

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

*A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine*

At a most alarming rate the great historic doctrines of the Christian faith which the church has believed and loved for centuries are being contradicted and denied. Evil practices that in time past were abhorred and severely condemned are now being openly practiced and defended and sometimes even promoted by the modern-day church. All of this is happening under the pretense that our age is one of enlightenment.

see "Spiritual Perception and Discernment" — page 393.

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In This Issue ...

Summer is upon us. Catechism classes and most Societies have already therefore been concluded for the season. Even the *Standard Bearer* comes out only once per month in June, July, and August.

Though "Constrained to Live unto Christ" says nothing about summertime, Rev. Kortering's Meditation does seem particularly appropriate at this time of year, when outdoor activities get into high gear, and time for meditation on and study of the Word is allowed often to suffer for it. Spiritual strength, however, comes from no other source than from such fellowship with God. To neglect it therefore is to deny ourselves the "thrill of being a Christian."

And that holds true not only for adults but also for children and young people. Rev. den Hartog points that out in his "Spiritual Perception and Discernment," in this issue. We live, he says, in a day of great spiritual ignorance and carelessness — resulting, as the cover-copy suggests, in wholesale abandonment of historic Christian doctrines. Only by a thorough knowledge of God's Word can one avoid being himself caught up in the apostasy of the day. And the foundation of such knowledge, writes Rev. den Hartog, comes in the way of instruction in one's youth.

Are we, perhaps, too quick to conclude that our children are too young to learn the doctrines of the Word of God? Consider, in that connection, Jesus' childhood. At twelve years old He was in the Temple, not to admonish the rabbis, not to teach them, but to learn from them. And the reason He was able to ask and answer hard questions was that, by that early age, He had already done a whole lot of hard study. (Like us in all things, sin excepted.) He was in dead earnest about His "Father's business."

"Nothing in this ungodly world can compare to the excellency of the things of God," writes Rev. den Hartog. A resolution to demonstrate, with our children, our conviction of the truth of that, by our continued serious attention to the Word during the summer months, will help assure also the thrill of being a Christian.

D.D.

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Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

Constrained to Live unto Christ

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

II Corinthians 5:14,15

Living unto Christ!

What a glorious outlook on life.

There is far more to life than tears, groans, wounded spirits, sinking souls, and scars. These are real, to be sure, for we live in the midst of a continual death. But, there is more, much more. We have direction, we have purpose, we have energy, we are alive, and that, in order to set as our goal to magnify God in the Person of His dear Son.

The Holy Spirit said elsewhere, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

We are alive because, as Paul in the Spirit writes a few verses later, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It is not sufficient that we simply declare that we are creatures of God. In truth, God created Adam and Eve, and through our first parents we have our natural life. That is not sufficient, however, to live unto Christ! For, "In Adam all die" (I Cor. 15:22). Thanks be unto God, in Jesus

we are made, literally, a new creation. As in the beginning God formed man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so now in the power of the gospel Jesus fashions from that totally depraved material a saint after His own image.

Such a work makes us alive.

This life has its roots in the human heart. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Jesus also said, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). Within our hearts we stand closest to God, we love God and know Him (John 17:3).

This spiritual life comes to expression within ourselves, in our soul life. We have the ability to think, to reason, to memorize, to express our desires, to respond with joy or sorrow, fear or confidence, hope or despair. We do believe that there is reality to the inner man. Many interesting discussions are appearing in the public press raising the question whether the mind is an illusion, or only biology, made up of chemistry and electrical impulses embedded in flesh. The life which we have in Christ comes to expression within our soul, an entity which is so real that it can and will exist apart from the body.

As long as we are home here, our bodies interact intimately with our inner being, our soul life. We have great difficulty dividing the mind from the brain, the emotions from our physical self. For this reason the Bible speaks of our bowels as longing and of our kidneys as involved in serious trials. This is true because God has made us so wonderfully that the distinctions we make as to our being cannot for all practical purposes be

separated. Man is one entity and functions that way.

Hence, we say with Paul, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

The direction of this life must not be unto ourselves, but it must be Christ who died and rose again.

Plenty of people live unto themselves. In the broad sense, this means living for the good of humanity. Surely the Christian must be concerned about his neighbor, about the basic needs of humanity, and about society in general. However, if a person lives unto himself, then he attempts to do this without any thought of God, or any desire to serve God, or to do it God's way. Thus the ungodly scientist labors for the good of humanity. He may be a medical research scientist working feverishly to find the answer to stopping deadly cancer, heart disease, or any such like. The ungodly statesman or politician may use his talents in the area of international diplomacy and seek peace among the nations. All of this is "living unto himself."

In the narrower sense it applies to the person who is simply selfish and self-centered. Such a person is not interested in the needs of other human beings, much less in serving God. The complexity of human nature explains the many ways this comes to expression. All people do not sin the same way. Hence, self seeking may come to expression in the greedy business man who is out to make his million no matter what. He sells his soul to his business enterprise. He is a "workaholic." He neglects his wife and children. He makes hard business decisions without considering how it affects the people who

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

work for him. Everything is "me." The same applies to the laborer who is determined to climb the corporate ladder no matter what. This person may be a man or woman who will do anything to get a higher position in the company. Greed oozes out of his eyes. His attitudes and conduct betray a raw inner, self-seeking person. These are the hardened sinners who will forsake spouse and family for the "pleasure" of another man or woman. Their cold hearts are not even sensitive to the hurt and pain they cause their family.

All they have in common is to "live unto themselves."

What a difference it is to live unto God, unto Christ.

We cannot live unto God without family worship.

That takes place only if we have a personal relationship with Him. God must mean much to us if we are to live unto Him. He can only mean much to us if we take time to have fellowship with Him. This explains the importance of daily fellowship with God in our quiet time — a time of prayer, a time of meditating and of reading the Word of God, a time of evaluating our lives, of contemplating our sins and the sweet assurance of forgiveness. The same applies to our family relationships, if the Lord has given us wife or husband, and children. We cannot live unto God without family worship. If we do this daily, we will also value highly the special moments we enjoy in public and corporate worship of Jehovah in His house on the Lord's Day and special occasions. How precious is the gathering, preservation, and defense of the church.

Deriving spiritual strength from such fellowship with God, we set the course of our daily life not to live unto self, but to serve God. This is the thrill of being a Christian. We are partakers of the anointing of Jesus Christ to live unto Him. We ask from the beginning of the day to the close of day, "What

wilt thou have me do?" We use our time, our talents, our possessions in the service of the kingdom of heaven. If need be, we also forfeit such things for the kingdom, we deny ourselves earthly gain if such gain would cause us to deny our Lord. We forfeit earthly advancement if such is required of us to do the work which our Lord calls us to do. A mother will rise up late at night to nurture her sick child, not just to quiet that child or minister to its needs, but in the love of Jesus she will do this. A pastor will leave the comfort of his home to go out in the middle of the night to meet the needs of his flock, not just because it is his duty, but for Jesus' sake. In the Name of Jesus he will care for His sheep.

Such includes both self denial and joyful service.

The deep spiritual roots for such behavior sink into the very Person and work of Jesus Christ Himself. In the language of this passage, "if one died for all, then were all dead (or then all died), and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." The emphasis rests upon Jesus who died and rose again. This is the spiritual source of our living unto Him.

Man without God lives unto himself and makes a mess out of his life.

The need for such a personal bond of faith with Jesus is the fact that apart from Him we are spiritually dead. In verse 17 the apostle speaks of "old things (which) are passed away." Such refers to our natural depravity. We are born into this world with a heart of stone, a heart that hates God and rejects every evidence of His presence. That is true of the unsaved person whether God speaks to him in the realm of creation, or whether He places the written Word in his hand and brings him under the gospel

preaching. In the one case, the man rejects that speech of God and fashions an idol for his worship (Rom. 1, 2); and in the other, he turns from the gospel, refuses to accept it as truth, and turns such knowledge into the lie.

No wonder, then, that a sinner deserves to perish. God punishes the wicked by giving them a reprobate mind, a hardness in sin, to work out sin in their lives; and in the end He plunges them into the lake of fire.

Man without God lives unto himself and makes a mess out of his life.

The change takes place when the living Lord comes to dwell with us. Already in His first coming, He died for all; and if one died for all, then were all dead. This describes His atonement for sinners. When Jesus died, He did not die on account of His own sins, for He was innocent. Rather, He died for all, as a substitute. In no way can this refer to every human being, for He expressly said, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:14,15). When He prayed under the shadow of the cross, He said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou gavest me, for they are thine" (John 17:9). The "all" is used to remind the Corinthians that it includes Jews and Gentiles, bond and free. When Jesus died, all those in Him died also. The account was settled.

Now that He arose, He comes to dwell in us by His Word and Spirit. The Father approved His work, accounted the debt paid, and gave to Him the Holy Spirit, the breath of life for this new creation. This makes the difference in us. By the gospel, He opens the closed heart, He softens the hard, and gives sight to the blind, and enables the lame to walk.

What motivated Christ to do this? Love. Pure, divine love.

When Paul considers this, that love which Christ has for us constrains him to reason this way: If Jesus died and rose for me, I should not live unto myself, but unto Him.

Is that not beautiful reasoning?

May that reasoning enable each of us to have meaningful lives. □

The annual synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches meets this year in South Holland, Illinois. Synod convenes on June 9, the Lord willing. The council of the South Holland PRC has called the special, pre-synodical worship service for the evening of June 8.

Our readers will be interested in some of the main matters on synod's agenda. Knowledge of the work is also stimulation of the saints unto indispensable prayer for the wisdom of Christ in this major assembly of the churches.

Mission Committee (MC)

First Church of Grand Rapids continues to call a missionary and to try to obtain a co-worker for the Jamaica field. The MC expresses its conviction that "the churches we are privileged still to serve in Jamaica have demonstrated ... that they are attracted to the PRC in America because of their interest, not in American dollars, but in the truth of the Scriptures as they have learned it from us." Rev. Arie den Hartog and Rev. Barry Gritters led conferences with the officebearers in the Jamaica churches during the past year. Rev. den Hartog reports that "there is a very great need for a missionary on the island of Jamaica." The report of Rev. Gritters and Elder Ed Gritters judges that "these conferences are well worth their while."

The Hudsonville PRC has been calling a missionary for the field in Northern Ireland. Ten calls have been issued and declined by various ministers. Classis East is supplying the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland with preaching by means of three-week appointments

of the ministers in the classis. Video tapes of the Hudsonville services are being used in the meetings of the group in Northern Ireland in the absence of a minister. The report of the Hudsonville Council notes that

the saints of Northern Ireland have been discouraged at the repeated declines. The consistory also is concerned about the question whether a "field of labor" remains such a field indefinitely. The core families in Northern Ireland remain wholly committed to the Reformed (Protestant Reformed) faith. Interest is still shown by those from outside of this core group. Still, without the regular labors of a minister for an extended period of time, the work cannot progress properly.

The recommendation of the MC concerning the Venice, Florida field will come to synod by a supplemental report that is not available at the time of this writing. Earlier, the MC decided to recommend to the council of the calling church, Kalamazoo, that the work in Venice be discontinued as soon as possible.

Synod will be asked to continue its support of the Reformed Witness Hour radio program on stations in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Oskaloosa, Iowa; Denver, Colorado; Ferndale, Washington; and Edmonton, Alberta (Canada).

Foreign Mission Committee (FMC)

The major part of the report of this synodical committee concerns the visit to Ghana, Africa in February, 1992 by two members of the committee, Elder Henry Bleyenburgh and Rev. Russell Dykstra. The FMC "are enthusiastic about the possibility of fu-

ture labor in Ghana, and have determined to work toward another visit in two years"

The FMC has begun a radio broadcast on Radio Africa. The station covers a large part of western Africa. Rev. Richard Moore is delivering messages on Ephesians.

The FMC is in contact with the Joint-Mission Committee of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.

Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC)

Under the auspices of the CC, Rev. Marvin Kamps attended the annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). At the instruction of the CC, Rev. Kamps discussed the possibility of closer contact with the representatives of several Presbyterian churches.

In view of a recent invitation to the PRC by the Christian Reformed Alliance (now, the Alliance of Reformed Churches) to send observers to its meeting, the CC is asking synod for direction regarding possible invitations in the future. This includes the possibility of an invitation to send observers to a "Confessional Conference" scheduled for 1993.

The CC was unable to fill the request of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA) for preaching-supply for the congregations in Burnie and in Launceston. No PR church was able to release its pastor for a period of six months or a year. The CC continues to attempt to find a man who can help the EPCA in this important way.

The Grandville, Michigan church released Rev. Jay Kortering

for six months to work in Singapore on behalf of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. Rev. Kortering has since accepted the call from Hope PRC in Grand Rapids to serve as minister-on-loan to the Singapore churches.

The PRC of Wellington, New Zealand, sister church to the PRC in America, has requested financial assistance for the support of her pastor, Rev. Rodney Miersma, for five more years. The original five-year commitment of the PRC has expired. The CC recommends that synod grant this request.

Theological School Committee (TSC)

Six full-time students are presently studying for the ministry in the seminary. All plan to return in the fall. They include two men being trained for the ministry in the EPCA. Another young man from the PRC has applied for admission to the seminary in the fall. The Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore intend to send a man for training in the seminary in 1993.

The TSC is proposing an addition to the seminary building. This proposal "centers on the construction of library space." About \$110,000 has already been donated for this expansion, \$80,000 from persons outside the PRC. The estimated cost is about \$360,000.

Two guest speakers gave special

lectures for the seminary this past year. They were Mr. Theodore Letis, who spoke on the Greek text of the New Testament, and Mr. Jon Huiskens, who spoke on "The History of the PRC: Learning to Live with Caricature." Visitors were invited to these afternoon sessions, and a goodly number attended.

An Overture, A Protest, and Appeals

The Loveland, Colorado consistory overtures synod to increase the minister and the elder delegates to synod from each classis from four to six. Classis West has approved this overture.

A brother protests the decision of Synod, 1990 which rejected the contention that the erection of a cross on the chancel wall of a church building constitutes a violation of the second commandment.

The consistory of the Norristown, Pennsylvania PRC appeals against the decision of Classis East requiring Norristown's use of the "approved songbook of the PRC," *The Psalter*, in worship.

The council of Southwest PRC appeals against the decision of Classis East advising Southwest to transfer the membership of members of the Southwest congregation to other PR churches as these members have requested.

The council of Grandville PRC

also appeals against the above decision of Classis East regarding the transfer of membership.

A brother appeals against the decision of his consistory in a case that the classis treated in closed session.

Varia

Synod is informed that an index to the Acts of the PR synods has been prepared and is ready for publication.

Under the good hand of God upon us, the PRC continues their steady numerical growth. The Churches now number 1,417 families — an increase of 32 families over the number in 1991.

The Involvement of Every Member

Let every member of the PRC, as well as everyone outside the denomination who has a care for these Churches for the sake of the Reformed faith, pray for God's guidance of the synod by the Spirit of Christ. The motivation of this prayer may well be the desire for the maintenance of God's truth in these Churches. When the synod has finished its work, let every member compare the decisions with Scripture and the Reformed confessions, to assure himself that what was decided seemed good to the Holy Spirit, as well as to the elders of the churches. □

— DJE

Contribution

Henry Huiskens

Covenantal Instruction

Instructing God's covenant seed as God has commanded us, and fulfilling our promise to do so when we baptized our children is a question many of our parents will be facing this summer. Graduation time is here and many of our children will be graduating from the 8th or 9th grade.

Where will they go to high school? Not all of our children have the privilege of attending Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids.

I have heard many discussions and debates on this subject, and I am sorry to say the main issue is not mentioned. Most of the discussion is

Mr. Huiskens is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

around what subjects are offered at the various schools available, whether public, church affiliated (parochial), or private. Other things discussed are how nice some of these schools are, and how friendly, and how they hug each other and tell each other how nice they are. Besides all this, some of these schools cost much less. Also in the discussion are all the bad things that go on in some of these schools, especially those schools which are maintained by Christian Reformed parents. The bad things may be true. These considerations should and must not be the determining factors as to where our children attend school. They are but mere excuses for not doing our duty and obligation and fulfilling our promise we made at the baptism of our children. The promise is to instruct our children in the doctrine of this Christian church to the utmost of our power.

When it is not possible to do this in our own schools, we must look for a school that comes as close as possible to what we believe. Sometimes that takes us to schools that are maintained by other Reformed people in spite of the bad things that may go on

there. This gives us an opportunity to witness against the bad and for the good. God says in His Word, "Ye are my witnesses." We are reminded in Old Testament history of God's covenant with His people when the prophet Elijah took twelve stones, one for each tribe, to build an altar upon the mountain top after it had not rained for three and a half years, and King Ahab had led the ten tribes into the worship of Baal. God continued to send His prophets to the ten tribes even as they drifted farther and farther away from the truth. The history of the ten tribes bears this out.

We must teach our children to witness. They must know what we believe and why. We must teach them in our homes, in our church, in our schools. The older must teach the younger by word and example. They must teach the younger to be watchers on the walls of Zion. They must teach the younger to identify the enemy. They must teach by example by being active in the study of the Word of God and being current on the issues of the day.

In the book, *Perspectives of the*

Christian Reformed Church, I found five different views of God's covenant. We, the Protestant Reformed Churches, have but one view of the covenant: the covenant of friendship of God and His people.

This is the issue, covenant people.

God does not give us a choice, but a command — a command to instruct our children to the best of our ability. And we promised to do this at the baptism of our children. We and the congregation promise this at every baptism. No one else bears this duty and obligation, only covenantal people of God.

Let everyone have this goal in this life as we read in Hebrews 11: "And all these died having the assurance that they pleased God." If we have this, we have everything: peace, joy, contentment, and happiness. We will have comfort on our sick or death bed. Let us all look forward to that great day when all the saints will be gathered together to celebrate the victory of the Lamb, who has gained for us the victory over sin and death, the devil, and all the workers of iniquity. □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

■ Schlissel Suspended

On April 2, 1992 the Rev. Steve Schlissel, pastor of Messiah's Congregation Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Brooklyn, New York, was suspended from the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments by Classis Hudson of the CRC.

According to Article 90 of the Church Order (CRC edition), a suspended minister may not engage in

any of the "duties of his office," including preaching or the administering of the sacraments. Schlissel may not preach in any CRC church, including Messiah's, during his suspension. If he does so, Classis Hudson may have to consider disciplinary action against Messiah's council.

Schlissel has been given until May 13 to repent. If he chooses not to repent, Classis will meet to consider his deposition, which means losing his ministerial credentials in the CRC.

Classis Hudson based its decision to suspend Schlissel on four grounds. Ground one is Schlissel's refusal to heed the admonition of classis regarding his written and pub-

lic statements, "whose tone and approach to correction in the body of the Lord are scripturally unacceptable." Classis urged Schlissel to temper this approach in September 1991, but said Schlissel "persisted in making statements characterized by abrasive and accusatory language that in sweeping generalizations questions the Christian integrity of fellow officebearers in the CRC." Schlissel called professors at Calvin Theological Seminary "whores" and "stinking heretics." He labeled people who disagreed with him "blasphemous bums," "feminist maniacs," "schizophrenics," "worms, vermin, and dogs."

Further, Schlissel refused to sub-

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mit to classis' discipline. According to classis' minutes, Schlissel's speech at the January meeting was "marked by refusal to submit to the chairman and by abrasive and disrespectful language." During discussion about the April 2 meeting, Schlissel announced he would be out of town frequently, "making trouble," and that it would be difficult to find a good meeting date.

As a matter of fact, Schlissel did not attend the April 2 meeting of classis. When informed on March 3 of the special classis meeting scheduled for April 2, Schlissel told classis that he had a speaking engagement on that date. (Classis noted that Schlissel's speech, at a noon meeting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, took about 12 minutes, and it would have taken him less than four hours to drive to the evening meeting of classis in Wyckoff, NJ.)

The second ground for suspension charges Schlissel with conduct unbecoming a minister of the gospel. According to classis Schlissel responded with innuendoes, sarcasm, and attacks on the integrity of people who questioned him regarding accusations he made against them. Schlissel "publicly slanders our denomination and its leaders on a number of occasions without first addressing them personally and through their consistory, classis, or synod," classis stated.

Third, classis suspended Rev. Schlissel for lack of integrity in promoting division in the denomination. Classis noted that Schlissel was urging others to leave the CRC while remaining in it himself.

Fourth, classis charged Rev. Schlissel and his church, Messiah's Congregation CRC in Brooklyn, with breaking the covenant the church made with the CRC in November 1986 "to be faithful to the gospel as expressed in our common confessions and to work for the upbuilding of the CRC in Brooklyn, in Classis Hudson, and throughout the denomination." (Schlissel was admitted to the ministry of the CRC under the provisions of Article 7 [Article 8, PRC edition] of

the Church Order.) Classis said Schlissel's public and written statements "give ample evidence that he has not worked for the upbuilding of the CRC, has not followed the procedures for recourse built into our Church Order, and has not been open to the counsel and admonition of fellow ministers and elders."

Rev. Schlissel, in an interview after the April 2 meeting of classis, refuted the grounds classis used to suspend him. Concerning the quotes classis cited as evidence of his refusal to heed classis' admonition, Schlissel said, "I stand by every one of them. If that's what they want to depose me for, I consider it an honor."

In response to the charge of encouraging divisiveness, Schlissel said, "I am not the enemy; I am not the threat. There are people in the denomination who have introduced new ideas to our church that are contrary to our confessions and divisive. This is a case of shooting the messenger because you don't like the message."

Schlissel said the charge that he and his church broke their covenant with the CRC is "the most ludicrous charge of all." He said that he did not sign the document, so it can not possibly be used against him.

Schlissel called the action of classis against him a "lynching" and blamed individuals for its decision to suspend him. "Jim DeJong (Dr. James R. DeJong is president of Calvin Theological Seminary, RDD) pulled the strings, Don Wisse (stated clerk of Classis Hudson) set up the hoops, and classis jumped."

Classis Hudson has an altogether different view of Schlissel's suspension. "The action was taken after a long series of events involving Rev. Schlissel," it says. "These events focused on the manner and approach taken by Schlissel in his relationship to others within the CRC as a whole. Classis took its action reluctantly."

Rev. Schlissel has appealed his suspension to the Synod of 1992.

Just one comment on all this. Rev. Schlissel may be ever so right on the issues troubling the CRC, but if the charges of Classis Hudson are

indeed true, his method of addressing those issues is all wrong.

*The Banner
Christian Renewal*

■ News of the Dutch Churches

The synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, hereafter GKN) decided that a new confession of faith was not necessary at this time. They did think that a pastoral handbook on the confessions was necessary.

This was in response to requests from three classes to look into the matter. One wanted a clarification; another observed that candidates for the ministry in the GKN had difficulty signing the formula for preachers. A third classis thought the GKN was losing sight of its confessional character.

The advisory committee suggested to synod that it might be impossible in this time to find formulas which they could oblige one another to accept.

The GKN is also involved in a process of union with two other Dutch denominations: De Herevormde Kerk (the State church) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of The Netherlands. This process is called "Samen op Weg" ("together on the way," RDD). Following a difficult year in 1991, the three churches appear to be making progress toward union. This is the opinion of the moderator of the GKN, Rev. P. Boomsma. Boomsma said that at a joint synodical gathering in February there was basic agreement about the organization of the church. Therefore the possibility is strong that the basic articles of a church order can soon be formulated.

Meanwhile the GKN suffered the largest decline in membership in its history in 1991. Membership fell by 1.34%. With a net loss of 10,531 members the GKN had a membership of 773,992 at the beginning of 1992. This is the latest in a series of declines going back to 1987. In that year the GKN had 820,268 members.

Thus in the last five years the GKN has lost 5.6% of its members. The area with the largest decline was in the province of North Holland, which lost 13.4% over the last five years. Most of this decline occurred in the churches in the city of Amsterdam.

The GKN is shot through with heresies. It tolerates gay preachers, among many other departures from the truth of Scripture and from biblical ethics. We believe there is a connection between liberalism and mem-

bership loss.

REC News Exchange

■ The Reformed Ecumenical Council Meets in May

"Following Christ Today" is the theme for worship and celebration at the May 25-June 5 gathering of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). After an investigation of the GKN, the REC's Interim Committee is recom-

mending that the Assembly declare there are insufficient grounds to terminate GKN membership in the REC. Several smaller denominations (Orthodox Presbyterian Church among them) have withdrawn from the REC because of the liberalism rampant in the GKN, especially in the area of hermeneutics (Scripture interpretation). Objections have also been raised against the GKN's membership in the World Council of Churches. □

REC News Exchange

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

Spiritual Perception and Discernment

My interest in this subject was stirred recently in connection with preparing a sermon on Philippians 1:9, 10. In this passage the inspired apostle of our Lord earnestly prays for the beloved church of Philippi. His prayer is an emphatic one, as is indicated by the opening words of these verses: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

The concept on which we want especially to focus is the one translated in the KJV as "judgment." It has various synonyms in the Scriptures, the equivalents of such words in the English as discernment, perception, and knowledge. This word is used only here in the New Testament. Literally it means careful perception, thorough understanding, spiritual discernment, moral judgment. The

precise meaning of this word can be understood in light of this whole passage. Paul speaks of judgment in this verse as a spiritual gift of God for which he prays. It is a gift only God can give to His church and her members. It is related to knowledge of God — knowledge of God Himself and of His Son Jesus Christ; knowledge of His grace and truth and of His salvation; and knowledge of His commandments for our life. The true knowledge of God enables the members of the church to make necessary spiritual judgments. The love of God must motivate us to make such judgments, an ever abounding love for God.

The Christian who possesses the gift of spiritual perception and discernment will be able to approve those things that are excellent, those things that are excellent in God's sight and worthy objects of pursuit in the Christian life. This in turn will enable him by the grace of God to live a life that is sincere and without offense as he eagerly looks for the coming of the day of Christ Jesus.

We want especially, in this article, to focus on the great and necessary virtue of spiritual perception and discernment. As is clear from the

prayer of Paul in Philippians, this is a virtue of greatest importance for Christians. Ours is not an age of great spiritual perception and discernment. Rather ours is a day of great spiritual ignorance and carelessness. The prophecy of Hosea is being fulfilled in our day: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest unto me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6). Because of the ignorance and darkness of our times, there is a fearful inability to make careful judgment. God's people themselves have little spiritual discernment. And what is even worse, those who are appointed to watch over the church and guard her against the inroads of false teaching and evil practices, especially the elders and spiritual leaders of the church, are grievously lacking in spiritual perception and discernment.

The consequence of this is that the devil is in large measure succeeding in his evil purpose to destroy the church by false doctrine and wicked worldly philosophies of life. At a most alarming rate the great historic doctrines of the Christian faith which

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the church has believed and loved for centuries are being contradicted and denied. Evil practices that in time past were abhorred and severely condemned are now being openly practiced and defended and sometimes even promoted by the modern-day church. All of this is happening under the pretense that our age is one of enlightenment. The historic faith of the saints, the godliness which they seriously and earnestly practiced in the past, is mocked and ridiculed as having been unnecessarily rigid and far too serious. In our age we know better. We are free to do things once condemned because we are enlightened, we understand things better. We do not have the hang-ups of the past. But every earnest and sincere child of God needs to ask, "Is it really

*Spiritual perception
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and of his Word.*

so?" That question can be answered only by an understanding of the Word of God and a careful discernment and perception of the times in which we live. We need to pray to God for the church that He may give her members knowledge and judgment.

Spiritual perception and discernment comes only by a thorough knowledge of God and of His Word. God gives this to His church through faithful preaching of the Word of God. We must be sure to belong to a church where there is such preaching. And we must be in constant prayer for the ministers of the Word and see to it that they spend much time in their studies to prepare sermons.

The knowledge necessary for spiritual perception and discernment includes doctrinal knowledge. It involves knowing the system of doctrine of God's Word. We believe that the Reformed faith is based on a true and consistently biblical system of Christian doctrine. A truly Reformed

Christian is one who has a good understanding of this system of doctrine. This gives him a built-in sense of what is right and wrong, and what is false and what is true. He has a "Reformed sensitivity" according to which he can accurately discern preaching and teaching that he hears and know whether it is according to the truth of God's Word or not.

Our children will grow up to be able to discern the true and the godly way of life if they in their youth receive thorough catechism instruction. Let us never as a church minimize the great importance of this. What a heritage is ours in our creeds, and especially in the Heidelberg Catechism as an instrument of instruction for our children! What a beautiful presentation of the system of Christian doctrine is contained in the catechism! When our children are thoroughly instructed in the catechism, when parents see to it that they learn their lessons well from week to week, year after year, then when they come to adulthood they will possess a system of doctrine that will give them a good foundation for their life. They will be equipped for careful spiritual discernment and judgment in their life and as members of the church.

Spiritual perception and discernment involves stopping to consider carefully and judge every new doctrine and every new philosophy of life that arises in the church. The devil likes to excite by that which is new and different. He likes to convince God's people that old and tried doctrines are boring and dull and irrelevant for the times in which we live. Our faith must be changing with the age and the time in which we live. Be careful, ever so careful, of all such talk! The apostle Paul tells us that the Athenians were notorious for constantly pursuing new doctrines. "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). But these heathens were "ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

How often "new" teaching is

nothing else than the old lie of the devil dressed up in different garb. God's truth is unchanging, from age to age the same. The true church has known and loved and confessed this truth for centuries. It is true that God continues to lead and guide His church into an ever richer understanding of the truth. There is always something "new" to learn from the Word of God. At the same time, we can be sure that, in these last days in which we are living, there is not going to be a discovery of an entirely new doctrine which the church has never before known, or of a truth which the church has for centuries misunderstood. Spiritual perception and discernment is possible only for the Christian who knows the historic and true doctrine of the Word of God which the saints of God have always believed.

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We as individual Christians and together as a church of Jesus Christ need spiritual perception and discernment so that we are not led astray by the apostasy of our age. We need to judge and condemn false doctrine. This may be unpleasant to have to do because it offends people and often divides even friends and families, but it is absolutely necessary in order to preserve the truth which is the foundation of the church. Careful perception and discernment prevents the Christian from simply going along with the majority. How easy it is to believe something just because someone else says it. How easy it is to go along with those who claim to be leaders and men of great learning and understanding. History has proven again and again that often the majority has been wrong and often men of greatest learning have been wrong

and have led the church very seriously astray. Every Christian needs spiritual discernment in order to judge carefully between the truth and the lie. According to the passage from Philippians quoted above, we are looking for the coming of Christ Jesus in the last day. God's Word prophesies that the last days will be days of great deception and apostasy, when many shall be deceived. Our Lord warned that the devil will attempt if possible to deceive even the very elect of God in the last days. To stand in these last days there is urgent need for spiritual discernment.

We need spiritual perception and discernment for practical and daily godly and holy living. That is the focus of Paul's prayer in Philippians. He prays that the church of Philippi might grow in knowledge and in all judgment so that she might be sincere and without offense until the day of Christ. We live in an increasingly evil world. The devil loves to present the life-style of the

world as so exciting, so satisfying, and so glamorous. He does that in our day especially through the mass media. The teachers and leaders of the world want to present the most evil life-styles imaginable as acceptable and honorable. Christians are greatly in need of spiritual perception and discernment to maintain clearly the absolute antithesis between our life and that of this ungodly world.

There is a positive reason for careful spiritual perception and discernment. Paul speaks in Philippians of approving the things that are excellent. These are the things of God. Through spiritual perception and discernment we understand how exceedingly glorious and excellent our God is. How blessed and wonderful is His salvation! How precious are the truths of His Word! How wise and good and righteous are all His judgments! How great is the reward of those who live every day by His commandments! How glorious is the hope of eternal life that God has revealed in His Word!

Nothing in this ungodly world can compare to the excellency of the things of God. So great is the glory and blessedness of the things of God that we who know this ought always to be ready to make the largest sacrifices and endure the greatest hardships to obtain the knowledge and salvation of our God and of His Son Jesus Christ. We ought to be ready to forsake this ungodly world and all things in it for the sake of the excellency of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Love for God must move us unto the serious exercise of spiritual discernment. Our love for God must constrain us to know and confess and maintain the truth of God's Word and to condemn and oppose the lie of the devil. Our love for God must constrain us to avoid all offense and to live lives that are holy and sincere and that bring glory unto His name. Let us pray for ourselves and for our churches that the love of God might more and more abound in us in knowledge and in all judgment. □

Decency and Order
Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Right of Appeal

If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod.

Church Order, Article 31

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A Sacred Right

The right of appeal is a sacred right possessed by every church member. It is a sacred right, not because it is a right granted by the *Church Order*, but because it is a right from God. As much as the Reformed system of church government is the will of God for the life of the church, so within Reformed church government the right of appeal is the God-given right of every church member. Article 31 does not create the right of appeal; it merely asserts this most sacred of ecclesiastical privileges.

The right of appeal belongs to the essence of church membership. To be a member of the church is to have the right of appeal. The right of appeal stems from the office of all believers, the office occupied by every church member.

Not only does every church member possess the *right* of appeal; every church member has the *responsibility* of appeal. When the church member is convinced that God's truth has been denied or God's law set aside by a decision of a minor assembly, he has not only the right, but also the

duty before God to appeal to the broader assemblies. His motivation is not winning his own case or proving his own point. His motivation is the glory of God and the well-being of the church, which glory and well-being are threatened by doctrinal departure or unholiness.

To deny church members the right of appeal is hierarchy. For a Reformed church to do so is to disdain her heritage, to despise her own *Church Order*, to countenance popery.

The right of appeal arises out of the fact that the church is not infallible. In her deliberations and decisions it is possible for the church to err. History proves this beyond a shadow of doubt. Reformed churches reject the presumption of the Roman Catholic Church that the decisions of church councils are infallible. Rome's teaching robs the members of any right of appeal. This is one reason why there is no possibility of reformation in the Roman Catholic Church.

The right of appeal belongs to the essence of church membership.

One has the right of appeal when he is convinced "...that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly...." This does not imply that every decision of an ecclesiastical assembly is just cause for appeal to a major assembly. Decisions that concern no principle or doctrinal issue are not properly the subject of appeal. Decisions that merely go against one's personal preference ought not to be made the subject of appeal. Those who make appeals over these kinds of issues, who make ecclesiastical mountains out of ecclesiastical mole-hills, unduly trouble the broader assemblies. One is "wronged" by the decision of an ecclesiastical assembly when he is convinced in his own conscience that a decision conflicts with the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions, or the *Church Order*.

The Appeal Process

Appeals should be as brief and well-documented as possible. Length is not important; clarity is.

The following structure should be followed in the composition of an appeal:

- 1) The name of the appellant.
- 2) The name of the body against which the appeal is being made.
- 3) The specific decision which is being appealed, quoted exactly if possible.
- 4) The reason(s) why the appellant is convinced that the appealed decision is wrong, citing proof from Scripture, the Confessions, *Church Order*, previous decisions by the assemblies.
- 5) All background information and necessary documentation that will enable the assembly to arrive at a proper decision.
- 6) A statement defining clearly what action the appellant desires the assembly to take.

It ought always to be remembered that the burden of proof rests with the appellant. The responsibility is not so much with the assembly to defend its action or decision. But the responsibility is with the appellant to demonstrate that the assembly's decision is in error: "...unless it be proved (i.e., by the appellant) to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the *Church Order*...."

Article 31 states clearly that the proper course of appeal is from the minor to the major assemblies. That means that decisions of consistories are appealed to classis; decisions of classes are appealed to the synod. This opposes the practice of Congregational and Independent churches. In these churches decisions of the ruling body of the local congregation may be challenged and brought for adjudication before the congregation. The Reformed system of church government knows of no appeal to the congregation.

Our churches have appended the following decision to Article 31: "Appeal to a major gathering against

any decision of an ecclesiastical body must be made upon the immediately following meeting of the body to which appeal is directed, at the same time giving notification to the secretary of the body by whose decision he is aggrieved. Of every judgment rendered in the case, those concerned shall receive a notification."

This decision requires notification of appeal to the body against whom appeal is being made. This includes not merely serving notice of appeal, but furnishing that body with a copy of the appeal. In this way the body is provided with the opportunity to respond to the appeal and prepare, if necessary, a defense. The assembly against which appeal is being made must also upon request furnish the appellant with the decisions and material pertinent to his appeal.

This decision also places a time limitation on appeals. Appeals are to be made to the next meeting of the body to whom appeal is made. Such a rule reduces unnecessary delays, an inordinate amount of time passing between the decision taken and the making of an appeal against it. Some leeway ought to be given in the application of this rule, circumstances sometimes being a factor. For example, a man may become sick and thus be unable to complete his appeal in time for the next meeting of the assembly to which he is appealing.

The use of an assistant in the preparation of an appeal has always been permitted in Reformed churches. One may have difficulty expressing himself, difficulty with the language, or be unfamiliar with the appeal process. In that case he may enlist the help of a trusted assistant, who may not necessarily agree with him but is willing to help him formulate his appeal. This assistant was referred to by the Dutch as *een mond*, that is, "a mouth," a spokesperson. This assistant should be a member of the church and should be designated in the appeal.

Decisions Settled and Binding

Article 31 states that the deci-

sions of the assemblies "...shall be considered settled and binding...." "Settled" means that once a decision has been made further discussion on the floor of the assembly is suspended. "Binding" means that the decision is to be honored and submitted to by all parties involved.

Decisions are considered settled and binding that are arrived at by majority vote: "...agreed upon by a majority vote...." As desirable as it is, a unanimous vote is not required. Decisions of the assemblies are made by a simple majority, half plus one.

Because decisions are settled and binding, even though an appellant does not agree with a decision, he must acquiesce even during the appeal process. He does not have to agree with it; the church may bind no man's conscience. But he must submit. This means that he regards the decision as legally in force. He does not agitate or spread propaganda against it. The sacred right of appeal is NOT the right to militate against the decisions of the broader assemblies. This principle is expressed in the "Formula of Subscription":

...reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the Classis or the Synod, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

Although decisions taken by majority vote are settled and binding, it may be advisable for an assembly to postpone the execution of a decision that is under appeal. This is not always possible and there is no rule in our churches requiring that matters under appeal remain in *status quo*. Each case must be judged on its own merits, the well-being of the appellant as well as the church as a whole being taken into consideration. Invariably this should be the case, however, in matters involving the exercise of Christian discipline.

The Disputed Exception

Article 31 allows for one exception: "...unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the *Church Order*...."

Over the years there has been difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of this exception clause. To whom must it be proved that the decision of an assembly is in conflict with the Word of God or the articles of the *Church Order*? Must this be proved to the ecclesiastical assemblies? Or must this be proved merely to the satisfaction of the person himself who is making the appeal, so that if it is his sincere conviction that for conscience sake he cannot agree with a certain decision, he need not consider it settled and binding?

There are those who have explained the exception clause as referring to the individual or consistory that has been wronged by a decision of the assemblies. Because in their judgment the decision is a wrong decision, they need not consider it settled and binding, not during the appeal process nor after final adjudication by the synod.

But this explanation is not correct and cannot be defended. In the first place, such an interpretation puts the burden of proof on the broader assemblies rather than on the appellant, in contradiction to Article 31 itself. Not the assemblies must prove to the satisfaction of the appellant, but the appellant must prove to the satisfaction of the broader assemblies.

In the second place, the word "prove" itself rules out such an interpretation. An appellant does not prove something to himself. He is already convinced in his own mind. That is the very reason he is appealing. It is the appellant who must prove to the broader assemblies that a certain decision is in conflict with the Word of God, the Confessions, or the *Church Order*. If the intention of Article 31 had been to assert that decisions of the broader assemblies are settled and binding only in so far as members or consistories are convinced of their rightness, the exception clause would read something

like this: "unless one is personally convinced that the decision taken conflicts with the Word of God, the Confessions, or the *Church Order*."

Thirdly, to impose this interpretation on Article 31 is to introduce anarchy into the church. If this interpretation wins the day in Reformed churches, every man will be doing what is right in his own eyes, as will every consistory. And so long as this thinking persists, there will be no judge that God will be able to raise up strong enough to deliver us from ourselves.

The exception clause applies to the ecclesiastical assemblies. It must be proved to the ecclesiastical assemblies that a decision or action is in error. Until that is done and the decision either amended or revoked, it remains settled and binding in the churches.

What recourse have individuals or consistories whose appeals are ultimately rejected after they have gone the full course of the appeal process? If possible, they should acquiesce to the decision made and remain in the fellowship of the churches. If, however, they cannot in good conscience do this, they have no choice but to leave the denomination. In this case it must be their absolute conviction that the church has departed from the truth of the Word of God, and therefore has abandoned the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in the world. In the way of separation, they must institute the church anew, or join an existing federation where the truth of the Word of God is maintained.

The sacred right of appeal obligates every church member to church reformation. If that reformation cannot be achieved from within, by way of the appeal process, it must be achieved by separation — but then separation only after the appeal process has been exhausted. □

Preaching

As the holy gospel is the true treasure of the church, so preaching of that gospel is the primary task of the church and her ministers. Recently a local church expressed the hope that their next minister would not be a scholarly preacher but rather a friendly, sociable pastor. This ignorance of what a preacher is according to the Word of God does not bode well for that congregation's future. The Hebrew word for preaching means to be fresh, then cheerful, then to tell good tidings. According to classical Greek, this person was a herald, a public crier, a messenger vested with authority who conveyed the official message of kings, magistrates, princes, and military commanders. In his lexicon, Thayer adds that the *manner* of a herald was "always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed." This is the word the New Testament writers were inspired to use for preachers and the activity of preaching. A preacher is God's ambassador, or official messenger, who conveys the Word of God to others. This is most beautifully and clearly stated in II Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Preaching is the chief means of grace, for by it the Holy Ghost works faith (L.D. 25). Preaching is one of the keys of the kingdom, for according to the testimony of the gospel God will judge (L.D. 31). Preaching is one of the marks by which the true church may be easily distinguished from the false (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). Preaching, with very few exceptions, is necessary unto salvation! We want to see, first, *that* this is so, and secondly, *why* this is so. Reading or discussing the Bible is not the means that God has ordained for the salvation of the elect, but the preaching of the Word is that means. This is shown in Romans 10 where salvation is in the line of calling upon God, faith, hearing, preaching, the sending of the preacher (vs. 14), and by the simple conclusion "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (vs. 17). Those that object to the wedding between preaching and salvation are silenced by Paul in I Corinthians 1:17-25 where the preaching of the cross is said to be the power of God unto salvation, no matter how foolish such preaching appears to some. For this reason the apostle is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes (Rom. 1:16).

The question is, How is preaching able to save a man? What is its power? The Scriptures set forth the amazing truth that whenever the Word of God is preached by a man called and sent by Christ through His church, then Christ Himself speaks through that preaching! The ascended Christ, from the right hand of the Majesty on high, is able to make His saving voice heard amidst the noise and babble of this world. Truly this is a miracle! For the church to be gathered, people must not merely hear about Christ; they must hear *Christ*. This is the correct translation of Romans 10:14: "And how shall they believe in Him *Whom* they have not heard?"; this is Jesus' emphasis in John 10:27: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"; this is the sense of Paul's words to the Ephesians many years after Jesus ascended: "If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (4:21); this is why Jesus can say as He sends out the seventy disciples, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me" (Luke 10:16); this is why a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11) is so dreadful, for then Christ does not speak through the prophet or preacher.

But if the glorified Lord is to gather His church through the means of human preaching, that preaching must be the proclamation of His own Word, the inspired Scriptures. He cannot and will not use the word of man. Therefore, we insist in our circles that preaching be biblical (exegetical, expository), confessional, doctrinal, authoritative, antithetical, edifying, and logically clear.

In all true preaching, Christ is central. Christ speaks. Christ is the contents of the message, as faith in Him crucified and raised is commanded. Christ, by His Spirit, makes the preaching effectual so that those ordained to eternal life believe. And Christ is the boast of all those that bow the knee before Him in faith.

Do you have faithful preaching of the Word of God each Sunday? What a blessing! Be thankful to the Head of the church who has given such a gift to men (Eph. 4:8-13). "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet...." Young men, are you reading this? Are you considering this? □

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*The Day of
Shadows*
Rev. John Heys

The Truth Proclaimed by Faith

Do you want salvation?

Do you need to be saved from the wrong idea of salvation?

There is a world of difference between what some mean by salvation, and what its basic meaning is. The awesome fact is that the first lie presented to mankind was the devilish presentation of salvation.

Unto righteous Adam and Eve Satan came with the lie that there was a way for man to be saved from the lie which God gave him. Although he did not present it that way literally, Satan through a serpent did tell Eve that God had lied to her husband, Adam, namely, by telling Adam that they would die if they ate of the fruit of a particular tree in the Garden of Eden. When Satan said to Eve, "Thou shalt not die," he said that God had lied to her husband, and that her husband had presented a lie to her when he informed her that to eat of the fruit of that one tree would bring death to her.

For our comfort and enjoyment of salvation it is very important for us to hold on to the truth which God gave to fallen Adam and Eve. He said to Satan — in Adam and Eve's hearing — that He would put enmity against him in the hearts of the members of His church, and that all the devilish citizens of Satan's kingdom would have their heads crushed!

The tragic thing in many

churches today — and we ourselves can easily fall into that sin — is to preach and present salvation merely as deliverance from the punishment of sin. The sad fact is that, when we do that, we present a salvation that even Satan and all the fallen angels want! But our God did not begin that way when He presented the blessed truth of our salvation. Salvation is that work of God's grace whereby He makes His elect hate sin. And Satan, who led us into sin, and all his servants, do not want that kind of salvation. But our God, first of all and very significantly, promises His elect that He will put enmity — that is hatred — against sin in the hearts of those whom He saves. In effect, He said that He will instill in them love for Himself, and undo that work of Satan whereby the devil got that love out of their hearts.

And that will take away the pain and death (which Satan and his seed bring upon those in whom the love of God is restored) for evermore, and in its place there will be an everlasting life of blessedness as members of the body of Christ. Our God does not cause us to be returned to love of Him because we were already delivered from the punishment of sin. He delivers us from the punishment of sin because He, in Christ and by His Spirit, caused us to love Him with a new spiritual life. He causes us to love Him, and then causes us to reach a heavenly life where we may, without those hindrances of pain and misery, serve Him moment by moment everlastingly. We are given a resurrection of our bodies in order that we

may serve Him in love. The curse is removed because the love of sin has been taken from us, and we have been made capable and willing to walk in love toward God.

Bearing all this in mind let us go back to that sharp and awesome difference between Jacob and Esau. Let us take hold of that amazing and very significant fact that Jacob had hold on Esau's heel when he and Esau were born. Why does God present this fact to us, namely, that Jacob has a hold on Esau's heel? Well, in the first place, Esau, the reprobate, unbelieving son of Isaac who was the first to be born to Isaac and Rebekah, reveals what is *always* first to those who beget children. Having lost their spiritual life, Adam and Eve could not bring forth the first child to be born to them as a believing child of God. The birth of ungodly, wicked Cain reveals that man always brings forth a child that is spiritually dead, until it pleases God to put spiritual life in him. God puts spiritual life in His elect through the Spirit of Christ, not through the parents who bring them forth as their seed. Very beautifully we sing that from Psalter number 383, the first stanza, which is based on Psalm 139:14-17, namely,

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned
me:

I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul
amaze.

Yes, so very true, those wondrous works are God's works in us apart from our parents, and by His Spirit. We are given earthly, physical life through our parents. But parents

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Protestant Reformed Churches.*

cannot give us spiritual life. They can and do teach us spiritual truths. But, after Adam and Eve died, man lost his spiritual life; and that life is given to the elect for Christ's sake, and by His Spirit.

The very first child born, namely, Cain, had no spiritual life given him through his parents. But their next son, Abel, had spiritual life that God gave him apart from his parents. So very, very often that spiritual life comes weeks and months and even years after physical birth. Think of the apostle Paul, who was at Christ's cross plainly revealing his hatred of God and His Son in our flesh. Yet, later on, he was born again as a believing child of God. Get that! Salvation comes in the way of being born *again*, and not by and through our first birth.

Did not our God tell Satan that He would put enmity in some of the human race? Did not David write in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"? Likewise, in Ephesians 2:5 Paul wrote, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved." And in Psalm 58:3 we read this very clearly, for there we read, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

Once again, Adam and Eve first brought forth a totally depraved son. And Isaac and Rebekah had the first of twin sons come forth with a wholly corrupt and sinful nature. And this, if you please, was not months or years before Jacob the believer came forth into this world. It was the one and same conception and birth; but spiritually they were two completely different sons.

Take note of the fact that Jacob did not speak the truth. He lied to his father, declaring, "I am Esau, thy first-born." What is more, Jacob was looking for material things, not for spiritual blessings. He was seeking some carnal things which his totally depraved brother was expecting. And this event is revealed to us to show us that we are saved by grace and not by our works. Jacob's sin of lying to his

father called for everlasting punishment rather than for covenant blessings, even as Adam and Eve's believing in Satan's lie called for their death.

We might then find it difficult to explain and understand what we find in Hebrews 11:20, namely, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Is God's grace presented here as falling upon Esau as well as on Jacob? Did our God through Isaac deal with both Jacob and Esau in His grace? Was there here a manifestation of God's "common grace" upon Esau?

No, that which Isaac predicted would come upon Esau was by no means something which God would send upon Esau in His grace. Note first of all that Hebrews 11:20 presents what Isaac did, not what God does. Isaac's faith, which is here mentioned, did not speak of what God in His grace does for those He did not elect eternally in Christ.

That word "blessing," presented in this verse, does not tell us what God does in His grace to those not chosen in Christ. The word "blessing" used here does not teach that what God does to the world of unbelievers is a work of His "common grace." The awesome truth here in Hebrews 11:20 is that Isaac did a work of faith. By faith he performed spiritually good deeds upon his two sons. He was rightly concerned with the physical and spiritual well-being of his son Esau. And because God had given Isaac faith and desire to keep His law, he rightly had concern for Esau's physical and spiritual well-being. By faith he knew that Esau was an enemy of God. But he also knew his calling to instruct his son in the truth which God had revealed to him.

Consider the awesome truth that the more earthly things that the unbeliever gets, the deeper is his punishment in hell! For he has sinned more fully than if he had not been given these things. If God would in His grace give to the non-elected unbelievers things their flesh enjoyed, then that grace of God ceases when that unbeliever is cast into hell. And God's grace is temporary. It stops its falling

on that unbeliever. But God's grace is everlasting. All His virtues are everlasting! Man does not, and Satan cannot, change and stop God's virtues. And the I AM never changes His virtues.

Hebrews 11:20 does not mean that God through Isaac blessed Esau. The Greek word "blessed" in this verse has two elements. The first is one that means "good"; and the second means "word." Isaac spoke a good word to Esau. That this word "blessed" does not mean make blessed is plain from what we read in Psalm 103:1, namely, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Surely David is not here telling his soul to make God blessed. We cannot add anything to God. But by His grace we can speak well about Him, praise Him, and call Him our God.

Now, if we look at Genesis 27:39, 40, we find Isaac saying to Esau, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." To that verse our God refers when He through the human author writes in Hebrews 11:20 that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. And it is important to note that not our God but Isaac here blessed Esau.

What is meant here in Hebrews 11:20, then, is that Isaac blessed Jacob in the sense of speaking good words to him, which in this case were words of God's covenant promise. And, if we look carefully at what he said to Esau, we will see that he did indeed speak good words in the sense that he gives a warning to Esau. He warns him about what he sinfully wants to do, namely, according to Genesis 27:41, slay his brother Jacob and get back that land promised to him.

In that sense Isaac blessed both Jacob and Esau. To the one, namely Jacob, he spoke good words of a coming blessing. To Esau he spoke of sins he intends to perform. And to warn sinners in that sense is a blessing, for it is speaking good words to them. It

is good for us to warn the world of its devilishness and coming sins. By faith we can and must proclaim to the world the coming of Christ, and our hope for the full salvation that He has earned for us.

In Luke 11:42-44 Jesus said three times: "Woe unto you Pharisees." Those were good words, even though they did not promise good to these sinners. And Isaac blessed Jacob with good words of a promise; and he blessed Esau in the presentation of a

good and correct warning of the sins which he would commit. By faith Isaac proclaimed the truth to both Jacob and Esau. That truth to Esau was hard for the flesh; but by God's grace Isaac could by faith tell his sons that which is true. □

*Search the
Scriptures
Rev. Carl Haak*

Malachi

Lesson 9

Behold the Day Cometh

(Malachi 4)

Chapter 4 of Malachi's prophecy flows naturally from the thoughts of the last part of chapter 3. Chapter 3:17, 18 spoke of that day when God would at last make up His church in which the remnant of Malachi's day would be included. We were also told that that day would be the day of vindication of God's righteous judgments, when the difference between the righteous and wicked would be clearly shown. Now the prophet declares the *certainty* of that day (Behold, the day cometh!) and unfolds the *events* of that day: a day of judgment for all who do wickedly and salvation for all who fear God's name.

It should impress us that this is a very significant chapter. Not only is it the conclusion of Malachi's prophecy, it is the end of the entire Old Testament. The next Word from God would be when the angel Gabriel is sent to Zacharias in the temple. We could not think of a more fitting and

sober conclusion to both Malachi's prophecy and the Old Testament. The certainty of Christ's coming is announced, the warning of final judgment, the announcement of the arrival of Elijah to prepare God's people for that day, and the encouragement on account of the great good that shall belong to God's people—all these are found in this chapter.

Dividing the thoughts of the chapter, we see that the day Malachi foretells as surely coming will be a day of:

1. Judgment. The prophet speaks of the day as "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (vs. 5). Further, it is the day of destruction and fiery indignation of God against the wicked, which shall leave them nothing (vs. 1). And finally, it will be the day when Jehovah shall smite the earth with a curse. Plainly, the prophet sees to the last day ushered in by the appearing of Christ, resulting in the final judgment and damnation of the wicked.

2. Renewal. Before that day comes (and remember that Malachi sees the day of the Lord as one whole, including Christ's birth and His re-

turn in judgment), Elijah shall come. His work will be to "turn the hearts" of God's people. Specifically, there will be a renewal of the family and of the covenant, as the heart of fathers shall be turned to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. God's people will be prepared and made ready for that day by the ministry of Elijah, which will result in a people made ready for Christ's return. Thus the prophet calls us to remember the "law of Moses my servant" (vs. 4).

3. Salvation. Once again we see the truth that that which brings judgment to the wicked world, at the same time brings salvation to those who fear the Lord. Indeed, the purpose for the day is the glory of God seen in the salvation of His church. That salvation is beautifully described. Christ will come as the Sun of Righteousness to give light and healing. We shall share in His victory and tread down the wicked. (See I Cor. 6:2 and Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 12, Q&A 32.) Matthew Henry says it so well: "The great and terrible day of the Lord, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned towards the Egypt-

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tians that fight against God, and a bright side towards the faithful Israelites that follow him."

We are taught to look forward to that day, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world as we wait, and to be faithful in our own homes until He appears in power and great glory (II Thess. 1:7-10).

Memory Work

Malachi 4:2, 5, 6

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Questions for Study

1. The Day of the Lord: Judgment

a. From verses 1, 5, 6 write down what Malachi says about the Day of the Lord. Then answer this question: What will be the overall impression left upon the wicked?

b. Look up the following passages and state what they teach about the Day of the Lord: Isaiah 34:1-10; Revelation 6:12-17; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; II Peter 3:7-14. Any others?

c. What will happen to this physical creation? What is the idea of "fire" in Scripture? What is implied in

the earth and wicked being *burned up*? Will they be annihilated?

d. This judgment comes upon "the proud and all that do wickedly." From this prophecy explain who is meant by "proud" and by those who "do wickedly." Also, put this in today's terms.

2. The Day of the Lord: Renewal

a. Verse 5 tells us that before the day of the Lord comes, Elijah will be sent.

1) Who is Elijah? See Matthew 11:13, 14; 17:10-13; Luke 16:16; Mark 9:12, 13; Luke 1:15-17.

2) What are the similarities between Elijah and John? Give illustrations from their lives.

3) Is the ministry of Elijah (John the Baptist) finished or is it still present, and, if so, where? Explain and give proof from the Bible.

b. The result of the sending of Elijah the prophet (vs. 6).

1) When Gabriel quotes this passage to Zacharias he changes part of it (see Luke 1:17 and Malachi 4:6). What is changed? What is the significance of this change?

2) What does it mean that the hearts of fathers are turned to their children (see Isaiah 38:19; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21)? What does it mean for the hearts of children to be turned to their fathers (see Luke 2:51; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20)?

3) The result of the faithful ministry performed in the spirit of Elijah is found first and primarily in

the home and parent-child relationship. We may call it a covenant renewal. Give some of the traits of a home where the hearts of parents are turned to their children, and children to their parents. How is this cultivated or nurtured?

3. The Day of the Lord: Salvation

a. Verse 2 is one of the great Old Testament prophecies of our Lord and the salvation He brings. Explain what it means that:

1) He is the Sun of Righteousness.

2) He has healing in His wings.

b. The effect of His coming upon us is said to be this, that "ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." A very expressive and beautiful figure is used of releasing to the field calves which have been tied up all winter. Explain what this means. What spiritual emotions are worked in us at the coming of Christ?

c. Verse 3 shows that we will share in the victory of Christ over the wicked (see I Cor. 6:1, 2). Why is this important and an encouragement to us?

d. Malachi sees the day of the Lord as one, including His birth and return. What does this teach us?

e. What will characterize the church (us) as we await the coming of Christ? (See verse 4.)

4. Can you write from memory those beautiful and expressive verses, Malachi 4:2, 5, 6? □

Jehovah's Faithful Covenant With Noah

From Holy Writ
Rev. George Lubbers

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.... But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Genesis 6:8, 18

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Some Introductory Observations

It was a critical time in the church of God. It was some 120 years before the Flood. We read here of the dire predicament of the holy Seed. It was the Seed promised to Eve. It was the Seed that would utterly crush the head of the Serpent's seed (Gen. 3:15). When God promised to "establish" His covenant with Noah, it was 120 years before the flood (Gen. 6:3). It was a perilous time for the "sons of God." Hordes of these sons of God went and joined the daughters of men, left the true God and joined the daughters of Cain, and went and dwelt in the Cain city which had not foundations. Great would be the fall of that city and of her inmates. But it was a time when Noah rose up as the "preacher of righteousness bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (II Pet. 2:5).

It was also the hour when "Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah." This grace Jehovah manifested in the "establishing of His covenant" of grace with Noah and his family in their generations. These generations would develop once more along the lines of "sin" and "grace" after the flood in the so-called new world, the world that now is, from the days of Noah till the final return of the Lord. Then none of the elect shall perish but all shall have come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). Then shall the Lord have fulfilled His promise to Noah and his seed. Thus the LORD established His covenant with Noah and with his sons!!

The God, in whose eyes Noah has found "grace," is the God whose name is JEHOVAH. This Name He used when He assured Eve that her Seed shall surely crush the head of the Serpent's seed. This is the name used when God is said to be the Creator of Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:7-9, 15, 16, 19-21) and when God comes to Adam and Eve with the first Gospel, the Protevangel (Gen. 3:8, 9, 13-15). It is also the Name of God when He, in His contemplated mercy, sends Adam and Eve from Paradise with the flaming sword of the Cherubims (Gen. 3:24). This is the LORD who rescues the

faithful few of His elect (Noah and his family) from the hellish intent of Satan's hordes, who would drag them with them to destruction (Gen. 4:26b).

Jehovah's Faithful Covenant Unfolded to Noah and to His Sons

The first solid evidence of Jehovah's covenant to Noah was that God in His unfathomable "grace" gave to him the gift of "faith." This was the same faith which God gave to the fathers before him. This was the faith by which the just live and are justified (Heb. 11:1-10). Thus Noah did not draw back as did the hordes in whom God's soul had no pleasure; rather Noah was such that he "believed to the saving of his soul" (Heb. 10:33, 38). It was the faith by which only he could possibly please God. He came to God; he believed that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Thus Noah belonged to the cloud of witnesses, who with Jesus looked to Jehovah and ran the race with patience.

In this faith Noah and his sons had the sure evidence that the good work which God had begun in him would surely be fulfilled unto the time when the "earth would no longer exist" (Gen. 9:22). Such is the testimony which Noah received and which is recorded of him. This great faith and grace was manifested in the 120 years when Noah prepared the Ark to the saving of his house (Heb. 11:7). Did he thus in faith not condemn that evil world and become the heir of the righteousness which is by faith?

The second solid evidence of God's actually establishing His covenant with Noah and with his sons was in the obedient act of faith on the part of Noah in actually entering into this Ark, and patiently waiting to be "remembered" by the LORD. It is no trite saying when Moses writes in Genesis 8:1, "And God remembered Noah." Is God's remembering merely a mental activity, or is it a holy, sovereign actuating of what He had promised, that He would establish His covenant, and bring it to pass, so that not

one of His words falls to the ground? (See, for the concept of God's remembering: Gen. 9:15, 16; 19:29; 30:32; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42, 45.) Here is a remembering on the part of God of divine faithfulness that has no equal. From this vantage-point we can see the implication of the Hebrew form of the verb *Chum* in the Hiphil degree. It is causative. God causes His covenant to come into existence, to continue, and to be eternally realized.

Pause here just a bit and reflect. That was no little rainstorm which this Ark had to endure. For forty days and forty nights the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. The waters above the firmament verily came tumbling out of the infinite heights. And the waters beneath the earth and of the very ocean broke forth. This little Ark had only one great power to resist this horrible onslaught. It was what is so cryptically stated, "The LORD (Jehovah) shut him in." Yes, that was Jehovah causing Noah and his sons and their wives to be safe. And in faith they did not say with Peter and the disciples of Jesus' day, "Lord, we perish." Here was faith tested, tried in this Ark. The faith that built it was the same faith which felt safe with a good conscience in it! Hallelujah, what a mighty Jehovah God!

God remembered, remembered His covenant. He gave the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith (I John 5:4).

Noah's Reward is Certain: It is the Reward of Grace

When we read Hebrews 11:7 carefully we notice that Noah had faith which overcame the world. Noah was a powerful man of God. It was the power of God's establishing His sure covenant with Noah and with his generations. Jehovah saved His church from the wrath of the seed of the Serpent. Of this there can be no doubt, can there?

There are three great things ascribed to Noah:

1. He built an Ark to the saving

of his house. He did this in obedience to God's word of warning to him, did he not?

2. In his saving of his house, Noah condemned the world to perish in the Flood.

3. He became the heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Thus Noah is listed with the "elders who obtained a good report." He is part of those worthy men and women of whom the world is not worthy (Heb. 11:38). This Noah has a reward. It is called "righteousness which is by faith."

He is really a forerunner of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of whom God is not ashamed to be called their God. For Noah, also, God has prepared the city which has foundations. He never entered into the City of Cain. The latter perished in the flood. It is of this reward that all the law and the prophets testify (Rom. 3:21).

The last words which we have of Noah are covenant words. They are prophetic words which speak of the great covenant God, who is most blessed forever. "And he (Moses) said, Blessed be the LORD (Jehovah) God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, he shall dwell in the tents of Shem;

and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27).

We should notice that Shem shall receive a great pre-eminence at first. It is quite evident that "Shem" here refers to all his posterity, who live under the blessing of Jehovah in Shem's tents. Is it not remarkable that the plural, "tents," is employed? The tents are many. These are the tents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are men who lived in tents while they looked for a city (Heb. 11:8, 9). And these tents are made very "wide" in the Israel of God. It was in tents that Israel dwelt for forty years in the wilderness. These were the tents of the twelve tribes as they surrounded the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Did not Balaam see these tents and exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel" (Num. 24:5)?

From one of these tents Christ is born. Did not God cause Isaac to be born in Sarah's tent? The very tent into which Isaac later brought Rebecca, and where both Esau and Jacob were born? From these tents came forth the three times fourteen generations of the line from Abraham, David, the kings of the post-captivity period till the birth of Christ. And all is made

in readiness for the great ingathering of Japheth into the tents of Shem. Are not the sons of Japheth "the isles of the Gentiles"? Are these not repeatedly spoken of in the Psalms and in the prophetic Scriptures (Ps. 72:10; 97:1; Is. 49:1; 51:5; 60:9; 66:19)? And then listen to the prophecy of Luke 2:28-32!

Surely Jehovah's covenant with both Noah and Abraham are the same covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, are they not? True, they are dated at different times. The covenant of Noah is given before the Flood and designates that the very Flood and the Ark are the demonstration of God's mercy. This covenant is the basis for the later dated covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Noah's covenant reaches across the ages until times shall be no more. It includes the covenant with Abraham recorded in Genesis 15 and 17. The latter gives us details of how Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem. It shows us how the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Japheth) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed (Gen. 12:3 and Gal. 3:8, 9).

Acts 15:18 "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." □

Church and State
Mr. James Lanting

Recent Federal Legislation on Church/State Issues

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

Inter-religious Coalition Promotes a Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

In an unusual showing of solidarity, a large and diverse group of liberal and conservative religious

groups have formed a rare coalition to support and sponsor a new federal statute calculated to enhance religious freedom in this country. Angered by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision last

year in the notorious case of *Employment Division v. Smith*, the coalition has convinced 104 U.S. Representatives to co-sponsor a new bill in Congress dubbed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act ("RFRA").

The RFRA was drafted to act as a legislative antidote to the Court's First Amendment decision in *Smith*, which alarmed religious leaders nationwide. The *Smith* case involved two Indians who were fired from their counseling jobs after it was discovered they had used peyote, a stimulant drug derived from cactus plants. They were then also denied unemployment compensation because their unemployment resulted from the use of an illegal drug. They appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that their use of peyote was a religious practice and sanctioned as a "sacrament" by their Native American Church.

The Court rejected their argument that the termination of their employment and state's subsequent denial of unemployment benefits violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment (Congress shall pass no law ... prohibiting the free exercise [of Religion]) Arguably overturning 30 years of established precedent, the Court surprisingly held that the Free Exercise Clause does not exempt anyone from a "facially-neutral" law even if it directly interferes with one's religious practice (such as peyote use). Previously, a religious objector could obtain an exemption unless the state could show that its law was the "least restrictive means" to serve a "compelling government interest."

The loss of this "strict scrutiny" standard for carving out religious exceptions to laws that intrude upon religious activities alarmed many. The RFRA was drafted to restore the "strict scrutiny" standard: government cannot infringe on a person's free exercise of religion unless it can demonstrate (1) that the government has a "compelling interest" in doing so, and (2) that it is taking the "least restrictive means" possible to further that compelling interest.

Most recently, however, some members of the Coalition for the Free

Exercise of Religion have been withdrawing their support for the RFRA bill because of concern that the language of the bill may backfire in the areas of abortion, taxation, and parochial aid. For example, some supporters of the original bill suspect that some feminists may argue that their right to an unrestricted abortion is a "religious belief" which the state may not regulate.

Similar bills are being prepared for Senate sponsors and within a few months there may be a showdown on Capitol Hill over a final version of a RFRA. This important piece of federal litigation deserves special attention from those concerned about church/state relationships and religious liberties in the 90s.

Abortion Activists Sponsor Freedom of Choice Act.

Abortionists are concerned that the Supreme Court will jettison *Roe v. Wade* this summer, again allowing states to establish their own guidelines and restrictions on abortion.

Accordingly, the forces that support a woman's right to abort her child have recently placed before Congress a bill that will essentially codify the *Roe v. Wade* decision. The proponents of this pro-abortion federal law have named it the Freedom of Choice Act ("FCA").

Among other things, the proposed FCA states that "a state may not restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy ... before fetal viability...." The sponsors desire to have this bill ready for a floor vote in the House as soon as the Supreme Court announces its ruling in the Pennsylvania abortion case this summer.

President Bush recently told an evangelical audience in Illinois that he will veto the measure if it is passed by Congress. The U.S. Attorney General Flanigan is also advising that the bill be rejected.

Abortionists, however, are confident that an unpopular Supreme Court decision in an election year will galvanize Congress to pass such a measure. Kate Michelmann, presi-

dent of the National Abortion Rights Action League, was recently quoted: "No member of Congress now can dance or dodge away and around this issue. Each of them is going to be accountable."

Some Constitutional scholars are dubious, however, whether Congress can create a right that the Supreme Court may rule is not found in the Constitution. In any event, the progress of this bill in Congress merits careful observation by those concerned about abortion in this country.

Interesting Federal Statistics on Non-Public Schools.

The 1991 edition of "Statistical Abstract of the United States," published by the federal government, was recently released. It contains some interesting data regarding non-public schools. Some examples that may be interesting to parents and teachers:

*There are 25,616 private schools (elementary and secondary) in the U.S., half of which are Protestant.

*45% of the Protestant schools have been in operation for only ten years or less. Only 29% of Protestant schools have been in existence for 25 years or more.

*Average number of students: Catholic schools — 363; Protestant schools — 142. Total number of teachers: Catholic schools — 185,000; Protestant schools — 142,000. Average annual salary for teachers: Catholic schools — \$15,100; Protestant schools — \$14,800.

*Annual Tuition Rates

	Protestant	Catholic
less than \$500	6%	15%
\$500 - \$1,000	31%	37%
\$1,001 - \$1,500	31%	26%
\$1,501 - \$2,500	20%	7%
Greater than \$2,500	12%	4%

□

Book Review

The Chosen People: A Corporate View Of Election, by William W. Klein; Zondervan Publishing House, 1990; 314pp., \$15.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

This discussion of election is presented to the reader as new light shed on a difficult doctrine. The author is of the opinion that neither Arminianism nor Calvinism has succeeded in solving the problem of election, and that a new look at the doctrine will demonstrate that both are wrong. This "new look" results in the author's idea that election is corporate.

This is a strange thesis to pursue and quite contrary to the facts in the case. He accuses both Arminianism and Calvinism of being individualistic. While this serious accusation is brought against Arminianism with considerable justification, anyone who knows anything about Reformed and Presbyterian theology (especially as it came to expression in the Canons of Dordt and in the Westminster Confessions) knows too that, from the beginning of the Reformation, a corporate view of election was taught in the church.

And this is exactly why the author's insistence on corporate elec-

tion is surely by no stretch of the imagination a new insight into biblical teachings.

But the author's troubles are not over. He uses his erroneous analysis of Calvinism to launch a fierce attack against the biblical and Reformed doctrine of predestination. This is done, interestingly enough, by way of an analysis of all the texts both in the Old and New Testaments which could in any way be quoted in favor of the doctrine of election and reprobation. He does not miss one passage of importance. But when the analysis of these passages emerges from the writer's hands, they are completely twisted so as to teach exactly the opposite of what they clearly teach, or they are dismissed with remarks like this: An interpretation which teaches the historic doctrine of election is impossible because that "would be totally out of character . . . for Jesus' ministry" (p. 150). His rejection of the Reformed view is explicit when he rejects Dr. W. Hendriksen's interpretation of such key passages as Matthew 18:14, although, interestingly, he puts a finger on a weakness in Dr. Hendriksen's position when he takes Hendriksen to task for his "two-will theory" of the will of God.

Klein's plea for a corporate view of election turns out to be a plea for a conditional view of election in which foreknowledge becomes prescience, and God's determination to save or to damn is based upon man's faith or unbelief. And so, after all, the author presents a view of election (and reprobation) which was taught some 375 years ago and which has been consistently condemned by all Reformed and Presbyterian churches which have remained faithful to their creedal heritage.

An interesting question, though, is: How does the author square his conditional predestination with a corporate view of election? This is an interesting question because the simple fact of the matter is that this cannot be done. His effort to do so is found in different places in the book, but especially on pp. 266, 267. It is stressed that election is for service (which a man may refuse to do and thereby fail to become elect) or for suffering. But it is never for privilege of any kind. So it all comes down to the fact that a corporation is the object of election, into which corporation one enters by a choice of his own will and a decision which he makes to believe. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Denomination Highlights

The Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, MI was the site of this year's Mr. and Mrs. Adult Bible Society League Mass Meeting. On the evening of April 28 society members from the west Michigan PRCs met together to hear Rev. Bruinsma speak on the topic, "Signs of the Times in Light of Current Ecclesiastical Events."

Rev. R. Moore, pastor of the Hull,

IA PRC, was the featured speaker at the Ladies' Spring League meeting held on April 2 in our Hull Church. Rev. Moore addressed the ladies from our Doon, IA, Edgerton, MN, and Hull congregations on the topic "The New Age Movement."

Congregational Highlights

For about a year now the congregation of Byron Center, MI PRC has conducted a class for its own mem-

bers on the principles of church government. Just recently they asked Prof. Hanko, of our seminary, to lead the class permanently. Because of good interest in and outside of their congregation they have now decided to extend invitations to all area PR churches to join them. This class meets each third Thursday evening of the month at 7:30 PM. Prof. Hanko has begun discussion on the offices of

the church. And it was anticipated that such subjects as election of officers, the formula of subscription, etc. would be covered.

The Adult Bible Society of the South Holland, IL PRC invited the Bible Society from the Peace PRC to meet with them for a special program on April 28. Rev. B. Woudenberg, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC was there to show the group some slides and discuss his recent visit with the Reformed Churches of Hungary and Romania.

The last issue of the "News" mentioned a couple of church choir concerts. Before any more issues slip away, let me add a few more.

The Choir of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA presented their annual Easter program after the evening service on April 19. The Choir of the Loveland, CO PRC also invited their congregation to join them in celebrating the resurrection of our Lord and Savior when they presented a program on Sunday, April 19. The Choral Society of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL presented a program entitled "Hallelujah What a Savior," on the evening of April 12. And, finally, the Hope PRC of Walker, MI had their choir program on April 26.

Tuesday, May 5, Mrs. Fran Lubbers presented her Second Annual Organ Concert in the auditorium of the Grandville, MI PRC. Her concert on the Digital Computer Allen organ

dealt with the theme, "The Lord is Risen Indeed." The concert music was also pre-recorded in stereo, and tapes were available.

This might be a first for our Pella, IA PRC. Their pastor, Rev. Bekkering, planned on taking one week of vacation to go to a Theological Conference in Pennsylvania. In his absence the Consistory planned to use a video tape for the sermons instead of an audio tape. This tape was provided by our Hudsonville, MI PRC. This marks the first time that I have ever seen it mentioned that one of these tapes was actually used by one of our congregations for this purpose.

Evangelism Activities

The Church Extension Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC reported to their congregation that they have begun placing issues of the *Standard Bearer* in different public locations in their area. They also reported that on April 20 Rev. Cammenga and deacon Marvin Schwarz traveled to Alamosa to visit with contacts that they had received in that area, especially with one family. This contact came to them from the Evangelism Committee in our South Holland, IL church.

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL planned a lecture for May 8 in the auditorium of the Illiana Christian High School. The Lord willing, Prof. H. Hanko was

to speak on the subject, "The Battle for the Bible."

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a lecture on April 30, delivered by their pastor, Rev. M. Joostens, on the topic, "The Office of all Believers (The Power and Responsibilities of the Pew)."

And one item of school news: In conjunction with Education Week at Covenant Christian High in Grand Rapids, Professor Robert Decker gave a special speech on April 18 in the school gym. The title of his speech — "Needed: Able and Faithful Men for the Ministry."

Ministerial Calls

Rev. A. den Hartog, pastor of our Hope, Redlands, CA congregation, has declined the call to become missionary to the island of Jamaica.

Although Rev. J. Kortering concluded his pastorate in the Grandville, MI PRC on May 3, he and his wife plan to worship there until they depart for Singapore on July 1. Grandville's Council also set Wednesday, June 10, as an evening for a farewell social for the Korterings.

And finally, at its meeting on May 7, the Council of the Hudsonville, MI PRC formed a new trio from which one was to be called to serve as missionary to Larne, Northern Ireland. This trio included the Revs. Bruinsma, Gritters, and Koole. □

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society, Ruth, of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, MI expresses their Christian love and sympathy to fellow members, Mrs. Josie Koole, Mrs. Dena Engelsma, Mrs. Thelma Orme, Mrs. Jeanette DeVries, Miss Gertie Lanting, and Mrs. Alice Knott in the sudden death of their husband, brother, and brother-in-law,

MR. PETER KOOLE.

May they continue to experience the Lord's sustaining grace and the comfort of His Word: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

Rev. James Slopsema, President
Mrs. Thea Buiter, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Faith Protestant Reformed Church (Jenison, MI) expresses its Christian sympathy to Rev. Kenneth Koole and Elder Lawrence Koole and their families in the death of their father and grandfather,

MR. PETER KOOLE,

on April 23, 1992 at the age of 69. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

Gerald Feenstra, Vice-president
Arie Griffioen, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sincere sympathy to our brother elder, Peter Feenstra and his family in the sudden death of his father,

MR. CHARLES FEENSTRA.

Our prayer is that they may take comfort in the knowledge that "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Council of Southwest PRC

Rev. Marvin Kamps, President
Phil Lotterman, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, June 11 marks the 35th anniversary of our special parents and grandparents,

REV. and MRS. JASON KORTERING.

The Lord has been gracious to us in giving parents who continue to be an example to us of godliness. The love and faithfulness of our heavenly Father is shown to us through them.

"How blest the man who fears the Lord and greatly loves God's holy will, his children share his great reward, and blessings all their days shall fill" (Psalm 112 — Psalter #305)

- ✿ Rev. Barry and Lori Gritters
Curt, Kevin, Eric, Dan, Brad, Lisa
- ✿ Dennis and Sharon Griess
Cory, Tara, Justin, Seth, Derek, Joshua
- ✿ Bruce and Joann Klamer
Alyssa, Jaycen
- ✿ Leon and Ellen Kamps
Nicholas, Caleb, Gina
- ✿ Rick and Carol Bos

Grandville, MI

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church would like to express their sympathy to Minnie VanDenTop and family in the death of her son,

WILLIAM VANDENTOP.

May the family find comfort in the words of Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

Rev. R. Dykstra, President
Gert Burgers, Vice-all

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Josie Koole and family, at the sudden death of her husband,

MR. PETER KOOLE.

Our prayer for you is that God will continue to sustain you, even as He has promised, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psalm 91:11).

Peter Petroelje, President
Leon Garvelink, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27, 1992, our dear parents, **CHARLES and LOIS KREGEL**, celebrated their forty-fifth wedding anniversary. We are grateful to God and to them for their caring, covenant upbringing, and we are confident that God will continue to be with them in the future as He has been in the past.

Psalm 103:17, 18, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

"To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

Their children and grandchildren:

- ✿ Ken and Mary Velthouse
Mike, Kris, Matt, Marc
- ✿ Joel and Ellen Bruinooge
Heather, Derek, Kyle
- ✿ Charles Kregel, Jr.
- ✿ David and Mary Kregel
Lisa, Brent, Jason, Ryan, Emily
- ✿ Andrew and Laura Nickle

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The men of the Doon Men's Society express Christian sympathy to our brother members, Elmer, John, Pete, and Minard VanDenTop and Ed VanGinkel, in the loss of their brother and brother-in-law,

MR. WILLIAM VANDENTOP.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Henry Bleyenburg, President
David Wiersma, Secretary

CALL TO SYNOD

Synod 1991 appointed South Holland Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, the calling church for Synod 1992 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

South Holland's Consistory hereby notifies our churches, sister-churches, and all interested Reformed churches and believers that the 1992 Synod will convene, the Lord

willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 1992, at 9:00 AM in the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473 (Phone: [708] 596-3113).

The Pre-Synodical worship service will be held in the South Holland Church on Monday evening, June 8, at 7:30 PM. Rev. Jason Kortering, president of the 1991 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Consistory of the
South Holland PRC,
George Vroom, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 12, 1992, our dear parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. JOHN EKEMA,

celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

We thank God that He has given them to us for these many years. It is our prayer that our heavenly Father will continue to guide them in their remaining years together.

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- ✿ John and Tina Ekema
- ✿ Bob and Kathy Ekema
- ✿ Jim VanOverloop and Linda who is now with her heavenly Father in glory
- ✿ Jim and Sally Koll
14 grandchildren
2 great grandchildren
2 grandchildren in glory

Redlands, CA

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses its deepest sympathy to its members Mr. and Mrs. Larry Koole and Rev. and Mrs. Ken Koole on the death of their father,

PETER KOOLE.

We take comfort together from the assurance that God's Word gives us in Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Peter VanDer Schaaf, Vice-president
Mary Brummel, Secretary