

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

*A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine*

Christ's coming is the meaning of 1993 as it is the meaning of all history. Exactly what the new year holds for the nations, for the church, and for ourselves personally, we do not know. But we know that it serves the coming of the Lord. Whatever takes place prepares us and all things for the coming of Christ.

See: A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming — p. 149

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In This Issue...

1993. What will it hold?

How about 1994? What will it bring? Not the second coming of Christ — Mr. Harold Camping to the contrary notwithstanding — for the compelling reasons you will find in this issue in "A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming."

At the same time, there is every reason to believe that in 1993 it will become ever more apparent that the return of Christ cannot be far distant. That's the thrust of Rev. Heys' Meditation in this issue. He draws attention, first of all, to the incredible advances in science and technology in our day. Of no less importance are the stunning developments on the international scene, which make the realization of man's desire for a universal kingdom of peace, after the order of Nimrod's Tower of Babel, seem at last to be an attainable goal.

Ominous developments these are, for the church of Christ on this earth. But not frightening. For, as Rev. Heys reminds us in "Our Constant and Certain Safety," we are engraved on the very hands of God. In facing the future, therefore, we need not fear. We are eternally secure.

A related article, though not by design, is the Guest Article submitted some time ago by Rev. C. Hanko. It's entitled "Spiritual Complacency."

Complacent? — in the face of such developments in the world around us? Ah, yes, such is the folly of man, even of redeemed man, that, with the signs of Christ's coming intensifying all about him, he becomes *lax*. Nor are we immune. We do well therefore to take inventory of our own lives, in light of Rev. Hanko's warning in this issue against spiritual apathy.

D.D.

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Our Constant and Certain Safety

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

Isaiah 49:16

What a blessed truth is here presented unto us by our God, in His grace, and through Isaiah!

It is so important and comforting for us to know that truth, and to hold on to it tightly. For we have entered into a new year, and therefore come closer to the day when, according to Revelation 13:17, we will suffer severely at the hands of the antichristian kingdom that lies ahead, according to God's sure word. How comforting it is that by God's grace we are graven upon the palms of His hands, and that our walls are continually before Him! Our text, above, assures us that by God's grace we will refuse to take the mark of the beast. This "beast" is the coming antichrist, who will demand of all the elect children of God that they take the mark of the beast upon their right hand, or in their foreheads, in order to have the right to buy or sell.

Now already, in our present life, we have amazing inventions with which we can not merely see things on the other side of the world, and hear recordings of what was said days and weeks before, but we can now see and hear what is happening on the other side of the world while it is happening. Indeed, we are not far away from the accomplishment of

what the world has always tried to do — from that which it was frustrated from doing, when men tried to erect the Tower of Babel, to establish themselves as an ungodly nation that would wipe off the face of this earth God's beloved church!

With today's inventions and tools, men are making the world relatively smaller and smaller; and the unbelieving world is increasing in strength, and is becoming a greater threat to the physical well-being of God's church. By means of new devices, invented and manufactured, Satan will soon be ready to keep the believing children of God from buying or selling, and will cause many to starve to death.

What a comforting truth, then, do we find in that word of God presented in Isaiah 49:16. The almighty God has us graven upon the palms of His hands; and the walls that protect the children of God in this life, so that they will dwell in all the blessedness of the new Jerusalem, are constantly before Him.

*The powerful Antichrist,
that is soon coming,
will not keep us
from anything
that God has promised us.*

Not only do we know, at the beginning of this new year, what happened at the Tower of Babel, as it is presented in Genesis 11, but by God's grace we are able to see how the world is striving, and to quite a degree successfully, to erect that com-

ing Tower of Babel presented in Revelation 13. For with crafty inventions, and being able bodily and speedily to go anywhere, not only here on this earth, but also by satellites to other places in the atmosphere, men will have at their disposal powerful means for the destruction of the New Testament church. And we can also see the comfort in God's Word that His church is graven upon the palms of His hands, and that its walls are continually before Him.

We are assured by our God that He has all things under His control. In our text above, He assures us that He will fulfill every word of His promises to us. The powerful Antichrist, that is soon coming, will not keep us from anything that God has promised us. We have the assurance that all things do work together for our good.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six days; and the seventh day He rested. As we are coming near to the day when 6,000 years have passed since that week in which God created all things in heaven and on earth, we do have clear evidence that this year we are much closer to the day when that beautiful city, which He has graven upon the palms of both of His hands, comes forth in all its beauty and blessedness. And we can, now, be absolutely sure that all is well, and that His church will come forth in perfection — in fact, come forth exactly as He eternally decreed to have it be for His own glory.

We do well, therefore, to bear in mind the fact that God's hands have almighty power. We should also appreciate the truth that we are graven

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

upon the palms of His hands which are almighty. We then should also bear in mind the truth that every creature — and that also includes all the holy angels, and Satan and all his fallen angels — gets every bit of its life from God. Not one creature is physically next to God. God is in all creation and creatures. He is the everywhere present God, who is everywhere with His almighty power. He causes absolutely everything that takes place to happen, as He wants it to happen. He stops every heart from beating, the exact moment He eternally planned that it should stop. Absolutely everything that happens is what He eternally planned. He uses both of His hands — which are mentioned in this verse — to fulfill all that He eternally planned.

Those almighty hands of God are gracious means which He uses so that every single one of His elect children will reach the glorious life which He eternally planned for them. This is so beautifully presented in I Corinthians 12:12-27. We are the body of Christ and we all have our eternally designed place in that body. We are, according to this passage, "the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Now, to be graven in His hands means that in God's own work, which was eternally determined by Him, we will be in one specific place, for specific work that was eternally determined by Him. Our God has graven us upon those palms of His hands with a view to all the wonderful work we will do in the new Jerusalem.

Eternally God determined where we would be in the body of Christ. But He also eternally decreed what He would do in His almighty power to bring us, with other members of Christ's body, where we would be to the glory of His name. It also means that we are absolutely safe, and that He will, at a particular moment in our time, send His Son from His heavenly glory to bring us completely and powerfully to a most blessed life.

We do well, therefore, to take note of that which precedes that state-

ment of our God, that He has us graven upon the palms of His hands; and that our walls — that is, those of the new Jerusalem — are continually before Him. In verses 13-15, and thus just before this statement that He has us graven upon the palms of His hands, our God, through Isaiah, calls out: "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains." This He does because Zion had said that the Lord had forsaken and forgotten His people. And our God, through Isaiah, asks whether a woman can forget her sucking child; and whether He can forget His church. Then, in this 16th verse, God calls us to take note of the truth that He does have us upon the palms of His hands, and that our walls are constantly before Him.

Therefore, as we now approach the days of the Antichrist, and are a year closer to the day when we will not be able to buy or sell, and in that way will be severely persecuted by Satan and his godless kingdom, this verse has a blessed comfort for us. Being a year closer, and taking note of man's modern inventions, and of the fact that we are clearly approaching the day when all nations of the world will be united into one worldwide kingdom of the Antichrist (and men already are speaking of bringing into being "one world"), we do well to listen to our God, who speaks of His church being graven upon the palms of His hands, that is, that they are constantly and continually before Him and seen by Him.

*With His searching eyes
our God sees every member
of His eternally
chosen church,
which is upon the palms
of His hands.*

The point is not merely that He continually sees His church. The comfort is not simply that He has us in His hands as His possession, bought by

the blood of Christ. What counts here is what is presented to us in Romans 8:28, namely, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." With His searching eyes our God sees every member of His eternally chosen church, which is upon the palms of His hands. With those hands the almighty God keeps Satan, and his wicked world, from leading us away from the everlasting blessedness which is pictured by that beautiful city which is graven upon the palms of God's hands.

The walls of the city, which protect us from our enemy, refer to Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who blotted out all of our guilt, and earned for us a place in that city which is graven upon the palms of God's hands.

Taking hold of that blessed truth, which presents such wonderful safety and salvation, we are called to sing what we find in our *Psalter*, number 35, the fourth stanza. There we read this blessed truth:

From God the victory I receive;
Most perfect is His holy way;
His word is tried, they who believe
Will find the Lord their shield
and stay.

That song is based on Psalm 18:30-32 where we read: "As for God, his way is perfect: the way of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust him. For who is God save the Lord? or who is a rock save our God? It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my ways perfect."

Does your heart say that? Because it is Christ Jesus who realized the walls that protect His church, you will find, if you are graven upon the palms of God's hands, a most blessed comfort and peace of mind, that looks for the return of Christ to bring us into that holy city, and unto a blessed fellowship with God.

In His grace our God assures us of a constant and certain safety. For us, all is well indeed. Every word our God declared He would fulfill, He must assuredly will. □

A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming

The Lord Jesus is coming. Our recent celebration of Christmas reminded us of this coming. His first coming points to the second, demands the second, and is fulfilled only in the second. The justification of God, the redemption of the church, and the judgment of this world accomplished by His coming in lowliness must be perfected by His coming in glory.

This coming will be bodily and visible. At His coming, the Lord Jesus will raise the dead, judge all men and angels, and renew the creation. This will be the end of this world and its history.

Christ's coming is the meaning of 1993 as it is the meaning of all history. Exactly what the new year holds for the nations, for the church, and for ourselves personally, we do not know. But we know that it serves the coming of the Lord. Whatever takes place prepares us and all things for the coming of Christ.

*For a church
or a church member
to forget the coming of Christ,
or even to suppose secretly
that the Lord
delays His coming, is fatal.*

Expectancy of the Lord's coming must dominate all the life and labor of His church in 1993. Scripture calls the church to do all her work and

live all her life with a view to the coming of Christ. She must preach the gospel with the purpose that all the elect be brought to repentance, so that the day of the Lord may come (II Pet. 3:9), and with the purpose that a witness be given to all the nations, so that the end may come (Matt. 24:14). She must administer the sacraments in order to show the Lord's death "till he come" (I Cor. 11:26). She must discipline the impenitent sinner in her fellowship, so that his spirit may be saved "in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:5).

The saints must care for each other, avoiding fighting, and must purify themselves, abstaining from gluttonous and drunken revelry, against the day that the Lord will come to reward the faithful and to punish the evil (Matt. 24:42-51).

For a church or a church member to forget the coming of Christ, or even to suppose secretly that the Lord delays His coming, is fatal.

There must ring in our soul in 1993 (the preaching must see to it!) the word of Christ, "Behold, I come; surely, I come."

When?

1994?

It is the prophecy of Mr. Harold Camping that Christ will come in 1994. Mr. Camping is a conservative expositor of the Bible with a large following among Reformed Christians in the United States and Canada, mainly through his radio broadcasts. He makes his startling prediction in a book published late last year, 1994?

(New York: Vantage Press, Inc.).

The question mark in the book's title is misleading. The author confidently foretells Jesus' return and the end of the world in September, 1994. The exact time will be the period between September 15 and September 27 of that year: "Last Day and return of Christ sometime on or between: September 15, 1994: Beginning of 1994 Jubilee year, and September 27, 1994: Last Day of Feast of Tabernacles" (p. 531).

The great tribulation that will precede the coming of Christ has already begun. Mr. Camping informs us that it began on May 21, 1988, when the gospel era ended. The great tribulation, therefore, does not consist of persecution of the church. Rather, it consists of Satan's assault on all churches so that they become apostate (pp. 515, 516).

The basis for this prophecy is Mr. Camping's discovery in the Bible of all the information hidden there by the Holy Spirit to reveal 1994 as the time of the end of the world. The Spirit has also given Harold Camping the gift to interpret this otherwise unknown and unknowable information about the end. Camping's book is some 500 pages of biblical ages, dates, and numbers with their meanings and connections. In contrast with its exciting theme and its vivid cover, the book is as dull as a volume of mathematics.

Camping has figured out that 1994 is an Old Testament year of jubilee. In fact, it is the 68th year of jubilee. Sixty-eight, according to Mr. Camp-

ing, is a number with a highly significant spiritual meaning. For it is the product of 2 times 2 times 17. The number 2 symbolizes the church, and the number 17 symbolizes heaven. 1994, therefore, is the year of jubilee in which the church goes to heaven. September 15, 1994 will be the Old Testament Day of Atonement, which will also begin the year of jubilee. But September 20-27, 1994 will be the Feast of Tabernacles of the Old Testament. The conclusion is that Christ will return between September 15 and September 27, 1994.

Day and Hour

Staring the maker of this prediction in the face is the declaration by Christ Himself that no creature, Himself as a man included, knows the exact time of the end. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32, 33). Camping solves this problem by distinguishing between "day and ... hour," on the one hand, and "year and month," on the other hand. He is not prophesying day and hour but year, month, and week.

*... if Christ Himself
as to His human nature
is ignorant of the time
of His return,
the time of His return
cannot be revealed
in the Bible,...*

But this effort to escape the clear teaching of Christ that the time of the end is not revealed is an act of desperation. "Ye know not when the time is," in Mark 13:33, makes plain that "day and ... hour," in verse 32, refers to any and every definite date, whether hour, day, month, or year. The Reformed creed, which is authoritative for every Reformed believer, correctly explains that the time

of the end is "unknown to all creatures" (*Belgic Confession*, Art. 37).

The entire project of attempting to determine from the Bible the date of Christ's return is disobedience to the Lord's express warning against this very thing.

Surely, if Christ Himself as to His human nature is ignorant of the time of His return, the time of His return cannot be revealed in the Bible, for it is the Spirit of Christ who inspired the Bible. Christ would know His own revelation.

Allegory

If the project itself is disobedience, the manner in which it is conducted is foolishness. 1994? is a classic example of allegorical exegesis — the extremest allegorical exegesis. Allegorical exegesis is interpretation of Scripture that pays no attention to the common, ordinary meaning of the words and thoughts in Scripture. The interpreter, usually motivated by great reverence for Scripture, finds spiritual meanings everywhere according to his own fancy. It is arbitrary, lawless, fanciful interpretation of the Word of God.

In 1994?, the pagan Cyrus is a type of Christ; wicked Ahasuerus "typifies God as the supreme ruler of the world"; everything about Paul's shipwreck has a spiritual meaning, including the 276 persons involved; and the numbers 2, 17, 23, and 68 have symbolic significance. Also of great spiritual meaning are the number 11 in Deuteronomy 1:2; the 2,000 cubits of Joshua 3:3,4; the 2,000 swine of Mark 5:1-17; the 200 cubits of John 21:8; and the 153 fish of John 21:11.

The arbitrary nature of Mr. Camping's exegesis is evident in his explanation of Daniel 9:27. Having committed himself to a literal interpretation of the 70 weeks (each week being a literal week of years, which itself is a mistake), Camping suddenly makes the second half of the 70th week a figurative description of the entire period from the death of Christ to the end of the world. The change from a literal to a figurative explanation of one and the same

phrase occurs in the middle of a verse. Seventy weeks is literal in the first half of the verse, but figurative in the second half (cf. pp. 381-404).

This kind of interpretation of Scripture is illegitimate and dangerous in the extreme. The Reformation opposed it vehemently. "To allegorize is to juggle with Scripture," wrote Luther. Calvin was of the same mind:

We must entirely reject the allegories of Origen, and of others like him, which Satan, with the deepest subtlety, has endeavored to introduce into the Church, for the purpose of rendering the doctrine of Scripture ambiguous and destitute of all certainty and firmness.

The practice of such interpretation (exegesis) and the theory of interpretation (hermeneutics) that lies behind it effectively deny the doctrine of Scripture as much as does the new hermeneutic of modernism. If everything can mean anything, everything means nothing.

This interpretation of the Bible, in fact, like the new hermeneutic of theological modernism, takes the Bible out of the hands of the saints. Indeed, it takes the Bible out of the hands of everyone except the particular interpreter himself. There is no man on earth except Mr. Camping who ever would have interpreted the Bible to arrive at 1994 as the date of the Lord's return. There is no man on earth who can follow his allegorizing as he engages in this interpretation. All must simply accept his explanation.

When at the end of the book Mr. Camping says to his reader, "There is no time left to trust your pastor or your church. You must trust only the Bible," he means, "Trust only the Bible as I interpret it for you." Apparently, he has many disciples who do exactly this. Hardly less disquieting to me than the astounding prophecy itself is the readiness of many devout, Reformed Christians to believe it.

Doctrinal Errors

Prediction of the date of Christ's

coming as September 15-27, 1994 involves Mr. Camping in other, serious doctrinal errors. There will be no human Antichrist. The Antichrist of Scripture is Satan himself. The church of the end-time does not face persecution. The great tribulation is rather the spiritual falling away of the churches. Since 1988, there is no longer a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ on earth. All churches have become apostate. The practical implications of these errors for the saints are staggering.

By no means the least serious of his false teachings is that doctrine that is fundamental to the prediction of September, 1994 as the date of the end of the world. This is a doctrine that is assumed, rather than argued. But it is very definitely taught. I refer to the notion that the Old Testament feasts continue into the New Testament, not by having been spiritually fulfilled in Christ, but literally. September 15, 1994 will be "the Day of Atonement," beginning "the 1994 Jubilee year" (p. 520). September 20-27, 1994 will be "the days of the Feast of Tabernacles for the year 1994" (p. 525). Such is the literal continuance of the Old Testament feasts that Mr. Camping can compute the date of the end of the world by means of this. 1994 will be the 68th literal year of Old Testament jubilee.

This makes Jews out of us Christians. It brings us back to the weak

and beggarly elements that Paul warned against in Galatians 4. The book of Hebrews is devoted to the truth that all the Old Testament feasts were so fulfilled in Christ as to have ceased at His coming. The use of them must be abolished among Christians, including the use of them to calculate future dates. There are no longer "days of the Feast of Tabernacles." The feast has been fulfilled spiritually in Christ, is a living reality in the church by faith, and will be perfected in the Day of Christ.

True and False Prophecy

Mr. Harold Camping claims to be a prophet. In keeping with Amos 3:7, God has revealed to him, and to him alone, the most wonderful future event of all: the coming of Christ and the end of the world. To Mr. Camping has been given the privilege of unsealing at the end the words of the secret that have been closed up until now (cf. Dan. 12:9).

Very well.

As a Reformed believer and minister of the Word, I too claim to be a prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, I declare with absolute certainty that Jesus will not come and the world will not end in 1994. As with all genuine prophecy, this is based on God's own Word. First, His coming in 1994 would contradict Jesus' own words in Mark

13 that no one, not even Harold Camping, knows the time of the end. If Camping is right, Jesus was wrong.

Second, by coming in 1994 Jesus would sanction allegorical exegesis to the dishonoring of Holy Scripture.

Third, far too much must still take place before the coming of Jesus Christ for this coming to be in 1994. Antichrist must yet establish his kingdom of man, rule all the world, and persecute the true church (cf. II Thess. 2 and Rev. 13). This will happen soon, but not in a year and a half.

Two prophecies, diametrically opposite.

The mark of false prophecy is that "the thing follow not, nor come to pass" (Deut. 18:21,22).

I have written the following announcement. It is to be published in the *Standard Bearer* of October 1, 1994.

Christ did not come, nor did the world end, last month, as Harold Camping prophesied in 1991 in his book, *1994?*. I now call on Mr. Camping to repent of his sin of disobeying Christ by predicting the date of Christ's coming and to repudiate the very idea of such predictions. I also call on him to recognize the error of his allegorical exegesis and to direct his followers to a true Reformed church where sound, grammatical-historical-spiritual exegesis is the basis of all preaching and teaching.

— DJE

□

Guest Article

Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Spiritual Complacency

Spiritual complacency is an ailment that creeps upon us unawares. It takes hold of us exactly when we least expect it.

If anyone were to ask us, "How do you feel?" we likely would respond, "Fine, I'm in the peak of

health." But if we were to follow up the question with a bit of self examination, we would realize that we had given our *spiritual* health little thought. Recent soul searching we have not done. Like Israel of old we are content to say, "The people of the

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Lord are we." We read our Bible every day, we pray, we live respectable lives from day to day, we are members of the church and attend its services faithfully.

The symptoms of this common ailment are exactly that: lack of concern, lack of zeal, a lingering apathy.

We actually notice no real change in our daily walk of life, although it is true that our prayers have become a mere formality, a cold repetition. We make a practice of confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness, but we do not stop to consider what sins we are confessing. Our church attendance is hardly more than mere custom. The singing has no strong appeal, so that we sing the words without giving much thought to the content. During the congregational prayer our minds wander. The sermons do not hit home. Were anyone to ask us, we would have to admit that the church service meant little or nothing to us. The celebration of Baptism, or even the Lord's Supper, with its preparatory week, is celebrated out of mere custom. But this is also true of our private and family devotions. To be honest, a good book or a favorite TV program interests us much more than all our devotional life.

The spiritual and eternal is replaced in our thoughts and desires with mundane and the carnal things.

Sad to say, this ailment is like a contagious disease that spreads very rapidly. It affects not only ourselves but also our family, our friends, and, ultimately, our church. Its victims are legion. Since we are not interested in spiritual matters, our family loses interest, our friends are hesitant to speak about them with us. We become spiritually lax, our family becomes indolent. In time even our congregation sinks into cold passivity.

The cause. This may be a bit difficult to diagnose.

It may be a reaction to a spiritual involvement. Strange as it may seem, after Israel's years of wandering in the wilderness, and after the conquest of Canaan, when everyone was settled in his inheritance, a spiritual lethargy came upon them, so that

they failed to remind their children and their children's children of what the Lord had done for them. The same may happen to us.

It is possible that we have been too busy

It is possible that we have been too busy, have become too involved in our business, our farm, or any other occupation. Our material interests became our first consideration. Our priorities, then, are all wrong.

A man was once sitting at his desk in his office when he asked himself, "What is more important to me, my business or my soul?" He decided to get rid of his business, lest he lose his soul.

It may even be the busyness in the family, or some outside interest, such as sports.

Like a cancerous growth, the disease may be rather far advanced before it is detected. It may even prove to be fatal for the individual, for the family, or for a congregation.

We think of the church of Laodicea, of which Jesus speaks in Revelation 3:15-17:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

The question is not whether we have faith, but whether we are "in the faith."

The cure. Jesus adds in the following verses, 18 and 19:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Can it be that in some sense this applies to me? May I unawares have become spiritually listless, complacent? Have my prayers become hindered by it?

The Word of God admonishes us in II Corinthians 13:5 thus: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

We should do so with this prayer in our hearts: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

The question is not whether we have faith, but whether we are "in the faith." We do not ask ourselves, "Do I believe?" but rather, "Do I walk as children of light should walk in all good works?"

At this point it may be necessary to ask ourselves, "What are good works?"

To that question our Heidelberg Catechism gives the answer (Lord's Day 33):

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 imagination, or the institutions of men.

That is strong language.

When I read Scripture or hear it read, when I make my prayers, when I worship on Sunday with the congregation, I must do so in faith. In fact, my entire life must be faith in action.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

All that is not done in faith is *sin*. God's wrath fumes against mere form worship, as we read in Isaiah 66:3:

He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in abominations.

Am I guilty at present of mere form worship?

Besides that, my entire life must be "according to the law of God." I can sit in church and hear the ten commandments read without pangs of conscience. True, at some time or another one particular commandment may accuse and condemn me. But even that is often not the case. Yet the Lord teaches that if I transgress one command, I transgress all, for the basic principle of the law is that I love Him with my whole being, so that all that is not done in love to God is *sin*.

Am I motivated by the love of God in all that I say and do?

One more thing. All that we do must be done to the glory of God. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Is that the chief characteristic of my life? Was I seeking the glory of God when I read my Bible this morning? When I prayed? When I sat in church last Sunday?

My Lord teaches me that my first and foremost desire must be, "Hallowed be Thy Name." How miserably I fail in that!

When we become aware of our spiritual lethargy our only escape is through prayer in Christ Jesus. "Buy of Me," He says.

We need the gold of Christ's righteousness, the white garments of sanctification, washed in the blood of Calvary; we need the eye-salve of the Holy Spirit that we may see and enjoy anew the riches of God's grace, His infinite mercy, and His unchanging faithfulness.

Well may we pray with the Psalmist:

Gracious God, my heart renew,
Make my spirit right and true;
Cast me not away from Thee,
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;
Thy salvation's joy impart,
Steadfast make my willing heart.
(*Psalter* no. 141)

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22).

Even then we must not be content until our complacency is changed into spiritual contentment. We must experience anew the joy of salvation. Even as Scripture admonishes us:

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice....

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:4, 7).

This can be and is readily transmitted to others. Our own spiritual joy will reflect itself in the family, and also among our friends. Even our enthusiastic singing in the congregation and our attentive listening to the sermon can be an inspiration to others.

O sing to the Lord a new song:
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

Sing unto the Lord, bless his name;
shew forth his salvation from day to day (Psa. 96:1, 2).

□

Strength of Youth

Rev. Steven Key

Proper Christian Self-Esteem (3)

Before setting forth the truth of Scripture concerning this concept of self-esteem, I want to call your atten-

tion once again to the influence of the unbiblical idea that has been so readily accepted.

I make bold to proclaim that the influence of the modern self-esteem movement has permeated even our own thinking to a degree — perhaps to a rather large degree. There has been more and more emphasis placed on self-esteem among us, and most

often it is not the emphasis on *proper* Christian self-esteem, i.e., *biblical* self-esteem.

For you who are reaching the age of marriage and child-rearing, this has some serious implications. There has been a dangerous shift in recent years toward leniency in child-discipline due to a fear of harming self-esteem. Our teachers also have

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experienced this pressure to make their students "feel good" at all costs. In some cases disobedience is being blamed on a poor self-concept; and lack of self-esteem has become the favored diagnosis given to blunt the responsibility that one once had to bear for his own behavior. Should the Lord establish you in marriage and give you children, I urge you not to follow this way of thinking. Heed the Scriptures. Only then will you experience the joy of Christian parenting.

I think you understand by now that the reason this modern philosophy of self-esteem has made such inroads in our thinking is that we are not living as close to the Scriptures as we ought, and our thinking is not governed by biblical instruction as it ought to be. We tend to be very lazy in our acceptance of modern philosophical and educational theories. By that I mean that when we hear certain so-called experts (especially religious experts) make a proclamation on a given subject, we tend to accept their theories without question and without examining the Scriptures.

The example of the Bereans has, sad to say, become such a foreign concept that, let alone searching the Scriptures after hearing a sermon, we do not think of searching the Scriptures when it comes to other matters. And if my bold assertion is true — and I make it not without seeing evidence — that is a serious flaw in our Christian lives and practice.

Facing Reality

The Bible presents a wholly different view of self-esteem, a view that reveals the modern self-esteem movement to be poor in comparison. And the importance of a biblical view is evident to any who will face reality.

In its rejection of the sin problem, the modern theory of self-esteem steers people away from facing reality. Those who follow this line of thought end up believing that their fantasies are reality. Christianity, on the other hand, would have you face reality and deal with it. I would have you understand clearly, real life cannot be created in the mind. Nor can

the reality of sin be cleared away by *thinking* it away, not even by rationalizing it away.

The way to have proper self-esteem is not by listening to the multitude of "Dr. Feel-goods" that are out there today. The only way to find meaning, purpose, and self-worth is through a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

If I were diagnosed as having a form of cancer which if untreated would bring certain death, it would hardly be helpful for me if you were to come to me and say, "Steve, don't worry about what the doctor has said; look at you. You are healthy through and through. Think good thoughts of yourself and all will be well. You can conquer anything through thinking good thoughts of yourself."

The "feel-good-about-yourself" doctors are no assistants to the great Physician.

Well, the great Physician has diagnosed you and me as having a terminal disease called sin. We read in Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death." The Physician has prescribed one cure. That is the medicine of Jesus Christ, the only Savior who shed His blood on the cross for all who believe. What folly then to heed the word of a man who comes to you and who says, "Man, the only thing wrong with you is a low sense of self-esteem. You must think better of yourself. Never mind that Physician. Never mind what God says about you." Is that the view you would take? That is a denial of reality!

You see, my youthful friends, that is the option. The "feel-good-about-yourself" doctors are no assistants to the great Physician. They claim His name. They claim to represent Him. But when you evaluate their theories, their diagnoses, and their prescriptions in the light of the Desk Manual of the Great Physician, you find that they are *deceivers*. And

such deceivers would only hasten your death!

That you understand the biblical presentation on this matter is extremely important. There is a place for proper Christian self-esteem. The question is: What is proper Christian self-esteem?

The Reality of Sin in Ourselves

A biblical view of self-esteem takes into account the reality of sin and reveals the victory and honor that belong to you who are in Christ Jesus.

You can never deal with your problems, you can never deal with a poor self-concept, by denying reality! The modern theory of positive thinking of one's self, apart from the proper biblical view of reality, holds no comfort for those who fall short of their goals! It actually seeks to avoid dealing with some of the harsh realities of life. What these feel-good-about-yourself doctors proclaim is really a sweet-sounding but very harsh philosophy!

Sin is real. Death, the wages of sin, is an even more stark reality. Sin and death must be faced, if you are ever to have a proper Christian self-esteem. And when I say that sin and death must be faced, I do not mean in some abstract way. I mean that *your* sin and *your* imminent and inescapable death must be faced by *you*.

So Paul preached as the mouthpiece of Christ. When he said goodbye to the elders of Ephesus, he could say, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). He had announced the need for repentance. He had called all who heard him to come out of the bondage of sin. He had preached the comfort of salvation that is only in Christ Jesus through the forgiveness of sin and the cleansing power of His precious blood. The Apostle proclaimed the joy of belonging to Christ, but also the judgment upon those who reject Him.

To face the reality of sin in the preaching can be a most uncomfortable thing for the preacher. I know. Preaching is a dangerous task, that entails heavy responsibility. But let

us understand the reality in the light of God's holy and infallible Word. To face the reality of sin is necessary finally to attain to proper Christian

self-esteem. To call people to repentance and to lead them to the cross of Jesus Christ is the only way in which they will find the comfort of proper

Christian self-esteem. It is the only way they will see the reality of heaven. □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

IS A NEW REFORMED DENOMINATION TO BE FORMED?

As our readers know, a goodly number of groups have seceded from the Christian Reformed Church in the recent past. As of this writing there are a total of thirty congregations composed of 1575 families, 3649 communicants, and 6312 total members. At present these congregations are independent, but part of the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC).

Last October an organization called the Burlington Reformed Study Center, composed of three men associated with the Canadian Reformed Churches (Liberated), organized three public meetings in the auditorium of Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. The meetings brought together ministers, theologians, and educators representing the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. The auditorium which seats 1000 was packed. According to one source (John VanDyk of *Christian Renewal*), "The first evening's theme, 'Is there a lesson in the Union of 1892?' got off to a less than rousing start as the two speakers, Dr. J. DeJong of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches and Rev. C. Pronk, a Free Reformed minister in St. Thomas, Ontario, appeared to become entangled somewhat in the cobwebs of

the historical event itself, and in a defence of their own denomination's historical roots."

The second evening featured Rev. C. Stam, pastor of a Canadian Reformed congregation in Hamilton, Ontario and Dr. Theodore Plantinga, professor at Redeemer and a member of the CRC. These men addressed the question, "How Close Are We?" Stam concentrated on the differences between the two communions. He noted "the significant gap which truly divides us in the events surrounding the Liberation of 1944." The newly formed independent churches which have come out of the CRC, "... have much to learn of the key points involved in the struggle of '44." Stam also pointed to the corrections by Schilder and others of Dr. Abraham Kuyper's scholastic theories with respect to common grace, the plurality of the church, and sphere sovereignty. Stam argued that the independent CRC leaders were still caught up in Kuyperian thinking, and he emphasized the need for study of how Schilder improved on Kuyper's work. Stam also pointed to differences in church polity between the two communions. He characterized their preaching as leaning toward "topical" as opposed to textual and historic-redemptive. The matter of song books used in worship is another possible barrier to potential union.

Despite these barriers, Stam concluded by saying, "There is much more that binds us, and we need one another."

Dr. Plantinga pointed to three differences in need of resolution. The first, according to Plantinga, "... is the tendency on the part of many Canadian Reformed people to think in terms of absolute contrasts, of blacks

and whites, when dealing with situations in which many CRC people see a lot of gray." In this connection Plantinga pointed to the Canadian Reformed conception of the distinction between the true and the false church. This tendency also comes to expression, said Plantinga, "... when Canadian Reformed think of Christian education, where Christian schools attended by Canadian Reformed children hire exclusively Canadian Reformed teachers." The second difference noted by Plantinga is in the area of Church Order, in which boardism and the hierarchical approach has crept into CRC thinking and practice. Those in the CRC have much to learn from the Canadian Reformed when it comes to Church Order, according to Plantinga. Like Stam, Plantinga argued for more familiarity with the events of 1944. "If we can arrive at a positive appreciation of 1944, then there is good hope that a union of some sort can be achieved," Plantinga said.

At the meeting of the last evening Dr. Cornel Venema, professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, and Dr. Jelle Faber, professor emeritus at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, addressed the question, "What should be done?"

Venema identified three groups which have come out of the CRC with whom the Canadian Reformed should pursue contact. These are the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, the Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Canadian Alliance of Reformed Churches. To the question, do these churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches have a responsibility to unite together, Venema's answer was a strong "yes." Said Venema, "My thesis is that, if these churches are united in their submis-

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sion to the Word of God, in their subscription to the Three Forms of Unity, and in their willingness to honor a Church Order adopted by common consent, then they should be united in a single federation of Reformed churches." Venema then proposed several recommendations to achieve this goal.

Dr. Faber in essence agreed with Venema's position. He too made a strong bid for union between the two communions. Faber agreed with Venema on the need for a new name. Venema proposed the name, the Reformed Churches of North America. Faber suggested that two sister church federations could be formed, one in the United States and one in Canada, the former with Mid-America Reformed Seminary and the latter with the Theological College in Hamilton.

Will a new Reformed denomination be formed out of all this? Only the Lord knows.

Christian Observer
Christian Renewal
Clarion

WORLD'S LARGEST CHURCH KEEPS GROWING

China, with more than 1.2 billion people, is the most populous nation on the face of the earth. An estimated 50-60 million of these people are professing Christians. Approximately 85% of these Christians worship in churches which are declared illegal by the Chinese government, whose policy is to control and inhibit the growth of Christianity. Millions of underground Christians in China who obey God rather than men by

transporting Bibles or teaching their children about God often suffer beatings, imprisonment, and torture. The Chinese government goes to great lengths to silence Christianity. Government police often tell lies to gain entry into suspects' homes. Interrogations, without any kind of legal counsel, drag on for months and frequently involve physical abuse and coercion. Most arrests result in sentences of 15-20 years, often in hard labor.

In spite of the persecution the church continues to grow, with an estimated 15,000 Chinese converting to Christianity every day. It remains true, the more the church is afflicted the more it multiplies and grows (Exodus 1:12).

Messenger



Search the Scriptures

Rev. George Lubbers

Lesson II

The Faithful Word Worthy of Reception by Faith

I Timothy 1:12-20

We ought to keep in mind that our task is to ascertain the instruction of the Holy Spirit in this section of Holy Scripture. It is abundantly clear that Paul is addressing these words of instruction and exhortation to Timothy, Paul's faithful, true son in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit addresses these words to the church at Ephesus and

also to the church that is gathered, preserved, and defended by the Son of God through His Spirit and Word until Jesus comes upon the clouds of heaven. It is the word of Christ that resounds to all His elect from the beginning to the end of the world which Paul speaks to Timothy as Christ walks between the candlesticks in the church at Ephesus (cf. Eph. 1:1ff.).

More particularly, Paul is underscoring the great truth of the Gospel that we are saved not by the works of the Law, but by faith in Christ. This is the unchangeable truth of the Gospel, namely, that we are blessed with

all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, even as we were elected in Him from before the foundations of the world. In this way we are holy and unblamable in Christ.

In I Timothy 1:12ff. Paul, guided by the Spirit, demonstrates the great gift of the superabounding grace of God as this is evidenced in Paul's efficacious calling. And this efficacious calling happens in God's own time and manner. This was especially true for Paul the apostle who in a specific and peculiar way was God's son. God counted Paul faithful and put him into the ministry to the Gentiles. This calling to be an apostle to

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the Gentiles had happened when and how it pleased God (cf. Gal. 1:10-17).

It should be noticed that the account of Paul concerning Hymenaeus and Alexander is very practical. This account emphasizes the solemn duty of the preacher. He must not fail to preach the whole Gospel of the blessed God.

Like a golden thread on every page of Scripture we read the meaningful phrase: "to save sinners." When I look at this term "sinners" I notice that every member of God's elect church is such a sinner. The term "sinners" causes me to think of the response of one of my esteemed professors. When I requested a suggestion for a fitting text for a particular sermon he said, "Oh, George, just preach on the very simple but profound text in Luke 19:9-10, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he (Zacchaeus) also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Yes, on that day Zacchaeus, chief of the Publicans, stood there as sinner *number one*. He was a prime example of all the elect sons and daughters of Abraham, who, according to the elective grace of God, are God's heirs.

*Christ came into the world ...
and carried away
the sins of all those sinners
ordained unto life everlasting.*

A few days after this profound and life-changing statement to Zacchaeus, the Son of man would be hanged on the accursed tree. He, the Emmanuel Child, who was named "Jesus," will be hung on a cross suspended between two sinners — murderers — and to one of them, a son of Abraham, Christ uttered the well-known words, "Truly, I say to you, today thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

It is this cross-word that Paul recalls in I Timothy 1:15 when he says, "This is a faithful saying and worthy

of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Do you believe that faithful word? Do I? O, matchless grace which knows no measure! The eternal Son of God, who loved all His own, and loved them to the end, came into this fallen cosmos. Christ came into the world which had been harmonious and perfect but which was now steeped in the *sin* of the world, and He carried away the sins of all those sinners ordained unto life everlasting.

Listen to the music of the innumerable multitude in the heavenly choir — those sealed unto eternal life. Who are these in this heavenly choir standing in heaven before the throne of God and of the Lamb, clothed in white robes? Harken to these sinner-saints as they sing in one melodious fortissimo: "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb of God, who came to sanctify both heaven and earth." Hear the great *Amen* before the Throne of heaven, the thank-offering of those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (read Rev. 7:12-13). And the miracle is that all creation shall share in the glory of the redeemed saints (cf. Rom. 8:19).

Paul says that the faithful saying that is worthy of all acceptance includes him as the chief of sinners in this host of redeemed saints in the heavenly choir.

The term "sinners" is derived from a Greek word that specifies habitual and notorious sinners. Yes, they were preeminently sinful, especially wicked. Paul puts himself in the worst class of sinners, and in this class he is the *number one* sinner! If ever, it was here clearly an acceptable word that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. For Paul's record stands out as the worst. Paul does not boast or glory in his shame. He glories in grace. He glories in the deep contrition which knows only of the superabundant and matchless longsuffering of Christ. Fact is that the matchless longsuffering of Christ

toward the apostle Paul was designed by God in such a way that all future sinners who believe in Christ to everlasting life might have a divinely appointed pattern of this matchless superabounding grace of God.

Notice too that Paul writes in Romans 3:23-24 that Christ came into this world *to save sinners*. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Although all have sinned, Paul singles out all who are justified by the great gift of grace. Hence, Paul writes that all of the elect are sinners. According to the measure stated in Ephesians 1:3-14 not one of these sinners is a proper citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. When elect sinners are measured according to this standard, all fall short. The one in the numberless throng that fell farthest from the standard was Saul of Tarsus.

What are his credentials? Read these credentials recorded in verse 13. The deeds he mentions are "burning" in his sanctified conscience: "blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious." In Galatians 1:14 Paul speaks of himself as a persecutor "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

Yes, it was zealous Paul who enumerates his sins as one who has obtained mercy. He preached always as one who worshiped God with a good conscience. Before his conversion he speaks of his exceedingly zealous attitude concerning the traditions of the fathers. After his conversion he can say, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Here Paul really swears by the God of truth. He does this in a Jewish court where men knew Paul both as Jew and as one who had left Jewry.

Now Timothy is called by this same Paul to run the race, to fight the battle of faith out of a pure conscience because the end of the command was "love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." Timothy must not do as Hymenaeus and Alexander did. Both of these

were cast away, and that knowingly. They did not have a good conscience, and they had suffered shipwreck in the faith. Both were given over to a willful existence in the midst of the Synagogue of Satan (Rev. 3:9). Here is the gathering of the blasphemers. They claim to be the true sons of Abraham, but they are not; instead they are liars. Here these teachers of law can taste the ultimate of an evil conscience which has never been cleansed from dead works to serve the living God. Did these two men learn the lesson and return as penitent sinners? We are not told.

Let all the apostles, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers flee the great temptations which beset us (Heb. 12:1).

Some Suggested Questions:

1. Paul speaks of the "con-

science" six times in I and II Timothy and in Titus (I Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 4:2; II Tim 1:3; Tit. 1:3). Did you know that the term "conscience" is nowhere found in the Old Testament Scriptures? Although the word "conscience" is not used in the Old Testament how is the idea of "conscience" implied in Psalm 139:1-24?

2. The New Testament speaks of a "good" conscience in I Timothy 1:5, 19; and of a "pure" conscience in I Timothy 3:9 and II Timothy 1:3. What is a "good" and "pure" conscience?

3. It is quite obvious that the function of our conscience is "to know," and then "to know with" the all-knowing God, who knows the hearts of all men and the secrets within. The English term comes from the Latin *con-scire*. The Holland has the term *Geweten* and German

Gewissen. They are the past participle, "to have known." Deep in our memory are hid the past deeds, thoughts, and intents of our heart as judged by the law of God. Look up the term "conscience" in I Timothy 1:5, 19; Hebrews 9:21 and attempt to determine the meaning.

4. Is a good conscience part and parcel of the heavenly gift of salvation merited for us on the cross in the same sense that faith is merited for us? See Ephesians 2:4-10. Is a good conscience an infallible earmark that we have a great certainty that we will inherit salvation? How does the Heidelberg Catechism connect a "good conscience" with the reality of our being called a Christian? (Cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12, Question and Answer 32.) □

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

Family Values

Anyone who followed the recent political campaigns in America is aware of how the above topic became a sort of buzzword in them. Everyone realizes that America is in a state of moral and spiritual decadence. Such awful realities of life in America as the spiraling rate of violent crime, murders, rapes, assaults, and gang violence are indications of the tragic state our nation is in. The recent L.A. riots are symptomatic of the profound problems in our nation's cities that seem to defy all solution. It is shocking to learn how many of the inner city youths are members of gangs.

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Thousands roam the streets of our cities without a home. Young people from earliest childhood are caught up with the drug culture, prostitution, and a life of violent crime. They grow up to be hardened criminals with attitudes and values that frighten you when you hear of them. Deep-seated hatred, despair, and pessimism almost impossible to overcome are bred into people from childhood on.

Even the world today acknowledges that much of the evils of our modern-day society can be traced to the breakdown of the American home and the tragic state of family life in America. Vice-President Dan Quayle, in a speech a few months ago, suggested that America must get back to "traditional family values." He dared to criticize Hollywood for the moral rot that it produces in its soap operas

and other movies. For the duration of the campaign he was the object of the wrath of Hollywood. He was mocked and ridiculed, most often on the basis of a total misrepresentation of the words he used. Meanwhile, those who are some of the most popular people in our land are at the same time the greatest perverts of our nation's morality. Political talk about "family values" has been greatly toned down for fear of offending the voting public.

In all the talk about "family values" it has also become very evident that there is little consensus in the world about what "family values" really are. One side may say that they include such things as homes where there are two parents, husbands and wives who live faithfully with each other, and children who learn obedi-

ence to their parents and other authority and learn to love and respect their fellow human beings, and who in the home learn the value and dignity of work and of honesty and responsibility. The other side says that

*It is not at all surprising
that the world does not know
what real family values are.*

"family values" include such things as respecting the "right" of women to abort their own babies and honoring the "alternative life-style" of the homosexual, giving welfare to unwed mothers with dependent children, and supporting the cause of the career woman who wants to go out to the working place and leave her children in publicly funded daycare centers.

It is not at all surprising that the world does not know what real family values are. Anyone who reads the Bible knows what God has to say about the evil of this world. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). The fear of God is not found among the wicked men of this world. There is no regard for the law of God. This world continues to grow and develop more and more in wickedness and depravity. The Bible tells us that the wrath of God is upon this ungodly world, revealed against all its unrighteousness and ungodliness. That wrath of God is revealed in the misery and wretchedness and violence, the wickedness and despair of this world. God is not mocked by the evil of the world. He visits it with His holy and righteous judgments. This world is fast becoming ripe for the final judgment.

In this world everyone does what is right in his or her own eyes. And if there is any regard for virtues and values, those values are determined by nothing more than the prevailing opinions of men. They are ever changing to adapt to the evil life-style of the people of the world.

How urgent it is for the Christian and for the church to separate itself from the ungodliness of this world. The calling of the church and her members is to know the truth of God and to stand firm on it. The calling of the church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation from this present evil world. Christians must live in the fear of God, and by their word and example show the truth and righteousness of God in their lives.

The Bible certainly clearly teaches the importance of the family and of family values. The law of God is the absolute standard of true family values. From creation God ordained that the family should be the foundation of society and of a nation. Furthermore, according to His great purpose of salvation God is a "family God." He has made His covenant of grace with families, with believers and their children. God is pleased to continue His covenant of grace and salvation in the line of generations from fathers and mothers to the children. The history of the Old Testament makes this clear. This is no different in the New Testament age in which we live. Already on the day of Pentecost God said by His inspired apostle, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts. 2:39).

Both the Old and the New Testament are full of instruction regarding marriage and the family. The Scriptures are very plain that in God's sight the family is of greatest importance. Strong families are of great importance for the future of the church of God and the cause of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth.

"Family values" are clearly and abundantly taught in the Word of God. They never change. They are the same from age to age. They apply in every and all circumstances. They are absolutely good. The families that are founded on the principles outlined in Holy Scripture will be blessed with the grace and favor and love of God. If we by the grace of God build our families on the foundations laid

by God in His Word, those families will stand and not be destroyed.

No, this does not mean that the Christian family will not experience great trouble and misery in this ungodly world. Christians, as long as they are on this earth, are still weak and sinful and their sinfulness often gets them into trouble and sorrow. Furthermore, they are affected by the wickedness and ungodliness of this world with which they sometimes foolishly go along. Nevertheless, the Word of God stands as the absolute basis of what is good and right. Those who build their families on its principles will be strong and blessed of God.

*Without the fear of God
there can be no family values.*

Let us outline some of the "family values" that are found in the Word of God. The foremost of them is the fear of God. In one of the most significant and beautiful passages in the Bible on the family, Psalm 128, we read: "Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord; walking in His ways." Without the fear of God there can be no family values. The fear of God must be the basis and foundation of the Christian home. It must be the controlling atmosphere and spirit of the home. If we fear God we know Him as the Sovereign and Holy One, the God of righteousness and truth. We know that there is no greater evil than His wrath and judgment, and no greater good than His favor and blessing. We believe He has created and ordained all things, including also marriage and the family. He has outlined His own good and wise order for the family, and only those who abide by that order shall be blessed.

Family values begin with a truly Christian marriage. Such a marriage is based on the Word of God. This Word of God teaches that marriage is a creation ordinance of God. It is not a mere human institution. God ordained from the beginning that mar-

riage should be between one man and one woman, male and female, not two persons of the same sex. The Bible teaches that God Himself brings man and woman together in marriage, and when they are united together He says, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." The Lord commanded man and woman that they should live faithfully with each other and not forsake each other as long as they both live on earth. God commanded that they should live in communion with one another in the bond of love, each serving the other for mutual benefit. God commanded that man and woman should live in holiness, sexual purity, and faithfulness with one another in marriage and that they should not allow another man or woman to violate the covenant of their marriage.

The Lord Himself ordained that man should be the head in marriage and that woman should be the helpmeet of man. Together man and woman, each in their respective callings, are to serve the Lord. These are fixed principles for marriage that cannot be changed without creating havoc in marriage. The husband is called to rule his wife in love, caring for her, cherishing her, providing for her, and protecting her. This is a great responsibility and can be preformed by man only in the way of high regard for and love for his wife and in dependence on the grace of God. The wife in marriage is called to serve her husband. This calls for selflessness, humility, and meekness, which are in the sight of God of great price.

*Children must be raised
in a home where there is
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and the fear of God.*

God commands the godly husband and wife to bring forth children, the children of God's covenant. This is not only a great joy and blessing for

a godly couple but also a responsibility before God. Children are to be loved and cherished as the heritage of the Lord. How absolutely different this is from what we see and hear about in this wicked world, where mothers in cold blood murder their own babies before they are even born. The law of our land is so weak and corrupt that it does not even condemn and judge this great evil.

The calling of the Christian couple is not only to bring forth children but also to raise them in the fear of the Lord. This is a very serious responsibility, and one that God gives to parents before anyone else. This is not first of all the responsibility of the schools or of the state. Children must be raised in a home where there is an atmosphere of Christian love and the fear of God. Children need to be admonished and disciplined. Contrary to the prevailing philosophy of the world, our children are not born basically good. Along with their parents they have from birth a deeply sinful nature. This nature must be checked by firm and loving discipline. In the home, children need to be taught obedience to authority in the fear of the Lord. Christian virtues need to be instilled and nurtured in them. In the home, children need to be taught responsibility and their obligation to work for a living. They need to be taught to have love and respect for their fellow man.

We believe that only the truly Christian home can by the grace of God perform this great task. Parents must be an influence for good in the lives of their children, not only by word but also by the example of their own lives. Extremely important to the nurture of children is that father and mother have a loving stable relationship with one another as husband and wife. Few things will have a greater impact than this on the lives of growing and developing children.

A great "family value," a treasure little known in our age of wickedness, is the Christian mother who sacrifices herself for the care of her children and considers the nurturing of her children so important that this

must be a primary concern of her life. So important is this to her that when she is devoted to this she has neither the time nor the energy for an occupation outside the home. She has one of the greatest occupations imaginable. It is no exaggeration to say that godly mothers who devote themselves selflessly to the raising of their children will have a greater impact on society and will do more good for the cause of the church of Jesus Christ than almost anyone else.

Fathers also have a great responsibility in the family. They must lead the family and care for it as its head. This involves much more than merely being the bread winner, as important as this is. Though they usually need to have a career outside of the home, they must never fail to understand that the chief purpose of this career is to care for their wives and families in the home. They ought to be very careful about being away from the home for any longer time than is absolutely necessary. They must be ready at times to forgo honor and promotion in the world because of greater priorities and responsibilities in the home and family.

In summary, for both father and mother the great requirement is self-sacrifice. This is a supreme "family value" that is truly far more glorious than the self-seeking career woman, and the man who for the same selfish reason has no other goal in mind than making himself rich and famous in the world.

The Bible sets before us the great ideals for Christian family living. The Bible gives us the prescription for a truly happy, strong, and blessed home. We know as Christians, however, that we are far from perfect and we often fall far short of the ideals set forth in the Scriptures. In the current debate about "family values" it is argued that, since there are so many homes today that are broken by sin and are far from what is known as "traditional families," we ought to compromise the teaching of God's Word and accept so-called alternate family life-styles. We ought to honor in the same way those who live in

these alternate life-styles as those who live according to the biblical norm. Even when there has been great sin in the marital relationship or neglect in the responsibilities of bringing up children we must praise every man for his efforts and condemn no one for the way he chooses to live.

The Word of God, however, does condemn a sinful life-style. On the other hand, it promises the grace and mercy of God to those who repent of their sin. Only the power of the grace

of God can bring healing and hope where there are broken homes, and where sin has resulted in misery and wretchedness.

The Christian must have great compassion towards those who through sin and weakness have brought sorrow and misery to their marriage and home. He must show this compassion in practical deeds and concern towards those who sincerely desire to serve God. This does not, however, give us the right to

forget about God's principles for the home. God's laws for the family are good and wise. They are truly *family values*. They are of inestimable worth and precious. When we by grace seek to follow the rules which God has laid down in His Word for our families we will gain a great reward. Few things on this earth are more wonderful than a happy and stable God-fearing Christian home. □

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Authority of Broader Assemblies

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the particular synod has over the classis and the general synod over the particular

Church Order, Article 36

Background

This article concerns the authority of the broader assemblies — the authority of the broader assemblies over the consistory and the authority of the broader assemblies mutually.

The formulation of Article 36 dates as far back as the Synod of Middelburg, 1581. This same synod dealt with various questions concerning the relationship between consistories and the broader assemblies. One such question was the following:

Since it is reported that some minor assemblies sometimes decide contrary to what has been ordered in major assemblies, from which disorder and disparity of church func-

tions springs, it is asked whether it would be good that the ACTS of minor assemblies be brought to the major to be examined, such as the church minute book to the classis and the classis minute book to the particular synod? Answer: No, but in order to take care of this, when someone notices such a situation, he shall give diligence that it be improved by specific admonitions or if it does not help by authority of major assemblies.

Although the Synod of Middelburg did not go along with the suggestion that the major assemblies regularly scrutinize the minute books of the minor assemblies, two things become clear from the Synod's answer. First, the minor assemblies are bound to submit to the decisions of the major assemblies, lest there arise "disorder and disparity" in the church. And second, lack of submission by the minor assemblies to the decisions of the major assembly is not to be tolerated but dealt with "that it be improved."

In this connection, although the major assemblies do not regularly scrutinize the minute books of the

minor assemblies, something of this is done each year in the practice of church visitation (*Church Order*, Article 44). According to the decisions appended to Article 44, "The consistory shall see to it that the record books are at hand for the inspection by the visitors." One of the purposes of this inspection of the record books, particularly the consistory minute book, is to assure that consistories in the classis are submitting to the decisions of the major assemblies.

The key word in Article 36 is the word "jurisdiction." Our English word "jurisdiction" comes from two Latin words: *jus*, meaning "law," and *dicere*, which means "to speak." When one has jurisdiction in a certain area, what he says is law. Clearly, the word "jurisdiction" implies authority, real authority, authority that must be submitted to by those over whom the jurisdiction is exercised. The Dutch version of Article 36 uses the word *zeggen*: "... 't zelfde zeggen heeft de classis over de kerkraad...." *Zeggen* means "the say." Classis has "the say" over the consistory, just as the synod has "the say" over the classis. The Latin version of Article 36 uses

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the word *auctoritas*, which means "authority."

Two Dangers Guarded Against

Article 36 guards against two equally pernicious errors that threaten proper Reformed (biblical) church government.

First of all, Article 36 guards against the danger of independentism. According to this view, the broader ecclesiastical assemblies have no real, binding authority. Their decisions are merely advice that can be taken or left at the whim of the minor assemblies. Only if ratified by the minor assemblies are those decisions even to be considered valid. In fact, there need not even be broader assemblies. The existence of broader assemblies is a matter of convenience not necessity.

Plainly, Article 36 embodies the Reformed rejection of independentism. There *are* broader assemblies. The decisions taken by these broader assemblies are *binding* decisions. The major assemblies do have *jurisdiction* over the minor assemblies. Classis and synod exercise a real authority over the consistory, as well as over the individual church member. Decisions taken by the broader assemblies are law in the churches, they do settle matters of dispute, and they are to be submitted to.

That the major assemblies have real power does not at all imply that they have absolute power.

Secondly, Article 36 also is the Reformed repudiation of hierarchy; and Article 36, rightly understood and honored, is the Reformed church's protection against hierarchical usurpation.

According to the hierarchical view, the major assemblies exercise an absolute authority over the minor assemblies, authority over all aspects of the life and government of the churches of the major assembly. The

local congregation is not autonomous, that is, self-governing. The "broader" or "major" assemblies are viewed as "higher" and "superior" assemblies.

This, very plainly, is not the teaching of Article 36. That the major assemblies have *real* power does not at all imply that they have *absolute* power. At this point, we need to pay attention to the language of Article 36. Significantly, Article 36 says, "The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis." Article 36 does *not* say, "The major assemblies have the same jurisdiction over the minor assemblies as the consistory has over the congregation." There is a difference, an important, principle difference between the authority that the classis and synod have over the consistory, and the authority that the consistory has within the congregation.

The authority of the consistory is unique. In distinction from the broader assemblies, the consistory alone has authority to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and exercise Christian discipline. No other organization, not even any other ecclesiastical organization, may usurp this unique authority of the consistory. When the broader assemblies do nevertheless presume this authority, they become guilty of hierarchy.

The authority of the major assemblies over the minor has already been carefully circumscribed by Article 30 of the *Church Order*. The broader assemblies have authority only in those matters which pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common. In addition, the broader assemblies have authority to deal only with those matters that could not be finished in the minor assemblies.

The Basis for the Authority of the Broader Assemblies

The authority of the broader assemblies is based on the willing consent of the local churches that have freely joined the church federation. The authority of the broader assemblies derives from duly appointed delegates who are sent by the minor assemblies to conduct the business of

the major assemblies. From this point of view, the broader assemblies have greater authority than the individual consistory because they represent the authority of all the consistories combined for the supervision and promotion of the work of the churches in common.

Submission to classis and synod, ... is nothing less than submission to Christ.

But ultimately the authority of the broader assemblies is the authority of Christ Himself. It is true, in a certain sense, that the authority of the broader assemblies is derived from the willing consent of the individual consistories. Yet, this is not the whole truth, nor even the most crucial truth when it comes to the authority of the broader assemblies. For at bottom the authority exercised by the broader assemblies is authority derived from the exalted Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the only Head and King of the church. To Christ has been given all authority, especially all authority in the church. Christ exercises that authority not only through the local consistory, but also through classis and synod. Submission to classis and synod, whether by the local consistory or the individual church member, is nothing less than submission to Christ.

Biblical Support for the Binding Authority of Broader Assemblies

The Scriptures themselves teach this binding authority of the broader assemblies and of the churches in common.

This is certainly the precedent set by the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. Here the local congregation at Antioch appealed to the broader assembly of the apostles and elders gathered at Jerusalem a matter that could not be finished at the local level. The question brought before the Jerusalem Council was clearly a matter that

concerned the churches in common. The decisions arrived at by the Council were considered settled and binding, "necessary things" (v. 28). These decisions were reported to the churches by the apostles as the "decrees ... that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem," and that the members were "to keep" (Acts 16:4).

There are also numerous examples in the New Testament Scriptures of the churches laboring together in matters that concerned the churches in common. The churches cooperated in the relief of the poor: "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:26). From the

beginning there was cooperation in the training of young men for the gospel ministry: "And we have sent with him the brother (Titus), whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind" (II Cor. 8:18, 19).

It is also abundantly plain from Scripture that the autonomy of the local congregation did not mean that each church could go its own way or do its own thing irrespective of the other churches. There was an authority that bound the churches to a common faith, a common way of life, a

common worship, and a common government. When Paul gives instruction to the Corinthians congregation concerning marriage matters, he says, "And so ordain I in *all* churches" (I Cor. 7:7). The apostle's instructions in I Timothy for proper behavior in the church, the house of God, apply not just to Timothy and the Ephesian congregation, but to every church and house of God. His instructions for godly behavior in the home apply not just to Corinth, but to all the churches (I Cor. 11:16). The apostolic regulations for worship are not just local regulations, but regulations for the worship of God that are to be carried out in every congregation (I Cor. 14:33; 16:1). □

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Thomas Cranmer: Sinning Reformer

Introduction

God uses many different kinds of men in the work of the church. The differences are not only those of cultural background, abilities and gifts, personality and character; they are also differences in spiritual strength and weakness. Some of God's servants are of such noble moral character that one stands amazed at the power of grace in their lives. Some are very weak, to the point that they seem wholly unfitted for the work of the church. Some are Samuels and Gideons; others are Samsons and Jonahs. Some are Calvins and Luthers; others are Melancthons and Bucers.

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Thomas Cranmer must be placed with the latter. There are so many blots on his life that one almost hesitates to include him in a "cloud of witnesses." But the place he occupied in the Reformation was important, and his martyr's death is a tribute to a humble faith which inspires many people of God who are weak as he was.

Cranmer's Early Life

Already Cranmer's early life gave evidence of his genius. Born on July 2, 1489, he soon entered Jesus College, Cambridge and excelled in his studies. He mastered Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French, German, and Italian, and showed remarkable promise in theology. He was thoroughly acquainted with the ancient church fathers and the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages. At 21 years old he became a fellow at Cambridge, but

forfeited his fellowship by an early marriage. His wife, however, died within a year and his fellowship was restored. Of her nothing is known.

Two things happened in the course of his studies and teaching at Cambridge: Through his study of theology and his acquaintance with the writings of Martin Luther, he became persuaded of the truth of justification by faith alone. And through his work in the field of church history, he became convinced that the pope was not the head of the church. On these two pillars was to rest much of his reformational work.

Cranmer's Weaknesses

Perhaps Cranmer's weaknesses can best be described as a certain lack of firmness and an unwillingness to stand for principle when the price that had to be paid was high. This

weakness was to plague him to the end of his life.

It appeared first of all in his participation in and approval of the adulteries of Henry VIII.

In an earlier article we discussed Henry VIII's desire to free himself from his marriage to Catherine of Aragon because she failed to provide him with a male heir to the throne; and his lust for Anne Boleyn, a lady of the palace. Henry would easily have divorced Catherine and made short work of her, if it had not been for the fact that the pope not only disapproved, but threatened Henry with all sorts of terrible things should Henry follow his lusts.

It was into this sordid affair that Cranmer was drawn. In the course of a rather casual conversation Cranmer expressed his opinion to two of the king's advisors that Henry's marriage to Catherine could easily be proved to be illegitimate. Cranmer's reason was that Catherine had been the wife of Henry VIII's brother, and that Leviticus 20:21 forbade the marriage in which Henry now found himself.

The views of Cranmer were quickly brought to Henry. In his pleasure, Henry appointed Cranmer to the position of chaplain to the king and sent Cranmer with a delegation to Italy to try to persuade Pope Clement of this idea. Clement was adamant and flatly refused to approve the divorce, and Henry was no further ahead in his plans.

It is an interesting parenthesis in this part of Cranmer's life that, on his way back to England from Italy, he stopped in Germany to confer with the Lutheran theologians. Two results followed from these meetings. Cranmer was more carefully and thoroughly instructed in the doctrines of Luther, and Cranmer married the niece of Osiander, Lutheran pastor of Nuremberg — even though clerical marriage was forbidden by the church.

Upon Cranmer's return, he was appointed to the highest post in the church of England, Archbishop of Canterbury. From this position of power, Cranmer engineered Henry's divorce and remarriage. On May 23,

1533 he declared Henry's marriage to Catherine void; and five days later Cranmer married Henry and Anne Boleyn in a public ceremony.¹

Cranmer's participation in these sordid events did not cease. Cranmer declared Henry's marriage to Anne void when, after only three short years, Henry wearied of her. And, if only by his silence, Cranmer approved also of Henry's cruel beheading of Anne. In the course of Henry's marital sins, Cranmer also had a hand in Henry's divorce of Anne of Cleves and in the execution of yet another wife, Catherine Howard.

It is impossible to justify all these activities of Cranmer, and there is no need for us to do that; but the same weakness of character showed itself in other ways.

Because the threats of the pope thundered all the way across Europe and threatened Henry with excommunication and the lowest place in hell, Henry rescued himself by declaring that the pope was not the head of the church, but that the king of England (namely himself) was head. Cranmer had come to this conclusion independently and assisted Henry in passing the necessary laws and decisions to make it effective. From a practical point of view, this meant that no money was henceforth to leave England for Rome without royal approval. The entire church was now under Henry's rule to do in the church as he pleased. And one of the things which he pleased was to shut down and raid the monasteries so that he could make himself heir of their enormous wealth.

We must bear in mind, however, that the reformational work in England was ambiguous and complicated. Henry wanted a church free from papal control, but he did not want a Protestant church; he was completely committed to Roman Catholi-

cism. But many, including Cranmer, were pressing for reform. When the two were put together, reform gradually made progress in spite of the king, but it was a reform wholly different from the reformation on the continent. In the reformations in Germany and Switzerland, the church was established by separation from the Roman Catholic Church. In England reformation came about by changing the Roman Catholic Church into a Protestant denomination. This was no small task, and the efforts were never wholly successful. Especially in liturgy and church polity the church of England remained basically Roman Catholic — as does the Anglican Church to this day.

Though strongly in favor of reform, Cranmer was hesitant and slow in pressing for needed change. When action was required, he shrank back. When Henry insisted on the mass and transubstantiation, other Reformers in England resigned their posts in protest, but not Cranmer. Even Calvin, in a couple of letters to Cranmer, protested Cranmer's sloth in bringing about needed reform.² Undoubtedly Cranmer was interested in making the Romish Church a Protestant church, and he sacrificed too much to attain that goal. Part of his problem was his respect for tradition: he was willing to settle for a reformed Roman Catholic Church because he was of the opinion that the church had gone wrong in about the 12th century, when, in fact, the evils of the Roman Church began much earlier.

And, perhaps worst of all, Cranmer showed his weakness when he was imprisoned under Bloody Mary, and signed documents in which he recanted his Protestant position and begged forgiveness from the Romish Church and from the pope.

¹ I say "public" because Henry could not wait to satisfy his lust and had secretly married Anne about five months earlier.

² See Calvin's letters of April, 1552 and August 10, 1552. *Letters of John Calvin*, Vol. II, ed. by Dr. Jules Bonnet; (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972).

Cranmer's Strength

But we have recounted only one side of Cranmer's character and life.

Though Cranmer's efforts towards reform never went quite far enough and were never pushed with quite enough zeal (especially when the going became difficult), what he did in the work of reform was no small thing. He helped King Henry sever relations between England and Rome, making reform possible. Though Tyndale died for translating the Bible and making it available in England, only a few short years later Cranmer had the Bible distributed in all the land and made it available in every parish church.

Though Cranmer remained content with an episcopal and Erastian form of church government in which the king was the head, he at least delivered the church from the worst of Rome's abuses. He made plans for the training of an effective and educated ministry to take the place of stupid, superstitious Roman prelates, and put some of his plans into action. He attempted to compromise on matters of liturgy but was instrumental in producing the English Book of Common Prayer. Though it is written for the heavy and highly liturgical worship of the Anglican Church and is, therefore, unacceptable to those who hold to Reformed principles of worship, anyone who wishes to learn the art of prayer can learn much from reading these liturgically beautiful, doctrinally sound, and biblical prayers. Some are rather curious, and we quote a couple of the more curious to give our readers a taste of them.³

For Rain

O God heavenly father, which by thy son Jesus Christ, hast promised to all

them that seek thy kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, all things necessary to the bodily sustenance: send us (we beseech thee) in this our necessity, such moderate rain and showers, that we may receive the fruits of the earth, to our comfort and to thy honor: through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For Fair Weather

O Lord God, which for the sin of man didst once drown all the world, except eight persons, and afterward of thy great mercy, didst promise never to destroy it so again: we humbly beseech thee, that although we for our iniquities have worthily deserved this plague of rain and waters, yet upon our true repentance, thou wilt send us such wealth whereby we may receive the fruits of the earth in due season, and learn both by thy punishment to amend our lives, and by the granting of our petition, to give thee praise and glory: through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁴

In the area of doctrine Cranmer agreed with the continental Reformers, particularly with Calvin. In his letters to Cranmer, Calvin did not scold Cranmer for holding to erroneous doctrines; his quarrel with Cranmer was the slowness with which Cranmer pressed for reformation in the church. Cranmer held to the Reformed view of the Lord's Supper, ordered that both the bread and wine be dispensed (Rome forbade the dispensing of wine), and was instrumental in the formulation of the 42 articles (later to become the Thirty-Nine Articles, the official confession of the Anglican Church). It was a truly Reformed Confession in its doctrinal parts.

Cranmer took Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr, and other Reformers from the continent into his home and

confidence and helped some of them to secure teaching positions in the church. He had much correspondence with Calvin, Melancthon, and other continental Reformers who, without exception, showed him respect.

Cranmer's Death

Cranmer's death showed the true character of his faith.

While Cranmer labored for reform with some hesitation during the time of Henry VIII, he worked with great boldness during the time of Edward VI. His work was brought to an end during the reign of bloody Mary.

In 1553 he, along with Latimer and Ridley, was consigned to the tower of London for his views. There enormous pressures were put on him to recant. For a long time he held firm. During a debate over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, he wrote: "From this your judgment and sentence I appeal to the just judgment of the Almighty, trusting to be present with him in heaven, for whose presence in the altar I am thus condemned." But, as we already said, he finally caved under the pressures and recanted in 1554. Because of his high position, he was sentenced to death in spite of his recantation.

Death came in 1556. He was expected by the authorities to read a public statement of his recantation. Imagine then, the surprise of his murderers when instead of publicly recanting he made public confession of his sin of recanting: "Now I come to the great thing that troubleth my conscience more than any other writings contrary to the truth which I thought in my heart, and writ for fear of death, and to save my life, if it might be; and that is all such bills which I have written or signed with mine own hand since my degradation, wherein I have written many things untrue. And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing contrary to my heart, therefore my hand shall first be punished, for, if I may come to the fire, it shall be first burned. And as for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy and

³ Both are taken from the Second Prayer Book of King Edward VI. The Book of Common Prayer underwent several revisions, but the basic work remains that of Cranmer.

⁴ The spelling is modernized. It is also from the Prayer Book that we get such common expressions as: those things which we should have done, but did not do, and those things which we have done which we should not have done.

Antichrist, with all his false doctrine."

True to his word, when he was brought to the stake, he put his right hand in the fire first. And, as he was burning, he held up his right hand and said: "This unworthy hand! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

It was his finest hour.

Powerful in the realm and in the

church, holding the highest ecclesiastical office in the world under the pope; weak and vacillating when he should have been strong, altogether too much inclined to curry the favor of the crown rather than the favor of Christ; he nevertheless left a legacy which has been received by the church for centuries. Though later Puritans

were to break with the Anglican Church over matters of church polity and liturgy, they too acknowledged gratefully what Cranmer had done for the church in England — even though they were sure he had not gone far enough. And his noble death sealed his witness to the truth insofar as it had been faithful. □

Book Review

An Introduction to the New Testament, by D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, & Leon Morris; Zondervan Publishing House, 1992; 537pp., \$24.95 (hard cover). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Books on "Introduction" deal with background material on Scripture. Usually they deal with the individual books of the Bible. A good book on "Introduction" will examine the question of the authorship of an individual Bible book; it will try to discover when the book was written; it will examine the question of the addressee of a book, i.e., to whom a book was addressed; it will attempt to learn the purpose for the writing of a book; and it will discuss in a brief way the contents of a book.

This investigation is done because of the character of the Bible. The books of the Bible were written at different times in the history of the nation of Israel. They were written under different circumstances. They were written for different historical purposes (Galatians was written to combat the heresy of the Judaizers in the churches of Eastern Asia Minor). The reason why these questions are important is that the meaning which the book had at the time of its writing is still the meaning today; we believe that the Bible speaks to the church of all ages.

God's Word is a marvelous book, inspired by Him and given to the church. But that Bible was written in such a way that God inspired certain men to write certain parts, for specific purposes, and as addresses to spe-

cific churches or people. The Bible has a historical aspect to it, which historical aspect is important to know to gain understanding of it. Books on "Introduction" attempt to serve this historical purpose.

This book is in the tradition of many books on "Introduction" and takes a new and fresh look at the questions which books on "Introduction" ask. It does, however, add some new questions which are not usually found in books on "Introduction." With each book it has a section on "Text," in which section the authors discuss the various readings of the Greek manuscripts of the book; and a section on "The Book in Recent Studies," in which section inquiry is made into mostly critical studies of the book by contemporary scholars.

The authors who collaborated on writing the book belong to the evangelical world of scholarship, and have written extensively on many different aspects of New Testament studies. The troublesome aspect of the book (and of nearly all contemporary evangelical scholarship) is a sell-out to modern higher critical methods. These authors, too, adopt without apology modern literary and historical criticism, including source criticism, redaction criticism, etc. This becomes especially clear in their treatment of the so-called synoptic problem; that is, the problem of the similarities and dissimilarities in the first three gospel narratives. One marvels at the fact that nearly all evangelical scholarship and nearly all evangelical scholars rush madly after the gods of higher critical studies.

The result of their commitment to such higher critical studies is a nearly exclusive emphasis on Scripture as a human book. One looks in vain for references to the inspiration of Scripture, the divine authorship of the Bible, and the purpose of the Holy Spirit in giving the Bible to the church. These questions are simply not answered, and the whole Bible is dealt with as one would deal with most other human writing from ancient times.

This all makes a difference. I am not saying that the historical background of the various books of the Bible is not important. Indeed it is. It is difficult to imagine how anyone can read and study II Timothy without being concerned about the questions of who wrote the book, why was it written, to whom was it written, etc. But when books never get beyond these questions, the whole point of Scripture is overlooked or dismissed. God wrote II Timothy, something which II Timothy itself claims for itself and for the whole Bible (3:16). And the important questions ought to revolve around this divine authorship. It is legitimate to ask: Why did Paul write Ephesians? But this ought never to be allowed to push aside the question: Why did God use Paul to write this letter to the church at Ephesus? And what is God's purpose in having the book written to be a part of Scripture?

The point is important, for, as far as I am concerned (and this is my whole purpose in teaching a course on "Introduction" in the Seminary), the crucial question in Introduction is

the question concerning the canonical significance of a book. What is its canonical significance? Well, that question presupposes the fact that the Scriptures, taken in their entirety, are an organic whole, given by God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for the church of all ages, as the revelation of Jehovah God in Jesus Christ as the God who saves His people.

To ask, then, concerning the canonical significance of a book is to ask what place an individual book occupies in the canon according to the purpose of God. To answer this question, it may be necessary to ask other questions concerning date, authorship, addressee, etc., but the answers are not absolutely crucial, for in many

instances the answers cannot be discovered. What is God's purpose in the book? That is the crucial question.

Then, the question becomes: How does this individual book stand related to the other books in Scripture as a part of the whole organism of Scripture? What unique place does this particular book occupy in the canon? How does this book, in its own unique way, serve to complete the perfect portrait of Christ, the Son of God, our Savior? What purpose in the unity of the whole does Philemon serve as in God's mind this book too reveals God in Christ as the God who saves His church?

These are the questions which are so seldom treated in "Introduction," or, as in the case with the present

book, are only occasionally hinted at, and then from the viewpoint of the human authorship of various books of the New Testament.

Yet I strongly recommend the book to all who are interested in questions of "Introduction." There is a wealth of material in the book. It gives much information on the current state of Bible studies. It is of immense help in understanding the background of the New Testament books. It will be of great value to anyone who makes a particular New Testament book the object of his study. Especially ministers ought to have the book if they are preparing a series of sermons on some New Testament Scripture. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Ministerial Calls

We begin this first installment of the "News" for the year with word that Rev. R. Hanko, who for the past seven years has served as pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, has accepted the call extended to him from the Hudsonville, MI PRC to serve as missionary-pastor to the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland.

This will be no small undertaking for Rev. Hanko, his wife, and their eight children. Let us remember them, as well as the congregation in Trinity, in our prayers.

Mission Activities

Rev. G. VanBaren, in his most recent letter to his congregation in Hudsonville, MI writes that "We are especially thinking at this time of the Thanksgiving celebration and the coming Christmas and New Year

period which follows. In the Fellowship here there are no special days in which church services are held As a church, we have been provided with much. Over here there are not all of the church and school activities to which we have become so familiar. We have missed these."

Young People Activities

The congregations of the Hull, IA PRC and the Edgerton, MN PRC were invited to join that of Doon, IA PRC in their auditorium on Sunday evening, November 29, for what has become the annual Fall Young People's Singspiration. The theme, as you might expect, was connected with Thanksgiving Day. All three of the YP Societies were also planning to give special numbers.

The YP Societies of the West Michigan area were invited to First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI on Sunday afternoon, November 29, for their annual YP Thanksgiving Mass Meeting. Rev. M. Joostens spoke on the theme "Anatomy of Thankfulness," basing his remarks on Ephesians 1.

The young people of the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada have just recently organized

themselves into our churches' newest YP Society. Their first meeting took place on December 6, and their first Bible discussion was the study of the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5. They also discussed "Keeping the Sabbath," for after recess.

The Senior YP Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC asked their congregation if they needed a break, had shopping to get done, or just needed to get away for the day with no children. On Saturday, December 5, the congregation was invited to drop off their children at church anywhere from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The young people babysat all day. Activities were planned, including lunch, which promised to keep the babies, toddlers, and older children busy all day.

School Activities

The school society of the Loveland Christian School in Loveland, CO approved the concept of a new school addition, including two new classrooms and a gymnasium. It was also reported that significant contributions have been received towards a gymnasium from individuals outside of the Loveland PRC congregation.

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Congregational Highlights

Rev. A. Spriensma was installed as the second pastor in the eight-year history of the Grandville, MI PRC on November 20. Two days later, on Sunday, November 22, Rev. Spriensma preached his first sermon as Grandville's new pastor. Reading from Ephesians 6 and choosing as his text verses 18 and 19, he entitled his sermon *Pray for Me*. That is something we all could do more of for our own pastors.

The Adult Bible Study of Grandville invited Rev. C. Hanko to speak to them concerning the 1953 split in our churches. He spoke on the evening of November 17.

The Men's Society of the Loveland, CO PRC sponsored a program after their evening service on December 6. Mr. Don Windemuller presented a slide program on the "State of the Hungarian Reformed Church." Mr. Windemuller accompanied Rev. Woudenberg in June of 1990 on a trip to Hungary and Romania shortly after the collapse of Communism.

An adult night of fun and fellowship was held in the Pella, IA PRC on the evening of November 13. Along with games and refreshments, there was also a ping-pong tournament.

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA has established an on-going project to upgrade and

expand their church library. Recently more shelves were added, which indicates more books.

Already they have a very valuable complete set of bound volumes of the *Standard Bearer*. The most important thing in the coming months, however, is that this library (as well as our other church and school libraries) gets used.

Food For Thought

Woe be to the people where the pulpit gives no utterance to the deep things of God; they will grow lean from want of nourishment, and sad from lack of comfort.

C.H. Spurgeon,
Sermons on Sovereignty □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Perry and Charlene VanEgdom in the death of their mother and mother-in-law,

MRS. JEANETTE VAN EGDOM, whom the Lord called Home on November 19, 1992.

May the bereaved be comforted by the words of Isaiah: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13).

Rev. Russell Dykstra, President
Brenda Regnerus, Secretary

NEW BOOK

Commentary on the book of Ruth
A Divinely Chosen Moabitess

by Rev. John A. Heys
can be purchased only at the
Reformed Book Outlet
3505 Kelly
Hudsonville, MI 49426
for \$5.00 (net) plus postage

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to the VanEgdom family in the loss of their loved one,

MRS. JEANETTE VAN EGDOM.
"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Pastor R. Dykstra, President
Grace VanDenTop, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Doon Men's Society express heartfelt sympathy to Ed and Perry VanEgdom in the loss of their wife and mother respectively,

MRS. JEANETTE VAN EGDOM.
May the family find comfort with our Lord's words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 15:27).

Chester Hunter, Jr., President
David Wiersma, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who prefer hearing the *S.B.* to reading it. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

REMINDER

Announcements (accompanied by payment) should be sent to the *Business Office* (see masthead for address) at least one month before publication date.