistorial Promotion of Christian
Schools," (Art. 21)

Rev. A. denHartog

"Authority of Broader Assemblies,"
(Art. 31, 36)

Rev. R. VanOverloop

All past and present officebearers, as well as anyone who is interested is invited to attend. Hope to see you there!