

# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

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*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*

The vast majority of the articles of the *Standard Bearer* serve in one way or another to direct our attention to our Savior. And that, after all is said and done, is the strength of our *Standard Bearer*. It is a strength that ought not to be overlooked, because it is a strength we need as husbands and wives, parents and children, to fulfill our callings in the kingdom of God.

See "The *Standard Bearer* and the Covenant Family — p. 84

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November 15, 1992



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## In This Issue...

Supporters of the *SB* who live in the Grand Rapids area are able each year to attend the annual meeting of the association which publishes this periodical. They are privileged therefore to hear not only the Board's report of their activities for the year, but also an inspiring address—usually by a pastor of one of the PR congregations in Grand Rapids. In order that all of our readers might have a share in the information and inspiration, we have included in this issue both the secretary's annual report and Rev. Bruinsma's speech.

Among the topics suggested to Rev. Bruinsma for this speech was "The *Standard Bearer* and the Covenant Family." The topic assumes a positive relationship between the two — i.e., that the *SB* does in fact serve the family. To make the *assertion*, however, is one thing. To articulate *how* the *SB* does so is quite another. One will of course think immediately of a rubric like "When Thou Sittest in Thine House," and of occasional articles which directly address relationships within the home. But if that were the extent of the *SB's* contribution to the covenant family, the relationship between the two would be very limited indeed.

We are glad that Rev. Bruinsma chose this topic, because he demonstrated convincingly that the ingredients are there, virtually from the front to the back of each issue, to make of the *SB* a means for strengthening the covenant family. We're glad, we say, not so much because of what his speech says about the *SB*, as because of the occasion it gives all of us to reflect on the spiritual character of our own individual covenant families.

To discover how this is so, read, "The *Standard Bearer* and the Covenant Family."

D.D.

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## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma  
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker  
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Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard  
Woudenberg.

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
4949 Ivanrest  
Grandville, MI 49418  
BUSINESS OFFICE  
The Standard Bearer  
Don Doezema  
P.O. Box 603  
Grandville, MI  
49468-0603  
PH: (616) 536-1778  
(616) 531-1490  
FAX: (616) 531-3033

## CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

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# Neither Poverty Nor Riches

*"... Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."*

Proverbs 30:8, 9

"Feed me with food convenient for me." Surely, this is not a sinful request we make to our God. It is not wrong to ask for earthly things. In fact, the request of this proverb is strikingly similar to the request Jesus has taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

By this request we recognize, first of all, that we are creatures who, like all other creatures, are dependent upon this earthly creation for health and life. Our lives are so fragile. We do not simply need food, but we need the right kinds of food, lest we suffer from malnutrition, become sick, and perhaps even die. We need shelter to protect us from the rain and snow and from the icy winds and the searing sun. We need proper attire to warm and protect us as we venture forth from our shelters. All these are basic needs which are necessary for life in this present world and creation. By raising the request to God that He grant us food convenient, we are in reality acknowledging that we are mindful of our human frailty and that our days are as the grass. We are such dependent creatures.

But by this request we also exhibit a childlike faith in God as our

almighty and faithful Provider. We acknowledge by it that He is the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and that His ways drop fatness. He provides for every creature what it needs to survive in this present world. He "waters the hills with rain from the skies, and plentiful grass and herbs He supplies." We, by the grace of God, have been led to a knowledge that we are dependent not simply on creation but, together with all of creation, on the Creator. He created this world and all it contains and He continues to sustain and guide it, providing for all the creatures of His hands.

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*...we are dependent  
not simply on creation  
but, together  
with all of creation,  
on the Creator.*

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Yet, is it not true that our request is much deeper than all this? Surely, we ask of our God that He provide for our material needs ... but not if in the receiving of these things we at all jeopardize our souls. What Jesus says is so true, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). If these earthly gifts which we receive from the hand of our God serve only to draw us away from Him and our heavenly desires, then we are surely going to take inventory of them. This the sacred writer does in the passage before us.

The request of the sincere child of God is not that God simply feed

him with food, but that God give him food *convenient* for him. That is much different! That term "convenient" does not refer to a request for all the conveniences and luxuries of life. Just the opposite is true: it asks only for one's "proper portion" in life, or, perhaps better, for the food "allotted" to one by God. Such is in perfect harmony with our sanctified desire to seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness first. We have set our sights on heaven and, forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward that mark. Our lives on this earth are but a pilgrimage; we have no abiding place here. True, we need that daily bread, but only that which is convenient for us—only our proper portion—in order that we might be nourished and live comfortably while we seek those things which are above.

But the sacred writer here in Proverbs finds it necessary, for his benefit and ours, to define the limits of this request: "feed me with food convenient for me." On the one end of the spectrum is poverty—the lack of the necessities of life. On the other end is riches—an overabundance of material things. Our almighty God does not distribute the wealth of this world evenly. To some He gives more—much more; while to others He gives very little, not even enough to live. To still others, God gives food just sufficient for life in this world. Because of this, the wise man of Proverbs asks God to give to him neither poverty nor riches.

Do not give me riches! Who in today's world would ever make that request? With few exceptions the axiom holds true: "the poor want to be rich and the rich want to be richer."

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*Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.*



We live in a greedy world! The millions of dollars gained and lost through gambling, lotteries, and sweepstakes are a reflection of man's deep-rooted lust after money and what it buys. Riches: this is what has always motivated mankind. Who would ever make the request, "give me no riches"? I admit that, for myself too (although I might never say that as such in my prayers), the desire for riches is often there. But then, that is what makes this request all the more urgent, is it not? What we really are taught to pray here is that God might work in us in such a way that we do not *desire* to be rich. We understand what Paul writes to Timothy in I Timothy 5:9-10, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition...."

Oh, it must be said, of course, that it is not sin to be rich. We are required to labor diligently in this world, and if God blesses those labors with much earthly gain then it is His will for us. And surely, it is not wrong to bow humbly before God in prayer and acknowledge His fatherly hand in our attaining of such wealth. Neither is it wrong to give thanks to God for all He has given us. We had better do this! But it is wrong for us to *ask* God for earthly wealth. When we come and lay our petitions before God in prayer, we are expressing to Him all the true desires of our heart. To ask for earthly wealth contradicts our spiritual desire for spiritual riches. Does not Jesus Himself teach us that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also? When we ask God to give us food convenient for us, then we are in reality saying, "I have no desire for riches; just for the necessities of this life."

That we do not ask God for riches, however, does not mean we desire the opposite extreme. We do not desire to be poverty stricken. No one desires this in life. But what ought to be kept in mind is that it is not sinful to make such a request of God in prayer: "give me not poverty." Surely, we do not go about looking to starve, as if this will make

us better Christians. Strange complex that some people have! They actually think that riches are what makes a person sinful. If they take some monastic vow of poverty, therefore, this will make them better Christians. The poorer one is the more he will seek the riches of heaven. That contradicts the request of this text: "Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me." Poverty does not assure true spirituality.

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*...the inclination of our flesh  
is to think that  
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financial obligations....*

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This passage proves this to us as well. The writer has deep and profound insight into his human nature and sinful flesh. This reveals itself when he gives us the reason for his request for neither poverty nor riches. He writes, "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Look into the heart of that man who is given little in life. Yes, look into your heart, redeemed, yet poor sinner! What do you see there in your sinful flesh? And what often times comes out in your dealings with others? Is it not true that the inclination of our flesh is to think that since we are poor we need not fill our own financial obligations before God? Others owe us their money because we are poor. Brothers ought to forgive us our debts because we cannot pay them. The wicked world we will pay, because they will not deal in mercy with us; but the causes of God's kingdom and covenant, these we will leave to suffer, because brothers in the Lord will not be so cruel with us. Such is the reasoning of the sinful flesh of that one who is poor. And that reasoning is nothing other than the sin of stealing!

And more, when the times re-

ally become difficult, how easy it is to raise our complaint against God Himself. He, after all, is the One who has made us so poor. How easy it is in those hard times to blame God. How easy it is to curse Him, if not in word, surely in the thoughts of our hearts. "Ah, Lord, give me no poverty, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain!"

"But, Lord, give me not riches either, lest I be full and deny thee and say, Who is the Lord?" It is easy to examine that brother who does not have so much and see his sin. But he must deal with his sin and we must deal with ours. Look into your own heart and flesh, redeemed sinner to whom God has given much in the way of earthly wealth. What inclination do you see in your sinful flesh? Is it not true that when we are rich we become rather self-dependent? We have success, we have money, we have luxuries and earthly comforts. Our life in this world is pretty secure. Our business is growing and thriving; we have put sufficient money away for safekeeping and for our future life. We pour huge amounts of money into real estate, we invest in stocks and bonds, we may even have our summer houses or motor homes. Or perhaps our income is a bit more moderate. Maybe the extras we have are not quite so luxurious, maybe our bank accounts and our investments are not so large, maybe our houses are not quite so large, or our motor home is only a pop-up camper. Yet, we are fairly secure in life. So caught up can we become in the pursuit of all of this that we forget about God and His kingdom. Yes, God is good for Sunday worship, He is good for salvation, but as far as this life is concerned ... well, we really have no worry and no need of God.

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:24). The easiest thing for a rich man to do when indulging in all the delights of his riches is to forget God ... and his poor struggling brother. How easy it is to reason that we have done our part for the cause of



Christ's kingdom (even though we do not feel the slightest pinch). Now let the brother do his. We do not like to be reminded of the hard word spoken in I Timothy 6:17-19, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but ... that they do good, that they be ... ready to distribute, willing to communicate...."

What a difficult request for all of

us as God's children to make: give me neither poverty nor riches!

We are thankful for the work of Jesus Christ in our hearts. By the power of the Spirit and through the work of God's grace we are humbled. We are made to know ourselves and our weaknesses and sins. And with broken spirits and contrite hearts we bow before God with the prayer on our lips that we receive food conve-

nient for us — nothing more and nothing less. We follow the example of our Savior who taught us to pray for our daily bread.

Why not make this our morning prayer? What a good way to keep ourselves focused all day. Then we will lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life. □

## Editorial

# The Death of Confessional Calvinism in Scottish Presbyterianism (5)

In his recent book, *Behold Your God (BYG)*, prominent Scottish Presbyterian theologian Donald Macleod denies the Reformed doctrine of total depravity. He denies this basic truth of Calvinism in the interests of defending the doctrine of common grace. Macleod teaches an operation of the Holy Spirit within unregenerated men and women that makes them somewhat good, that fills them with "laudable qualities," and that enables them to do much good in the areas of theology, ethics, science, and art.

With the exception of a few hardened evildoers (Macleod mentions Judas Iscariot and Hitler), unregenerated men and women are somewhat good. They are somewhat good in every faculty and part of their being — mind, will, affections, and body.

Professor Macleod teaches partial depravity.

The preceding editorial dealt with Macleod's attempt to harmo-

nize his teaching with historic Calvinism by redefining "total" as 'in every part.' "Total depravity," Macleod would have us believe, merely means that the unregenerated sinner is depraved in every part of his being. But he is not *completely* depraved in every part. Every part of the sinner is also somewhat good.

### Partial Depravity and the Westminster Confession

A second, and still more grievous, way in which the Scottish Presbyterian defends his un-Presbyterian doctrine of partial depravity is by misrepresenting the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). In support of his definition of "total" as meaning merely 'in every part,' Macleod appeals to the WCF, 6.2 (he gives the reference as 6.3, but this is a mistake):

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion

with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

Macleod would have us suppose that the Confession here describes total depravity as merely a defilement of every part of man (*BYG*, p. 128).

The fact is that the WCF very definitely states, not merely that the unregenerated man is depraved "in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," but that he is "*wholly defiled*" in every faculty and part. Every faculty, e.g., the will, and every part, e.g., the brain, of all unregenerated sinners is completely defiled. In every faculty and part is nothing else than defilement. There is no good in any faculty or part of fallen man.

Also, Professor Macleod neglects to call attention to what follows in this chapter in the WCF on total depravity:

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, dis-



abled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions (6.4; emphasis mine, DJE).

What loophole is left to a Presbyterian through which he can introduce good into the unregenerate? Where in the creature described by the Confession of Faith are the "laudable qualities" that Professor Macleod has discovered in unregenerated man? How is it possible to interpret chapter six of the WCF as teaching merely defilement "in every faculty and part"?

In light of the creed's describing the condition of the unregenerated sinner as that of *death* ("dead in sin, and wholly defiled," etc.), there is something absurd, something ludicrous, about the notion that this sinner is yet somewhat good and, therefore, capable of doing good works. The teaching that unregenerated men are somewhat good requires us to believe, as sound Presbyterian theology, that dead men are also somewhat alive. Indeed, the dead men are somewhat alive *in every faculty and part*.

Were I to assert such nonsense in the physical realm of everyday life, I would be dismissed as a fool. "My Uncle Harry is dead, and he has some life yet in soul and body so that he is working quite actively." But in the realm of Presbyterian and Reformed theology, this passes for great wisdom. "The unregenerated is dead in sin, and he has some ethical life so that he is vigorously producing good works."

A similar misrepresentation of the Presbyterian creed as supporting partial depravity is Macleod's mishandling of the Confession in the matter of the supposed good works of the unregenerate. He quotes a line in the WCF, 16.7 in support of his contention that the unregenerate are good and capable of doing good:

But the unregenerate man may still be capable of works which, "for the matter of them, may be things which God commands, and of good use

both to themselves and others" (BYG, p. 129).

The words, "for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others," are a quotation of the WCF in 16.7. But this use of the quoted words makes the Confession say the very opposite of that which it actually is teaching in this article:

Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; *they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God ...*(my emphasis, DJE).

Macleod quotes a line of the article to teach that the unregenerated man performs good works. The article, however, expressly states that all the works of the unregenerate are "sinful and cannot please God," including those works that outwardly conform to God's law.

#### The Confession's Definition of a Good Work

In this article of the Westminster Confession appears the same definition of a good work that is found in Question 91 of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q. But what are good works?

A. Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations, or the institutions of men.

According to both the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, a good work is one that has three characteristics. These characteristics concern source, standard, and goal. The source is faith; the standard is the law of God; and the goal is God's glory.

According to both the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism a good work is *exclusively* one that has these three characteristics. No work that lacks these three characteristics is good. Every work that lacks these three characteristics is evil.

Christ alone is the source of good for men, and, therefore, only works that originate in the faith that draws from Christ are good.

The law of God is the sole standard of good, and, therefore, only works that conform to the command to love God and the neighbor are good.

There is none good but God, and, therefore, only works that aim at God — the Triune, holy God revealed in Scripture — are good.

This creedal definition of a good work rules out all possibility of an unregenerated man's doing good works, and it judges all the works of the unregenerated to be sins.

#### Macleod's Definition of a Good Work

Macleod's bold solution to the problem (for he is determined to have the unregenerated sinner perform works that are good, regardless of the Presbyterian creeds) is to propose another, different definition of a good work:

But if we allow that, without forgetting this higher meaning, we may also define *the good* quite biblically as doing what nature teaches, showing natural affection and manifesting respect for life, property and marriage, for duly constituted authority and for the ordinances of the church, then we may distinguish some unregenerate men from others as *good*: and go on to explain the difference as a gift of God, expressing His common grace (BYG, pp. 129, 130).

To define "the good" differently than the WCF in 16.7 is not allowed. This definition is God's own definitive definition. Accordingly, whatever is not out of faith, according to the law of God, and to God's glory is sin. If, outwardly, the deed conforms



to the law's precept and if, seemingly, it serves humanity well, it is only a glittering sin. Augustine called such deeds of the ungodly "glittering vices"; the Puritans called them "painted sins."

#### How Will Presbyterians Define a Good Work?

Every Presbyterian inclined to accept Macleod's novel definition of a good work should reckon with three facts: 1) The new definition contradicts the definition of the WCF; 2) the devising of good works by Professor

Macleod is forbidden by the WCF in the opening article of chapter sixteen: "Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention"; and 3) there is absolutely no creedal proof of any production of good works in unregenerated men by the Holy Spirit by means of a "common grace."

The Presbyterian creeds, like the Reformed creeds, teach the total de-

pravity of unregenerated men. The creeds themselves make plain that "total" means 'complete' and 'entire.' From this total depravity proceeds not one good work, but only "all actual transgressions" (WCF, 6.4).

Which definition of a good work do Scottish Presbyterians accept? That of the Westminster Confession or that of Donald Macleod?

Their answer will indicate whether they confess total or partial depravity. □

— DJE

## All Around Us

## Prof. Robert Decker

### ◆ News Briefs

● Rev. Robert E. Grossman resigned as Professor of Church History and Pastoral Care at Mid-America Reformed Seminary. Rev. Grossman has been on the faculty at Mid-America since 1986. In his letter of resignation to the Board of Trustees he indicated his desire to return to his first calling: the gospel ministry in a local congregation. Rev. Grossman, a minister in the Reformed Church in the United States (German Reformed), will continue to teach during the 1992-1993 academic year.

#### Mid-America Messenger

● Professor Klaas Runia retired as professor at the Theological University of Kampen in The Netherlands. Runia, a noted Dutch theologian in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), was an educator, writer, editor, administrator, and ecumenist. From 1956 to 1971 he taught systematic theology (dogmatics) in the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia. From 1971 to 1992 Dr. Runia was professor of practical theology at the GKN semi-

nary in Kampen. For twenty years Professor Runia was editor-in-chief for *Centraal Weekblad*, a weekly newsmagazine and commentary written primarily for members of the GKN. Runia also was deeply involved in the work of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), serving as a delegate from the GKN and on every interim committee from 1972 to 1988.

#### Centraal Weekblad REC News Exchange

● Bishop Laszlo Tokes held a nine-day hunger strike in September to call attention to the fact that the government of Romania has not punished those responsible for "the genocide during the December 1989 revolution." Tokes was a spark for that revolution by his non-violent resistance against the Communist regime. He was afterward elected a bishop in the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania.

#### REC News Exchange

● On September 21 the Council of the Beverly Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan unanimously resolved "that the Beverly Christian Reformed Church cease its affiliation with the denomination known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America, effective September 21, 1992." At a subsequent congregational meeting 262 of Beverly's 306 communicant members voted 195 to 67 to support the Council's resolution. Beverly's ac-

tion makes it the seventh independent Reformed church in West Michigan. Beverly's secession brings the total reported membership of secession churches to 6081 members.

#### Reformed Believers Press Service

● The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church voted at its synod last June to withdraw their membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). Allen Church, a delegate to the REC Assembly in Athens May 25 - June 5, told the synod that the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken or GKN) had dominated the REC since 1980. When the REC refused to terminate the GKN membership, Church concluded, "The GKN issue continues then to paralyze the REC." Some delegates protested the move, but in the end the vote was near unanimous for ending their membership. Thus the Associate Reformed Presbyterians join several other denominations, among them the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America and the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, which have withdrawn from the REC for the same reasons.

#### REC News Exchange

### ◆ AIDS: A Teen Nightmare

Just how widespread is HIV infection among American adolescents? No one knows. But the number of teens who have actually developed AIDS has increased by more than 70

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



percent since 1989, making AIDS the sixth-leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 24.

Given such grim data, more evangelicals are challenging Christian leaders and denominational officials toward action, accuracy, and compassion in combating transmission of HIV. Joining the evangelicals in urging greater Christian involvement is prominent AIDS researcher Robert Redfield of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D. C. Last summer Redfield led a Washington briefing on teens and AIDS.

Redfield attacked current HIV prevention efforts that emphasize "safer sex" practices among adolescents and others. "Condoms aren't safer; their dangerous at best," he told the 117 Christian leaders gathered for the meeting. Redfield cited a 3 to 20 percent failure rate of condoms. "Take a risk that could destroy your life: that's the message we're giving kids," said Redfield.

Rather, Redfield called on Christians to teach sexual responsibility and attack the "myth of the valueless message" that accepts any sexual behavior in any setting. He called "bidirectional monogamy" the soundest medical policy and one that could "stop this epidemic in its tracks."

Teens with multiple sexual partners face the greatest risks. According to a recent study released by the

Center For Disease Control, 19 percent of high school students say they have had four or more sex partners; among high school seniors, the number is 29 percent.

We agree with those many who are saying the church cannot afford to ignore these statistics. Indeed, research shows that "church youth in America are not unlike unchurched youth in their sexual activity today," says Shepherd Smith, founder and president of Americans for a Sound AIDS/HIV Policy.

What ought Christians do about this? Some are suggesting that Christians ought to make the abstinence message for teens more effective. Instead of emphasizing the consequences of early sexual activity, such as AIDS and unwanted pregnancy, they should focus on the benefits of abstinence — notably, healthy emotional and sexual relationships. A positive message ought to be sent the teens on these matters.

We don't agree! Certainly the church must send a positive message to her teens, but that message has to be more than is suggested above. The church must continue to preach and teach the truth of God's Word on this matter. The Word of God is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This, the Seventh Commandment, teaches us "that all uncleanness is accursed of God: and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live

chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life." The Seventh Commandment also "forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q's 108, 109). The church and Christian parents must teach the youth that sex is a wonderful gift of God to His people. They must teach the youth that God intends sex to be for one man and one woman within the bond of marriage as the highest expression of love between husband and wife and as the means to bring the children of God's covenant into the church.

This is what we must be diligently teaching our children. Along with this we must monitor carefully what they read, where they go, with whom they associate, and what they watch on television. We must teach them as well that HIV/AIDS is the terrible judgment of God on an exceedingly wicked and adulterous generation. Only obedience to the Seventh Commandment of God's Law of Liberty, and to God's clear teaching in the Bible on living chastely within and outside of the marriage bond, will stop the deadly AIDS epidemic "in its tracks." May God give us much grace so to live and so to instruct our sons and daughters in these last days in which so much lawlessness abounds. □

*Christianity Today*

*Decency and Order*

*Rev. Ronald Cammenga*

## Ecclesiastical Functionaries

*In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters.*

*Church Order, Article 34*

### Ecclesiastical Functionaries

This article requires that there be two officers at all ecclesiastical

assemblies. There must be a president to preside over the meeting. The specific duties of the president will be treated in Article 35. Besides the president, there must also be a clerk to record the minutes of the assembly. It is especially the duties of the clerk that are treated in this article.

*Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.*



Although these two functionaries must be present at all our assemblies, Article 34 does not prohibit the election of other minor functionaries. All our assemblies also elect a vice-president. Our consistories generally elect a general-adjunct or vice-all. Synod elects a second clerk.

What authority have ecclesiastical functionaries? They do not exercise a superior authority over their fellow officebearers who are a part of the assembly. They are merely functionaries chosen by the assembly for the purpose of serving the assembly in the orderly and expeditious treatment of its business. Their powers are limited by the *Church Order* and by the rules of order of the assembly. Their authority is not over the assembly, but only within and at all times subject to it. When the assembly adjourns, their office ceases.

How are ecclesiastical functionaries chosen? In the consistory the various functionaries are elected, with the exception of the president, who is the minister (cf. Article 37). At the classis meetings officers are chosen from among the minister delegates by alphabetical rotation. Whoever is next in alphabetical rotation serves as president. The next in alphabetical order after the president serves as the vice-president and will be president at the next meeting. The last serving president functions as the clerk. At synod, functionaries are chosen by a free election from among the minister delegates.

### The Work of the Clerk

Article 34 describes the work of the clerk as "... keep(ing) a faithful record of all important matters."

The main duty of the clerk, or secretary, is to record the decisions of the assembly, as well as file all the supplemental material that bears on the decisions that are taken. The formal decisions taken by the body are to be accurately recorded. This does not include the discussion that pertains to each decision, only the decision itself. Included should also be the grounds upon which more important decisions are made.

The Synod has not one but two clerks, a first clerk and a second clerk. The second clerk is not an assistant clerk who functions only if for some reason the first clerk is unable to perform his duties. But the second clerk is to keep a parallel set of minutes, so that at all times Synod may have two copies of its decisions.

Why is the faithful keeping of a faithful record important? Certainly, in the first place, so that the churches may know exactly what was decided by the assembly. In addition, so that in the future there be no needless duplication of work; past decisions are readily accessible. For this reason, too, it is good that the classical and synodical decisions be indexed and that the index be kept current. It is also important that the decisions of the assemblies be recorded, so that the work of the assemblies may be preserved for the benefit of the future church.

With regard to the minutes, each assembly must approve its own minutes. Ordinarily two decisions are taken to safeguard the accuracy of the minutes. A decision approving the script or concept minutes is taken at the conclusion of the meeting itself. A decision approving the transcribed minutes is taken at the following meeting. The approved transcribed minutes are to be signed by the clerk and by the president.

Are the minutes of the ecclesiastical assemblies open to public inspection? Generally this is so. For this reason the *Acts* of our synods are published annually for distribution among the members of the churches. Even consistory decisions are open to the inspection of the members of the church. However, there are items that must be kept within the assembly itself, usually discipline cases, although the parties involved are entitled to a certified copy of all decisions which pertain to their case. Generally, discipline cases are treated in closed session at the broader assemblies — only delegates and presently serving officebearers are permitted to be present for the treatment of these matters.

### The Stated Clerk

Besides the clerk of each assembly, our classes and synod have also a "stated clerk."

Our churches have appended the following decision to Article 33:

The major assemblies shall also have a stated clerk, who however shall not hold the position of permanent secretary, and who shall not be a member of the assemblies' officers, but that of deputy to serve the classis or synod with services which would otherwise constitute the task of such a functionary.

The stated clerk is not a member of the assemblies' officers *per se*. That is, he is not one of the officers of the assembly by virtue of his being the stated clerk. If he happens to be chosen as one of the functionaries, or his turn comes up in the rotation, that is a different matter. But his being stated clerk does not make him automatically an officer of the assembly. As stated clerk, he has no vote, not even advisory vote, unless it is specifically granted him by the assembly. He has no ecclesiastical authority in himself and by virtue of his being the stated clerk. He may only do what the assembly authorizes him to do. He need not even be a serving officebearer; Classis East of our churches, for example, utilizes the services of a capable layman.

In their rules of order, both classes and synod spell out rather carefully the duties of the stated clerk. In general, his duties include entering the permanent minutes into the record book, preparation of the agenda for the meeting, preserving the assembly archives, and taking care of all official correspondence on behalf of the assembly.

It is worth noting that early in the history of the Reformed churches there was resistance to the appointment of stated clerks by the assemblies. The reason for this was the fear of hierarchy. It was felt that the appointment of stated clerks gave too much authority to one man. In several denominations today that fear has been realized. Stated clerks have



become exceedingly powerful. In some denominations they even exercise decisive determination with regard to what does and what does not appear on the agenda of the assemblies.

To guard against the danger of hierarchy, Joh. Jansen favored the appointment of a certain church to do the work of the stated clerk, thus spreading the responsibility over an entire consistory. A different church would be appointed after each classi-

cal or synodical meeting. This church would then also be responsible for convening the next classis or synod.

Although there may be a certain danger of hierarchy connected to the appointment of stated clerks, this danger can easily be avoided by the assemblies themselves seeing to it that the stated clerks remain directly responsible to the assemblies. Their work is to be confined to that which is delegated to them by the assemblies, and their actions are always to be

reported to and approved by those assemblies.

There can be no question about it that the stated clerks of our classes and synod perform an invaluable service to our assemblies and churches. Many hours are spent in taking care of correspondence, compiling agendas, and recording and publishing minutes. We ought to be grateful for the indispensable assistance that they render to the efficient functioning of our broader assemblies. □

*Search the Scriptures*

*Rev. George Lubbers*

# Lesson I

## I Timothy 1:1-11

We begin our study of I Timothy under the motto which Jesus suggests in John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures ... they are they which testify of (concerning) me."

Our great desire is that these lessons will be of benefit to your diligent searching of all the Scriptures, in both Testaments, Old and New!

A brief, clear, and lucid interpretation will be made under the two-fold headings:

Firstly, the great basic distinction between the apostolic gospel-truth concerning the fulfilled law of God, and the legalistic use of the law by teachers who deny and destroy the gospel of the cross.

Secondly, the spiritual nature of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ

Jesus. This is clearly worded in verse five, where we read, "Now the end of the commandment is love (charity) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

The apostolic gospel-truth is briefly summed up in verse five. The subjective essence of this gospel truth is a matter of the regenerated, born-again heart. Notice the text. The term "heart" is used to designate the spiritual seat both of the good heart of the new man in Christ and of the man who is purely "natural man." (Read Matthew 5:8, 28; 6:25; 15:8; John 12:40.) It is the powerful and saving operation of the Spirit of Christ that can and does make the hating enemy of God a lover of God. He does this by shedding His love abroad in the hearts of the elect, yet dead sinner (Rom. 5:5-12; Eph. 2:1-10).

Now the end of the great commandment is the pure, active love of God flowing forth from a pure heart. For the concept "pure in heart," see Matthew 5:8. Only such see God (I John 3:2, 3). A pure heart fits in the

very presence of God. The pure shall see God as He is. From such a pure heart flows the pure waters of the Christ, the fountain. Such have a good conscience before God and man. He knows before the commandment that he is pure and undefiled. And such a one knows with great spiritual joy that this end of the law is the "perfectness" (Col. 3:14) of love realized. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26). Read Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 86 very carefully and thoughtfully. By all means also read Deuteronomy 6:4-6. Do you think that Deuteronomy 6:6 refers to being able merely to recite the words in verses four and five as the fulfillment of the perfection of the law, or do those words, "shall be in thine heart," refer to the new covenant of grace spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:7-17?

To "search out" this matter of the law written in our hearts, make a study of Hebrews 10:5. Read also Psalm 40:7-9.

When we read I Timothy we

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



must remember that this great mystery of the gospel had all been clearly set forth and preached in the Ephesian church. Paul had not held back so that he did not teach to these churches "all the counsel of God." Surely the gospel of the sovereign God Paul had written to these churches, as we read in Ephesians 2:11-3:12.

In spite of all of this, "some" had risen from the midst of these Ephesian churches who were preaching mere human law-works. But this was a wholly different gospel which was not good news for poor sinners, dead in their trespasses and sins. It preached that a man must do good works, keep the law perfectly, merit the right to dwell in God's house. However, they could never come to "faith," never attain to love out of a pure heart and a good conscience. They would either live in desperate fear of death and hell before a just and holy Judge, or flatter themselves to have attained to perfection by the righteousness of the law. Paul once lived in this vain illusion of being acceptable to God, of being blameless before Him. But when the grace of God was manifested in him, then all these external keepings of the law, which he had held to be gain, he saw to be loss when he had received the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (Phil. 3:3-11).

Yes, those who "willed" to be preachers of law are very ignorant of the laws given by Moses. They really never understood the Scriptures. Paul says of such law teachers that they are mere babblers who give heed to endless genealogies. Such would-be teachers of the Scriptures do not understand the very ABC's, the first principles, either of the "law" or of the "gospel." Strong words, yet true words. They do not understand the rock-bottom facts which Paul explains in Galatians 3:18-22. The one great fact is that God never gave a law at Sinai which *could give life* to a dead sinner. If the law, the decalogue, could give life to a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath even as the "others," then the cross was simply unnecessary forever!

That is the basic point, a seeming trifle, that the law-preachers were wholly ignorant of. Alas, they prated to be men of knowledge. But Paul correctly says in I Timothy 6:20 that they "are falsely so called." By whom are they thus denominated? By true and believing saints? Not at all. They are so called by Satan, who is the "father of the lie" (John 8:43, 44). These teachers of "law" are spiritual "pseudonyms." They go about as teachers of the truth of the gospel, but they "lie," they love darkness, they hate the light. The central focus-point of their hatred is that they believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18-21).

Had these teachers of law truly understood that the law is not set to condemn all sinners in the court of the most high God, but only a certain kind of sinners, they would have abstained from the folly of maintaining that a sinner has the "free will" to do the law apart from the grace of God in Christ. Yes, then they would have noticed the truth of the gospel, the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham, as later clearly connecting salvation with the blood of the sacrificial Lamb at the Passover. "And when I see the blood I will pass over." Notice that Genesis 15:8ff. indicates very clearly that it will be the offering and promise made unilaterally by God which vouchsafes the great sacrifice by blood, which fully satisfies every demand of the perfect law. That is the great point which the law-teachers at Ephesus willfully neglected to teach. They would have the law set every sinner, justified or not, under the condemnation as condemned men in "death row" unless they keep the law of righteousness by works of the law. Read the woes of Christ upon such thieves and robbers, teachers of the law, in Luke 11:49-52.

But according to the "gospel of the glory of the blessed God" there are millions, a numberless throng of sinners of the deepest dye, who are not in "death row." Yes, by nature they all were once such sinners who did every possible thing contrary to the perfect laws of God; they broke all

the commandments of God in both the first and second table of the law. Read the list in I Timothy 1:10. O what a list of sins in which we all were dead even as the others! That was before we were created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:1-10). But we learn from the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, that where sin abounded grace does much more abound (Rom. 5:15-21). Such is the manifested saving glory of the most blessed fount of grace and life. (Read II Corinthians 3:4ff.) We do not need to fear that verdict of God day by day. We may not be filled with terrible fears to be assigned to the bottomless pit of hell. We no more see the glory of the law-giving; rather we see the glory of the most blessed God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the power of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. It is the mystery of godliness which is great. We pray with all the saints of all ages that the Lord who is the Spirit may grant us to look with uncovered face that we may view as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord. O what a glorious gospel which is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes, first the Jew and also the Greek.

We no longer are judged as believers according to the law. No, we are now measured, in our lifelong battle, by the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, Amen! Even the function of the law has changed. The promise was fulfilled at Calvary. Here the handwriting which was against us was fulfilled once and for all (II Cor. 3:15-21; Heb. 9:18-28). We should all take to heart, both ministers and congregations, the words of Galatians 3:24: "The law has been ('fully become' — Greek, *gegonen*) a *Pedagogue*, a severe schoolmaster, unto Christ. It drove the Old Testament saints unto Christ, as portrayed in the types and shadows of the law. It was during the time appointed of the Father that the Old Testament believers were under tutors and governors "until the time appointed!" That time was the fullness of time, when Christ came under a woman and under the (curse) of the



law to ransom all the sons who were under law, in order that they might receive the adoption. Praise Jehovah! What a Jesus, our Savior, who came to save His people from their sins (Gal. 4:1-6; Matt. 1:21).

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**Some suggested questions:**

1. Is it grammatically and exegetically established that God our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ are one in essence and divinity? That these are one in the same in essence in the great mighty work of our salvation from death and hell — is this crystal clear from John 14:1-11? Is this the great mystery of godliness in a nutshell?

2. If the gospel of the glory of the blessed God is the rule of faith and

walk of all Christians, establishing forever the unity of the law and gospel; and if this is the only standard in heaven and hell in this age and in the age to come, does this not make it necessary for the unbelievers, who shall never see life, to squirm that they be not crushed to dust by the chief cornerstone laid in Zion?

3. There are ever and anew those who would unlawfully use the law under the argument that by the teaching of salvation by grace alone "men are made careless and profane." How do the fathers of the sixteenth century Reformation answer this column? See Heidelberg Catechism Questions 62-64. What Bible texts are quoted to prove the spiritual impossibility of these bald and senseless assertions? See Luke 17:10; Matthew 7:17, 1; John 15:5. There is also Romans 6:1-14.

This shuts the mouth of every anti-nomist as well as that of the neo-nomists, does it not? Was Saul/Paul wittingly or "in ignorance" kicking against the pricks? What did Jesus ask him when He appeared to him as the Lord of glory? Read Acts 9:5, 6. Do you comprehend the eternal depths that there were to this trembling of Saul?

4. Is it ever the experience of a converted saint that his confidence of being a new creation in Christ made him to plunge himself in the morass of hellish temptation? Or does this new creaturehood in Christ make it principally impossible to sin, but to purify himself as God is pure? Are these the pure in heart who shall see God? I John 3:1-6. □

*Special Article*

*Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

# The *Standard Bearer* and the Covenant Family\*

*\*Text of the speech delivered at the annual meeting of the RFPA on September 24, 1992.*

The subject before us implies there is a relationship between the *Standard Bearer* and the family, but it says nothing as to what that relationship is. Is the *Standard Bearer* useful

in strengthening the family, or does it have little to do with addressing the needs of a covenant family? That question our theme does not answer. For that reason it is perhaps best that we clarify our intent or purpose with respect to this subject.

It is not my intention, first of all, to propose a new title for our periodical—a title that zeros in on the family. Nor am I, in connection with this, going to suggest a new format to this periodical in order that it might "focus on the family" in a more intensive way. In my personal estimation those periodicals that do so become rather old hat and repetitious. I am perfectly

content with the present format of our *Standard Bearer*.

Neither is it my intent or purpose to suggest new and innovative ways the RFPA can promote the use of the *Standard Bearer* in our homes and families. We ought not busy ourselves in devising some kind of new scheme or strategy by which the *Standard Bearer* can be used more effectively in the home or family. So it is not my purpose to initiate some kind of promotional campaign.

My purpose, however, is to examine how the *Standard Bearer* already is an important means used in strengthening our families. It is not a

*Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.*



periodical that *can become* effective in promoting the covenant family; it is a periodical which is *at present*, and in its present form, a good and effective tool in strengthening our homes and families.

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In making the claim that the *Standard Bearer* is an effective means in strengthening the family we must be clear on what we mean by the family. We have been hearing much about this subject in the news of late. Ever since Vice-President Quayle publicly denounced one of the many immoral and sinful sitcoms on television for glorifying the birth of a child by a single, unwed mother, the debate as to what constitutes a proper family has persisted between him and the media. Mr. Quayle wishes to maintain what he calls the "traditional family," while Hollywood and the media want to extend the idea of the family. Our own Grand Rapids Press just a few days ago seems to have given its approval of the definition of the family presented in the sitcom. The Press quotes the definition of the family which was publicly aired on that TV program as follows, "Perhaps it is time for the vice-president to expand his definition and recognize that whether by choice or circumstance, families come in all shapes and sizes. And ultimately, what really defines a family is commitment, caring and love."

We repudiate that definition of the family! Yet it is exactly this concept of the family that has swept the nation. The wicked world and society in their books and magazines, in their movies, and in their supposedly innocent television comedies propagate almost every form of sinful living. And these simply reflect what has become true of our nation as a whole: God's standard of what is right and good is ignored or, worse, blatantly denied. Wicked man redefines for himself what he considers right and good. What is the family? Well, he says, the family comes in all shapes and sizes, and is defined only by commitment, caring, and love.

This opens the door to all sorts of

opinions concerning the family. If a man and woman wish to live together outside the holy bond of marriage, and even to have children outside that bond, then society ought to accept this as a legitimate family. If a young woman desires to have a child without a husband, then we ought to extend to her the courtesy of calling her, with her illegitimate child, a family. If a mother and father divorce and divide the children between them, and continue as single parent families, or remarry and mix their children with other children of another divorced person, so what? This is an acceptable family. Even if homosexuals decide to cohabit, or even "marry," this is a perfectly legitimate family. It does not matter if God's Word and commandments are ignored. It does not matter if the relationship is a sinful one. As long as there is "commitment, caring, and love." That is all that matters! It surely is true that if we follow this wicked definition of the family, the family will come "in all shapes and sizes"!

But not so with God! And, not so, therefore, with the church! The biblical family (notice, I do not say traditional family) can be defined as "one man and one woman, who are legally married before church and state, and who live together in love, bringing forth those children God has chosen to give to them."

The biblical family begins with and therefore is grounded in the man. God created Adam first, and that, quite obviously, without his wife. God did this in order that Adam might learn personally what God said in Genesis 2:18, "it is not good that man should be alone." The same is true today: the godly man knows that what will truly make him happy in life is to find a wife. So says Solomon too in Proverbs 18:22: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord." The man therefore goes out and finds himself a wife.

We need not address the sanctity of marriage or the need to speak the vows of marriage as the only way to consummate that marriage. Nei-

ther need we speak of the necessity of faithfulness in the marriage state. Scripture is abundantly clear on all of this in many passages. Just allow me to read the words of Solomon in Proverbs 5:18-20: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?" That man and his one wife together, then, already make up the family unit.

But that family unit is truly brought to its completion and fulfilled when children are added. One certainly may not overlook the description given in Psalm 127:3-5 or Psalm 128:3-4. Here is the picture of the biblical family: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table." That is the family!

I realize, of course, that there are exceptions to this definition. At times, for example, the Lord withholds children from a marriage. At times the Lord, as well, may take away one's spouse through death or even by means of their unfaithfulness. Certainly, the church accepts these as families — not as oddities. They are far, far from that! But these families are different from the biblical norm — not because they themselves have chosen or desired to be, not because they felt there were better alternatives to choose, but because it was *God Himself* who rendered them such.

When we say, therefore, that the *Standard Bearer* plays a role in strengthening families we bear in mind that we refer to the Scriptural family. The *Standard Bearer* does nothing to strengthen a sinful family, save perhaps to admonish them of their sin and call them to repentance. The *Standard Bearer* addresses the biblical family.

But it is not simply a *biblical* family whose needs are addressed by the *Standard Bearer*. More particularly, the *SB* addresses the needs of a



covenant family. And that, by far, is of the greatest significance. There are many people who yet today follow the pattern of the biblical family, but who do so for reasons wholly other than spiritual ones. They follow the pattern simply because it is the traditional thing to do; such is the strongest of family units. Or they follow it because they feel it is expected of them by their family and acquaintances. Families of this sort, though they follow the biblical pattern of the family, nevertheless see no need for God or His Word to be the basis of the family. Families of this sort, no doubt, would not even think of subscribing to the *Standard Bearer*. Or if they did, they would simply set it out as a table ornament, and never read it.

We are speaking, however, of the role of the *Standard Bearer* in the life and home of a covenant family — in the life and home of a husband and wife who take their calling toward one another seriously. A husband and wife who love each other and who, as heirs together of the grace of life, seek to reflect the relationship of Christ and the church in their marriage. Likewise, we refer to parents who take their covenant vows seriously. They are parents who view their children as children of the covenant. They take seriously the command to teach their children, by word, by example, and by discipline in the fear of the Lord. They are parents who avail themselves of every opportunity and means to stimulate in their children an interest in the Gospel and in the church of Jesus Christ in this world. In their rising up and their lying down they seek to instill within their children the precepts of their God.

We speak as well of children who have come to know their place in the church and the covenant; and who reveal by their conversation and walk that they too are concerned with God's cause and covenant in this world. We speak of children who, with their parents, cling to the cross of Jesus Christ, not seeking their righteousness in themselves, but seeking it in Christ alone.

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What perhaps ought to receive the real emphasis when defining the covenant family is this: we speak of a family which knows that they together belong to an even larger family — the family of God! A covenant family is one that is not only concerned with their calling in the home toward one another, but also interested in their role in the church of Jesus Christ in this world. They are vitally interested in what is going on in the world around them, and even more so in what is happening in their own denomination. This is the biblical, covenant family to which we refer. And it is to this family that the *Standard Bearer* is of greatest benefit. This family, the *Standard Bearer* at present and in its present form, strengthens and encourages. And it does this in a unique way, that is, in a way that few other periodicals do.

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I believe the *Standard Bearer* defines in concrete terms the standard of the covenant family itself. In many articles I have read, and still read, the *Standard Bearer* addresses itself directly to the calling of husbands and wives toward one another. It addresses as well the calling of parents toward their children and the calling

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of children towards those in authority over them. I know that this is not

done in every article we find in this publication. But then, that is not the point at issue here. When I read such rubrics as, "The Strength of Youth," or "When Thou Sittest in Thy House," or when I read guest articles addressing the subject of home and family, then I find articles that set the Scriptural standard for life and relationships in the covenant family. These articles, in a very practical as well as biblical way, address difficulties and temptations which parents, youth, and children confront in their lives. And these articles present biblical solutions as well. In that way the *Standard Bearer* speaks directly to the needs of the covenant home and family. And in that way, too, the *Standard Bearer* strengthens and encourages the members of the family in their roles in the home. Never can the complaint be leveled against the *Standard Bearer* that it ignores the specific needs of the family.

At the same time, of course, we realize that the *Standard Bearer* is not a publication all the articles of which address these relationships in the home. It is not a magazine devoted strictly to marriage, or parenting, or the problems of youth. As we mentioned earlier, this is not its intent or purpose either. But we must not conclude that the *Standard Bearer* has therefore precious little to offer as far as the strengthening of our covenant families is concerned. This is far from true!

We are talking about a covenant family, remember. We are talking about husbands and wives and young people who are active in school and in the church, and in the world at large, just as well as in the home and family. We are talking about parents and children who are vitally interested in studying the Word of God and the history of the church; interested in what is happening in their denomination, on the mission field, and in the church of Christ at large. All this is part of the covenant life of the church and of the families in it.

The *Standard Bearer* supplies all this. When we pick up the *Standard Bearer* we read articles which ex-



pound to us the Scriptures or which teach us the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. We read other articles which teach us, young and old alike, about our precious Reformed heritage—the great doctrines of the Scriptures. Still other articles keep us abreast of what is happening in our own churches, as well as in churches about us. Articles teach us of our Church Order, our confessions, or the roles we must assume in the church as men and women. When editorials and letters are read, we and our children learn of the differences that exist in the churches of our day, and are able to analyze them according to the Scriptures. And we can go on and on.

But the point is this: all of this is needed to strengthen the covenant family — adults as well as children! To alter dramatically the *Standard Bearer* in order to focus on the family would be a terrible mistake. The *Standard Bearer* is accomplishing the strengthening of the family more in its present form than if it were to be narrowed down such that it called our attention only to roles in the home. We are interested in our roles in the church and in this world as well, are

we not, covenant families?

But there is one more unique way the *Standard Bearer* strengthens the covenant family. Many of its articles direct God's people to what is the one and only strength of the family: the cross of Jesus Christ. Far too many religious periodicals today have become, at worst, humanistic, and at best, moralistic. Some direct their articles to families that are far from biblical, and are in fact sinful family units. These articles actually encourage them in their sin by giving them what is considered to be helpful advice on how to make the best of it in their lives. Other periodicals address issues in the lives of families simply from a moralistic point of view: ten easy steps to a happy marriage, helpful hints in establishing a good relationship with your teenager, how to deal with overbearing parents, and such like. And although some of the points can be well taken and are interesting enough, nevertheless they fall far short of the heart of the issue. Little reference, if any, is made to the Scriptures and to the commands of God's Word. They address morals, but they fail to direct themselves to

the heart of the issue: the faith of the child of God.

The strength of a covenant family is the faith they share in common — a faith rooted in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. When a husband and wife, or when parents and children, share in a certain knowledge and an assured confidence that in life and death, both in body and soul, they belong to Jesus, then that faith will strengthen them in their place in the home and outside the sphere of the family. The vast majority of the articles of the *Standard Bearer* serve in one way or another to direct our attention to our Savior. And that, after all is said and done, is the strength of our *Standard Bearer*. It is a strength that ought not to be overlooked, because it is a strength we need as husbands and wives, parents and children, to fulfill our callings in the kingdom of God. For that reason we give thanks to our faithful God that we have our *Standard Bearer*. We encourage the RFPA, the editor, and the writers of our *Standard Bearer*. Persevere in this work of the Lord. God bless you in your efforts! □

*Annual Report*

*Mr. Cal Kalsbeek*

## Secretary's Annual Report to the RFPA

"The purpose of this Association shall be: 1) to witness to the truth contained in the Word of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. 2) to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto" (The Constitution of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Article II). The *Standard Bearer* has been faithful to that purpose now for sixty-eight consecutive years.

Carrying out this purpose through the publication of twenty-one issues of the *Standard Bearer* each year is no small task. Consequently a word of appreciation to those who contribute to this work is certainly fitting. However, this writer feels inadequate to the task. How can we properly express our appreciation to our editor, Prof. Engelsma, and the writers of articles for our magazine

*Mr. Kalsbeek is an elder in Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



for their faithful contributions? What do we say to our Business Manager, Don Doezeema, for the tremendous part he has had in the publication of the *SB*; particularly as the link between the Editorial Staff and the R.F.P.A. Board, which so much contributes to a smooth and effective working relationship? Can we adequately thank Judi Doezeema for her work of typesetting and other clerical work, including the work of updating the *Standard Bearer* index that she has been doing with her mother, Mrs. Helen Bylsma, during this past year? What should we say to those who regularly help mail out our publication? Then there are our subscribers, who regularly send more — often much more — money than the cost of their subscriptions; and the Protestant Reformed Churches which regularly place the *Standard Bearer* on their collection schedules; and individuals who have contributed large amounts of money to improve the appearance of our magazine: these too, are worthy of our thanks. It is our prayer that all who faithfully contribute to the publication of the *Standard Bearer* may experience in this labor of love the blessing of our Covenant God!

Those who listened carefully to the treasurer's report noticed that the *Standard Bearer* is currently in excellent shape financially. Our balance has almost quadrupled since 1990. There are at least three reasons for this dramatic increase. First, over the past five years money received as gifts has almost exactly doubled; we believe this is strong evidence for a healthy interest in and appreciation for our publication. Second, during that same five-year period the number of subscribers has increased by 20%. The third reason for the sizable balance can be attributed to the savings of approximately \$300.00 per issue because of changes in the publication process. That's a savings of over \$5,000.00 per year! Most of this is due to the fact that the composition of the *Standard Bearer* is being done at our seminary by Mrs. Doezeema. Currently only the actual printing of our

magazine is being done by others.

So, what are we doing with all this money? The Board is conscious of our responsibility to be good stewards of the monies at hand. We are also very much aware of the first sentence in the preamble to our constitution, viz., "The members of the Reformed Free Publishing Association have organized for the express purpose of witnessing to the Reformed truth." Consequently we have been active in trying to promote the *Standard Bearer* in a variety of ways.

One way we have tried to promote the Reformed truth through the *Standard Bearer* is by means of advertising in other religious periodicals. This can be expensive; it can also be rewarding. During this past year we have placed advertisements in *Evangelical Times*, *Christian Renewal*, *Christianity Today*, and *God's World*. As a result, 156 people asked for the offered free copies of the *Standard Bearer* and we gained 52 new subscribers. In today's advertising world, that's "small potatoes" and hardly worth the investment. However, when considered in light of the fact that others are being exposed to the truth by this means, it becomes considerably more significant. It is the Board's intent to continue "witnessing to the Reformed truth" by means of advertising.

Another attempt of the Board to promote the distribution of the *Standard Bearer* was to offer the use of our advertisements and free copies of the *SB* to the evangelism committees of

the Protestant Reformed Churches. This idea originated with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland, and currently a number of Protestant Reformed evangelism committees are using our advertisements to promote the *Standard Bearer* and at the same time establish new contacts in their immediate localities.

Further, the Board has gone on record "to encourage the editorial staff and business manager to continue to look into new ways to make the *Standard Bearer* more attractive" (Article 5, June 5, 1992 R.F.P.A. Board minutes). We are sure that you have already noticed some past attempts to "spruce up" our magazine by means of an occasional color cover. Some sizable gifts designated specifically for this purpose have been gratefully received and used.

Also, the R.F.P.A. Board continues its introductory offer of a year's subscription to new subscribers for a mere six dollars.

And we should add that the Board is open to suggestions from you, our faithful constituents, for other ideas for enhancing and promoting our *Standard Bearer*.

There you have some of the activities of the R.F.P.A. Board over the past year. We are thankful that God has provided the means for us to carry out this work. And we pray for faithfulness to Him in the continuing work of honoring Him by means of our publication: the *Standard Bearer*. □



Judi Doezeema and John and Hermie Veldman prepare *SB* for mailing



# Patience

A striking passage on the subject of patience is James 5:1-11. After the apostle has warned the rich against fraudulently keeping back the wages of the laborers while they themselves lived in pleasure and wantonness, he writes, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rains. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." This passage really brings together all the Scriptural teaching on the Christian virtue of patience. When elders and ministers call on the saints in hospitals and rest homes, they see this wonderful fruit of the Spirit almost every time they visit.

In the Old Testament we find patience mentioned only three times. It is a word whose root means to tarry or to wait. Most often the idea of patience is expressed in the Hebrew by the phrase "waiting on the Lord" (Ps. 37:1, Is. 25:9). In the New Testament there are especially two words: one means to be of long spirit, to persevere patiently, to bear the offenses and injuries of others, to be long suffering, to be slow to anger; the other emphasizes steadfastness, the endurance of trials, the patient waiting for the lifting of burdens. Patience is that virtue of the child of God whereby he willingly suffers persecution and hardship, without a thought of retaliation or rebellion, in the knowledge that all things are ordained for his good, and every wrong he suffers will be avenged by God.

The child of God brings forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15); waits with patience for that which he sees not (Rom. 8:25); has need of patience (Heb. 10:36); runs with patience the race that is set before him (Heb. 12:1); understands that the trial of faith works patience, which is such a crowning virtue that if a man has it he is perfect and entire (James 1:4); marvels at the patience of Job (James 5:11); keeps the word of Christ's patience (Rev. 3:10); patiently continues in well doing (Rom. 2:7); and patiently waits for Christ (II Thess. 3:5). In all this he walks in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:23).

God Himself is longsuffering. One of the Greek words noted above has the meaning "to suffer long," and this is often predicated of God. The longsuffering of God is one of His adorable virtues in which the afflicted Christian finds comfort and refuge. (In Romans 15:5 we read of the patience of God. Patience is not set forth here as an attribute of God, but God is shown as the one who gives and works patience.) The longsuffering of God is that virtue of the Godhead according to which He wills the perfection of the elect in the way of their suffering and affliction, and wills all this suffering as the necessary means to their perfection. This explains why God does not immediately come to take vengeance on His and our enemies. Forbearing towards the vessels of His wrath, He suffers long over His precious, afflicted people. God is not slack concerning His promise, but is longsuffering to usward. He wills that none of the elect should perish, but that all of them shall come to repentance and faith (II Pet. 3:9). The longsuffering of God is salvation!

Let us return to that passage in James 5. The husbandman is God. He waits for the full harvest of the elect in the last day. As the farmer must wait for the sunshine and the rain, must put up with tares and thistles, so God suffers long in respect to the precious harvest. He does not bring the day of Jesus Christ prematurely, for then the harvest would not be full. Understanding this, the child of God is also patient unto the coming of the Lord. He is convinced that that coming draweth nigh. He believes the Lord of the harvest is in sovereign control of all things. Enduring, he is happy.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." □

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*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



# Salvation's Rich and Certain Coming

What counts is not what man says, unless it is our God speaking through him. And what Jacob had said to his father, namely, that he was Esau and that he was seeking the blessing which his father had promised him, was a lie which called for God's holy wrath upon him.

But because Isaac, the father of Jacob and Esau, in his blindness declared God's blessing upon Jacob — even though he planned to bestow it upon Esau, the first of the twins born unto him — we with Jacob must hold on to the truth which God declared when Isaac blessed Jacob. What our God was then speaking to Jacob through Isaac assured him of receiving God's covenant blessing. And that blessing is presented to us in Genesis 27:26-29.

That blessedness, which God promised Jacob through his father, became clearer in a vision or dream which God gave him when he fled from his brother Esau's hand. According to Genesis 28:10-15 God promised Jacob and his seed the land wherein he had slept that night. That was in a section of the land which God promised Abraham and his seed. Having been promised this in his dream, Jacob called that place Bethel, which means house of God. Of that we read in Genesis 28:19.

Now, when Jacob says (in fact vows), "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my

father's house in peace," he does not thereby reveal that he is not sure that God will keep that promise. He does not present in those words what he will do only if God faithfully keeps His promise. Note the fact that Jacob "vowed a vow" according to Genesis 28:20. What is more, that word here translated as "if" does not present a doubt in Jacob's mind as to what God promises him. Strikingly enough, in Jeremiah 23:38 the same Hebrew word is translated as "since." What Jacob then says here in Genesis 28:20 is, "Since God will be with me."

Take note of the fact that in the original form and literally in verse 21 Jacob says, "Then shall Jehovah be my God." That name Jehovah means I AM. Jacob correctly presents God as one who never, no never, changes. He is the I AM, not the I was, or I will be. Jacob is sure that what God said to him in that dream is absolutely true and will come to pass.

Still more, take note of the fact that in verse 22 we read, "And the stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Jacob did not wait to see whether God's promise is fulfilled. That day he set up a pillar for the building of God's temple. He does not then say what he will do if God keeps His word. He, by God's grace, states that he will reveal his trust and confidence in God. The expressions "Thou shalt" and "I will surely" in verse 22 deny any conditions which Jacob presents. By His Spirit God gave Jacob faith, and moved him into the confidence of His promise which he received from God through his father Isaac.

Indeed, in the rest of his earthly life Jacob did reveal much evidence of his sinful nature. As the Heidelberg Catechism states so correctly in Lord's Day XLIV, we have "only a small beginning of this obedience." In this life we have only a small beginning of the obedience our God has implanted in us by His grace. In this life we do not even receive fifty percent of the obedience which that new life will give us in the new Jerusalem. The awesome question for us also is: "How many of the 1,440 minutes in each day do we serve God? In fact, how often do we even have Him in our mind?" Do our hearts want to serve and glorify Him much of the day?

Of course, there are hours when we need sleep, and our minds are blank, so that for hours we think neither of God nor of sinful deeds that we want forgiven. The blessed truth, however, is that when Christ returns and raises our bodies from out of the graves in which they will be placed, and He glorifies them, so that we are in the new Jerusalem, there will be no night there. Of that we read in Revelation 22:5. Then, indeed, every moment in that everlasting life we will be dedicated with body and soul unto our God, and serve Him everlastingly without one smallest moment of ceasing to do so. The way and kind of work may differ. Sometimes we will sing God's praises; and then afterwards we will speak and serve Him with our bodies as well as with our minds and will.

Yes, in the Old Testament dispensation the church was in the day of shadows. Christ had not yet come. The realization of salvation that came when Jesus on His cross cried out, "It

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



is finished!" had its types and shadows; but what our salvation required was not yet a historical fact. For today, from a spiritual viewpoint, we have the wonderful fact of the finishing of that work which is so necessary for our salvation. And although we do have a new life by a spiritual rebirth, and the love of God is already in us, we have, as pointed out a moment ago, only a small beginning of that new obedience which will be ours for body and soul when Christ returns.

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*The question is whether  
in our lives there is today  
a richer manifestation  
of that life than there was  
last year.*

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But the critical question is this: "Is your activity on the Sabbath day a shadow of that coming life of perfection as a citizen of the kingdom of Heaven?" Those saints presented in Hebrews 11 have their faith in God and love for Him presented in Scripture. The question is not merely whether our life also manifests such a new life in us. The question is whether in our lives there is today a richer manifestation of that life than there was last year. Are we eager to have Christ come and give us that perfection as well as the perfection of our bodies, and freedom from the punishment we deserve?

An important truth which we must heed is one so widely ignored, and by our actions even denied. Our Sabbath days have so much lacking of what the born-again child of God is called to do, and of what is found in other of the members of our church. Jacob here speaks of God's house. And indeed we are going to live with Him in His house of many mansions, where Christ is preparing a place for us (John 14:2). What is more, our God's upholding of Jacob, and His keeping him spiritually alive, is a shadow of what we by God's grace are called to do and can do.

As we saw last time, our God gave Jacob a blessed promise in that dream, which he had that first night of his flight away from Esau who planned to kill him. Let us go back to it a moment in order to appreciate Jacob's confession and vow. Our God promised Jacob that He would be with him and keep him, that is, uphold him and prevent everyone from taking away his life. He promised Jacob that He would not leave him, but bring him to the promised land, and fulfill all of the promise which his father, Isaac, had made known to him.

That is a comforting truth not only for ourselves, but also for our children. We, and by all means our children, need more and more in these days in which we live, and in the years just ahead of us, to grow in our conviction of the truth of what God said to Jacob in Genesis 28:15, namely, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest ... for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

For we live in a time of wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in diverse places, and pestilence and famine. We live in a time when more and more men want once more to build a Tower of Babel. The men of the world want one world of peace. An earthly peace looks good to them, at least to most of them. With inventions the world is practically becoming smaller and smaller. We are all getting so close to each other. And with airplanes we can in a few hours get where in the past men could not come for days and weeks. By means of television we can not only see, but also speak to and with men on the other side of the world. We not only see their lips move, but we hear every word which they speak. More and more we are getting closer and closer to each other, and to the situation of One World! The world's unification threatens the church's destruction, as it did at the Tower of Babel; and for the church's safety our God then brought the confusion of speech. Read that carefully in Genesis 11:1-9. To-

day Satan has succeeded so greatly in getting the enemies of God's church able and ready to do what is written in Revelation 13 about the antichrist in verses 11-18.

It is so necessary for us to take a firmer grip on what we are told in I John 2:15, namely, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We do well to bear in mind that we do not simply have them who belong to no church hating us. Even as Jacob had his brother, even his twin brother, hating him, so we have — and will more fully see it and understand it soon — those who call themselves the church, and Christians, but who are tools of the antichrist hating us.

Now, today, Satan is not only succeeding in his efforts to get the seed of the woman to live like the seed of the serpent. He is very successful in getting the seed of the serpent to call itself the seed of the woman. We do well to consider all that which we find in the Old Testament Scriptures; and today is a day when there are very clear evidences of the return of Christ. But also there is very clear evidences that Satan is working hard, and with increasing success, in his attempt to establish on this earth the kingdom of hell, and to keep the kingdom of heaven from being realized.

But Christ came, and our salvation is sure. He will come again as surely as He came almost two thousand years ago. He brought the Old Testament day of shadows to its end. And because He is the way, the truth, and the life, we can be very, very sure that His everlasting kingdom of heavenly glory will soon come. We do have today clear evidences and encouraging shadows of His second coming, and of our full salvation. Soon we with body as well as soul will be with Him. And we will be fully saved from all our sinful nature, and be able to serve our God with all our body and soul. That important element of our salvation will surely come. That element we need, and by God's grace we will enjoy it forever. □



# Roe V. Wade

## *A Bitterly Divided Supreme Court Reluctantly Reaffirms **Roe V. Wade** But Widens States' Power to Establish Abortion Restrictions*

*"The abortion matter is not before us in the first instance, and coming as it does after nearly 20 years of litigation in *Roe's* wake, we are satisfied that the immediate question is not the soundness of *Roe's* resolution of the issue, but the precedential force that must be accorded to its holding. And we have concluded that the essential holding of *Roe* should be reaffirmed. Yet it must be remembered that *Roe v. Wade* speaks with clarity in establishing not only the woman's liberty to terminate her pregnancy but also the State's important and legitimate interest in potential life."*

Majority opinion,  
*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*  
(1992)

On June 29 of this year the Supreme Court finally released its decision in the prominent case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. At issue were several Pennsylvania abortion restrictions challenged by Planned Parenthood: a 24-hour waiting period; a spousal notification requirement; prior notice to a parent of a minor requesting abortion; and abortion facility reporting requirements.

Many pro-life organizations, and even the Bush administration, filed briefs in the case imploring the Court to use *Casey* to overrule the notorious *Roe v. Wade*. Some Court watchers predicted that, because Reagan/Bush appointees now have a narrow majority, the Court would finally jettison *Roe's* erroneous notion that the Constitution guarantees women a "fundamental right" to abortion on demand.

Surprisingly, it was not to be. Three "moderate" justices (Kennedy, Souter, and O'Connor) joined the liberals Blackman and Stevens to form a joint majority that reaffirmed *Roe's* "central holding" that the constitutional concept of "liberty" embraces "a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy in its early stages."

Not unimportantly, the *Casey* Court also adopted the *Roe* concept of viability—"the time at which there is a realistic possibility of maintaining and nourishing a life outside the womb." Before viability, the Court held, a woman must have the unimpeded right to terminate her pregnancy; after viability the State may interfere to protect its interest in protecting life. Thus, although the majority rejected the trimester framework of *Roe*, it nonetheless retained the viability test to "balance" the State's interest in protecting life over against the mother's "own conception of her spiritual imperatives and her place in society."

### Warranted Regulation

But the majority also held that the woman's right to abortion-on-

demand is not inconsistent with the State's "profound interest in potential life." Accordingly, *Casey* held that states may raise certain abortion restrictions before viability so long as these restrictions do not result in an "undue burden" on the woman's right to an abortion-on-demand. "Undue burden" was defined as a "substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion of a nonviable fetus." Thus, although States may regulate abortion-on-demand, they may not prevent it, at least before viability. In conclusion, *Casey* affirmed *Roe* but substituted the trimester framework with the undue burden test, keeping the viability standard intact.

### The Doctrine of Precedence

The *Casey* majority opinion is especially noteworthy, however, because of the majority's stated rationale for reaffirmation of *Roe*—the doctrine of precedence. This historic judicial doctrine obligates a court to abide by and follow previous decisions. Declaring that "the legitimacy of the Court would fade with the frequency of its vacillation," the three

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



moderates more or less reluctantly felt compelled to join the two liberals on the Court and reaffirm *Roe*, its soundness or lack thereof notwithstanding. The majority also surmised that overruling *Roe* would possibly be interpreted as "surrendering to political pressure," and accordingly, to "overrule under fire ... would subvert the Court's legitimacy."

### Vigorous Dissents

The Court minority, led by Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justice Scalia (joined by Justice White and Justice Thomas) filed vehement dissents. Chief Justice Rehnquist took issue with the majority's "contrived" reliance on the doctrine of precedence to reaffirm *Roe*:

We believe that *Roe* was wrongly decided and that it can and should be overruled. One cannot ignore the fact that a woman is not isolated in her pregnancy, and that the decision to abort necessarily involves the destruction of a fetus. The Court was mistaken in *Roe* when it classified a woman's decision to terminate her pregnancy as a "fundamental right...." In our view, authentic principles [of precedence] do not require that any portion of the reasoning in *Roe* be kept intact. It is our duty to reconsider constitutional interpretations that depart from a proper understanding of the Constitution.

In addition, the dissent scoffed at the majority's new "undue burden" test or standard to determine which State abortion restrictions will now be permissible and which regulations must be struck down by federal courts:

In that this new standard is based even more on a judge's subjective determinations than was *Roe*'s trimester framework, the standard will do nothing to prevent judges from roaming at large in the constitutional field guided by their own personal views. The "undue burden" standard is plucked from nowhere ... and will engender a variety of conflicting views.

### A Disappointing Dissent

Although the minority dissent of Justice Scalia and his colleagues is very effective in exposing many of the errors and inconsistencies of the majority joint opinion, the dissenting opinions are also very disappointing in an important respect. This is because the dissent refuses to acknowledge the obvious "personhood" status of the fetus.

Rather than assert the life and liberty rights of the fetus, the dissent merely argues that the abortion issue is essentially a legislative not a judicial issue. Justice Scalia's dissent is typical in this regard:

The States may, if they wish, permit abortion-on-demand, but the Constitution does not require them to do so. The permissibility of abortion, and the limitations upon it, are to be resolved like most important questions in our democracy: by citizens trying to persuade one another and then voting.

In other words, Justice Scalia's view is that, since reasonable people have differing views on abortion, and since the Constitution arguably says nothing about it, the question should be resolved by a vote in each state's legislature. The Supreme Court (whose duty is to interpret the Constitution) has no business deciding abortion issues arguably not addressed in the Constitution.

Accordingly, even the dissent in *Casey* affords Reformed Christians little hope that in the near future the life of unborn children will be afforded deserved Constitutional protection. For contrary to Justice Scalia's assertion, surely the issues of the right to life and when "personhood" begins are decidedly *not* political questions to be decided by a majority vote in some state legislature. The right to life is society's most fundamental right, and the Supreme Court may not abdicate its responsibility to render a decisive and final decision in this regard, affording necessary legal protection for the unborn. □

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### Temporary Address Change

Rev. Gise VanBaren, who is currently ministering to the CRF in Northern Ireland, and plans, tentatively, to remain there through May of next year, is living at:

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## Book Reviews

*Call the Sabbath a Delight*, by Walter Chantry. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991. 112pp., \$5.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. R. Decker.]

This little paperback is must reading for Reformed believers in our day. It may be true that our Reformed fathers were a bit legalistic in their views of the proper observance of the Lord's day. Father would shave on Saturday evening and mother would peel the potatoes and bake the roast for Sunday's dinner on Saturday evening. On the Lord's day itself the children were not allowed to play either in the house or outside. The two worship services were attended. Children were given Bible passages to memorize. Even works of necessity and mercy were severely limited. If all this and more tended to be rather legalistic, the days of our fathers were better than ours! To the vast majority of Christians, also those who are Reformed, Sabbath observance is a thing of the past. One may or may not attend worship services as he or she pleases. Those who attend only once per Sunday or who attend only occasionally are not disciplined. The Lord's day is used for all kinds of activities: travel, recreational pursuits, dining out, and more. The second service on the Lord's day attracts only a handful of people in many a Reformed congregation which boasts a membership of hundreds, even thousands. These practices are slowly making inroads into some of the more conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches and, alas, into our Protestant Reformed Churches as well. For this reason this book is must reading.

Walter Chantry, longtime pastor of Grace Baptist Church (Reformed Baptist) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, insists that the Fourth Commandment of God's law requires people to devote one entire day (the first day of the week) to the worship of God, prayer, and meditation on the Holy

Scriptures. The failure of the evangelical church to observe the Lord's day has had devastating effects on the church. Writes Chantry, "In their pride, men have dismissed God's perfect law. His Decalogue requires the habit, the steady routine, the practice, the discipline of a day of worship and service to God. It is such a habit, routine, and discipline that will give men both a knowledge of God and moral standards by which to live. It is just such a Sabbath Day that will strengthen families and social institutions. No wonder the church herself is devotionally, doctrinally, and morally weak. Even Christians will not devote a day each week to their Lord" (pp. 11, 12).

"Time for the Lord is the issue about which the Fourth Commandment speaks," Chantry says (p. 16). He makes an excellent point in this connection when he points out that God is very "reasonable and generous" in the giving of the Fourth Commandment. God requires only one day in seven for His service. God gives us six days in which to be involved in our work and legitimate recreation, but asks that we devote only one day per week to the worship and service of Him. There are four simple principles which are to govern our observance of the Lord's day. These are: 1) We are to remember the Sabbath Day. It is to be kept in mind as an important obligation and commitment. 2) The Day is to be kept holy. 3) We may do no work on the Lord's day. This means we may not engage in any activities which would make it impossible to devote the entire day to the Lord's service. 4) And, we must not require others to work for us on the Lord's day (pp. 19-23). Chantry reminds us that since God is "the lawgiver and judge it is His prerogative to institute the moral law. It is advisable that every creature take note of this reminder that the Almighty has personally set aside one day in seven for Himself. All who

must one day stand before Him to have their everlasting destinies announced have need to hear the standard He devised to judge them. How many excuses of ignorance, of being too busy to pray, of not having time to read Scripture, to become acquainted with the saints, to bring one's family to worship will die on the lips of the guilty before this commandment? When in His awesome majesty the Lord says, 'I made the day holy,' who will plead exemption from Sabbath practice?" (pp. 28, 29).

Chantry emphasizes that Sabbath keeping is a great joy and that many blessings accrue to the saints who keep God's day holy. He warns that Sabbath keeping is not inactivity. Rather we cease from our own work in order to devote all of our time and energy to the work of worship and praise. Sabbath keeping involves works of piety and worship, works of necessity, and works of mercy.

In his fourth chapter Chantry offers an excellent exposition of Mark 2:27, 28 over against the false claims of the dispensationalists that what Jesus had to say concerning the Sabbath applied only to the Jews and, therefore, the New Testament says nothing to us about Sabbath keeping.

The author points out that the Sabbath was strictly enforced in both the Old and New Testaments (chapter 5), but in the New Testament without the civil punishments under Moses. This is because the Old Testament church was an immature child (Gal. 3, 4), while the New Testament church is grown and mature. The civil punishments would be inappropriate for the church which now possesses the full revelation of God and the fullness of the Spirit. At this point Chantry is weak. His erroneous view of God's covenant (Chantry would say "covenants") becomes obvious and he fails to take into account the *typical character* of the Old Testament.

Sabbath keeping is not a legalistic or outward observance of a list of do's and mostly don'ts. The Christian keeps the Sabbath out of profound thankfulness to God for the redemption He has provided for him



in Jesus Christ. In various contexts Chantry warns his readers against all Phariseeistic legalism while stressing that the Sabbath was given by God to His saints as a day for them to worship God and commune with Him.

Again, a good book on this subject. Whether one agrees with the author on all points or not he will profit from a careful reading of this little book. ■

*Commentary on the Psalms*, by Joseph A. Alexander. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1991; 572pp., \$18.95 (paper); \$24.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by Rev. D.H. Kuiper.]

This volume was originally printed in 1864 under the title, *The Psalms, Translated and Explained*. It was reprinted by Zondervan in the 1940s under the same title in their series "Classis Commentary Library." Since this volume was out of print, Kregel Publications is to be commended for making this work available once again. This volume is a photo-reproduction of the Zondervan edition, howbeit with new headings.

J.A. Alexander (1809-1860) was the son of Archibald Alexander, a graduate of Princeton College, and later a professor at this college as well as at Princeton Seminary. He gained a worldwide reputation as a scholar in the ancient languages and in church history. His thorough acquaintance with the Hebrew is evidenced throughout this book, as insight into the nuances of Hebrew poetry can be found everywhere. He offers "an amplified translation to preserve not only the strength but the peculiar force of the original." Since he follows the versification of the Hebrew, when the KJV differs in verse number he gives these numbers in parentheses for easy reference.

The commentary averages about four pages per Psalm, rather brief for a verse by verse treatment of "the Book of Praises." The reader may be disappointed with the brief treatment given some verse on which he is seeking light. The strength of this commentary is Alexander's high view of

Scripture and faithfulness to the original language, his reverence for God, his recognition of the Christological content of the Psalms (he was a strong advocate of Hengstenberg's positions), his unashamed presentation of the imprecatory Psalms, and his simple style. Young people will have no trouble understanding his interpretation.

Next to Calvin's five volumes, and Spurgeon's seven, this is the best treatment of the Psalms we have seen. It will serve well both for devotional reading and society preparation. The paperback we have before us is of enduring quality and is easy to read. ■

*Liberty of Conscience: The History of a Puritan Idea*, by L. John Van Til. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1992. 192pp., no price given. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Dr. Van Til is interested in the origins of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees freedom of religion to the citizens of our country and does so by erecting a wall of separation between the church and the state. This wall is erected by the first part of the Amendment which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

The author traces this idea back to the English Puritan William Perkins, and follows how the idea was carried out through the period of the Elizabethan government, during the time of the Stuarts and the English Commonwealth under Cromwell and the Westminster Assembly, and the failure of the principle during the time of the Restoration. He gives special attention to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the history of Roger Williams, and the Antinomian Controversy. He explains how the idea was accepted in the American colonies and how it became a part of American political thought.

The book deals with knotty problems which have troubled the church since the time of Constantine the

Great: the issues of the relation between church and state, the legitimacy of an established church, the question of toleration of heretical churches within a commonwealth, the matter of freedom of conscience in the sphere of religion, and the right or wrong of the position which our own country has taken by the First Amendment. The author quite obviously supports the whole concept of freedom of religion.

The book is packed with interesting historical material, is carefully supported in its argumentation, with excellent and pointed quotes from significant authors, and is coherent in its efforts to trace the development of the idea.

I wish, however, that the book had included two additional elements. One is a more careful definition of precisely what the author means by such crucial terms as "liberty of conscience," "toleration," and "freedom of religion." As I was reading the book, I kept asking myself the question, "What are the definitions of these terms which the author is using?" Some clear definitions would have helped the reader make his way through the argument with greater ease. The second is that the book lacks a discussion of some of the ramifications of the issue itself, i.e., the issue of the relation between church and state in matters of religion. For example, the author points out that Perkins already held to an idea of sphere sovereignty; but it is not always clear how this relates to the broader issues. I am aware of the fact that the book intends to be a historical study; but it would be easier to understand the issues if the problem were laid out at the outset in a clearer way.

Finally, just a brief remark about an error in spelling. On p. 44, the author speaks repeatedly of the University of Frakenker in The Netherlands, when, in fact, he refers to the University of Franeker.

Those who are interested in this question of the relation between church and state will be benefited by reading the book. □



## News From Our Churches

*Mr. Benjamin Wigger*

### School Activities

The ninth graders of the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI are again willing to do odd jobs for any of their supporters when they become available. For example, if you have leaves to rake, windows to be washed, storm windows to be put up, snow to be shoveled, basements to be cleaned, or any other work, you are reminded to call one of the ninth grade students. These students had been encouraged to make their own contacts, but perhaps if you have work and have not been contacted, you could give the school a call. They would appreciate your consideration. The earnings will be used to help pay for their class trip. As last year, the suggested rate is \$4.00 per hour.

On October 15 Rev. K. Koole gave a speech entitled "Parental Priorities" to the Hope School PTA.

The Parent/Teacher/Friends Association of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI met on October 8. The speaker that night discussed Apple Economics and Computers class relationship to business today.

Rev. W. Bruinsma addressed the PTA of the Heritage Christian School which met on October 15, on the subject "Our Christian Schools: No Better Alternative."

### Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada has begun receiving copies of articles put in the Grand Rapids (MI)

Press by the PRCs there. These copies are made available for the congregation and are intended to be used in their personal witness.

The Evangelism Society of the Byron Center, MI PRC recently sponsored a very worthwhile and appreciated conference on the subject of Spiritual Depression. This conference was held in their church on Friday and Saturday, October 9 and 10. Prof. Decker opened the conference Friday by speaking on "Depression: Its Cause"; and this was followed up on Saturday morning by Rev. J. Slopeema addressing the conference on "Depression: Its Cure."

While neither of these speakers claimed to be experts in the fields of psychology or psychiatry, they both based their presentations on their experience as pastors and as ministers of the Word of God, and on their own personal experience with depression.

The theme for the conference was Philippians 4:4-9. Our calling as Christians is to rejoice in the Lord always, but that is impossible to do when we are depressed. Hence, Scripture says: "Let your request be made known to God. And the God of peace shall be with you."

As one of the more than 150 couples that pre-registered for this conference, let me thank Byron Center for another fine conference. Judging from the full auditorium and the stack of questions after each speech, I believe it can safely be said that there were many more who felt the same way.

### Denominational Activities

Rev. Kortering, who is laboring on behalf of our churches in Singapore

with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and Rev. J. Mahtani of the ERCS, planned to go to India for a Christian Conference of Sindhi Indians. Rev. Mahtani, who is Sindhi, has met these people on a previous visit. They planned to go for 2-3 weeks in October.

The Fall Ladies' League meeting was held in the Edgerton, MN PRC on October 20. Rev. M. DeVries, Edgerton's pastor, addressed the ladies on the topic "Promoting Respect in an Age of Rebellion."

### Congregational Activities

At a congregational meeting held in early September, the congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB decided to purchase one-half acre more than the four acres they had originally voted to buy for their future church property. This was to offset the amount of land which they would have to reserve for a road which might be built in the future.

On Sunday evening, October 18, the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC met after the service for an hour of fellowship, and to say their good-byes to their pastor and his wife, Rev. and Mrs. G. VanBaren, who left the next day to labor with the members of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Larne, Northern Ireland. Plans call for the VanBarens to labor in Northern Ireland on behalf of our churches for up to a year, or until such time as a man accepts the call to serve as missionary pastor to Larne.

### Ministerial Calls

On October 18 the Hudsonville, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. R. Hanko to serve as missionary to the CRF of Larne, Northern Ireland. □

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