

# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

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Are you walking  
in the will of God?  
Are you filled  
with the Spirit of God?  
Test yourself.  
Are you addicted  
to the ministry of the saints?  
What place do your fellow saints  
have in all your plans,  
activities, and ambitions?

See, "Addicted to the Ministry of the Saints" — p. 300

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In This Issue...

Communication from readers has again provided delightful variety to the *Standard Bearer*. Head-coverings for women in church. Tongue-speaking. Rebaptism. How would such subjects find their way into the *SB* outside of "The Reader Asks"? We hope you'll find the treatment of them in this issue interesting, and that it will be a stimulus for more questions to come. Only one qualification: because of time or space constraints we are not always able to write or print responses to questions of readers as soon as we would like. So — do ask ... but be patient.

We're pleased also to have in this issue a Guest Article, provided by an Indian Singaporean, now pastor-elect of Trinity PRC in Houston, TX. By the time this issue appears in print, Rev. Mahtani will very likely be in the U.S., working hard to prepare for his April 14 Classical exam in Randolph. But at the time of this writing he is wrapping up his labors as a counselor in the Helping Hand, a Christian rehabilitation center for former drug-addicts in Singapore. His Guest Article is in fact the shortened version of a chapel speech which he gave there recently, impressing on the minds of his hearers that real rehabilitation involves for them not simple a conquering of the old, sinful addiction, but the acquiring of a *new* one. Addicted they must be ... but to something *else*. As must we all. Read, in this issue, "Addicted to the Ministry of the Saints."

D.D.



# A Prayer for Divine Searching

*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.

What an awesome request of David is here presented to the almighty, everywhere present God!

The question arises: How can such a prayer be uttered by one who knows that all men are fallen into sin by Adam and therefore deserve everlasting punishment in hell? Still more, David had stated in the very beginning of this Psalm that God had searched him and known him. In fact, he says that God knew his down-sitting and uprising; that He had beset him behind and before; and that such knowledge is too wonderful for him. He states that he is aware of the fact that he cannot flee from God's presence.

Does not David's prayer here in verses 23 and 24 stand in great opposition then to what he presented in the first verses of this Psalm? Was he not

adding to his sins by praying that God would "see if there be any wicked way" in him?

No, a thousand times *no*! As a born-again child of God David presents a very necessary and beautiful prayer. He is not praying that God would search him and know his heart in the sense of trying to find out whether he had sinned. In light of how he began this Psalm, we see that David is here praying that God will "lead (him) in the way everlasting." If he indeed thought that he had no sin, and that God did not know all the sin which he committed, he would not need to pray that God would lead him in the way everlasting. Not only would he have the right to everlasting life as far as he himself was concerned, but he would not need to pray to be led in the way everlasting. Notice that! If David had in fact never sinned, he would be in the same condition and state as that of the holy angels who need no salvation. But David confesses that he must be led in the way everlasting.

What is more, in verse 15 David wrote, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." And then, in the next verse, this is what he affirmed: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect." David thus confesses the fact that his substance is not perfect. It would seem, then, as though he is now mistaken by praying that God will "see if there be any wicked way" in him.

Now, that God was gracious to David means that David was fully

aware of his sinful life and nature. For grace always gives a gift that one did not earn and deserve because of what he had done.

Why then does David pray to God that He search him to know his thoughts, and see if there were any wicked way in him?

The reason for this is that every believing child of God prays because he has been born again, and he desires that God will reveal to him (not to Himself) the sin of which he is not aware, has forgotten, or has sinfully been trying to continue and to maintain.

Recall what Simon Peter did three times. He boldly denied Christ and his connection with Christ, when He was being tried before the high priest. And when Jesus turned and looked at him, Peter went out and wept bitterly. That, in a sense, is what David also means when he prays that God search his heart, know his thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in him.

Every child of God, whether he reads these words or wrote them, is so correctly characterized by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day XLIV. There we are taught that "even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience." To that truth we should hold on tightly; and with David we all should pray what David prayed in the text wherewith this "Meditation" begins. We all with David must pray to our God: "See if there be any wicked works that I have covered, that I defend before my neighbor and call good works." That is what David

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



means here in this last verse in Psalm 139.

Let us bear in mind and hold on tightly to that truth presented by our God to Adam. One sin is enough to bring us into hellish torment. One sin causes us to die spiritually, even as Adam and Eve died spiritually that day when they ate the forbidden fruit. And when God came to them they showed their spiritual death, which had come upon them through that one sin! They did not fall down before Him and confess sin. Adam blamed Eve, but did not even ask for forgiveness. They had begun to try to run away from God, and thereby revealed their spiritual death. Likewise every sin in us today calls for everlasting punishment. How many sins we commit reveals how far down in hell we deserve to be sent. But, as David here reveals, we must know *every* sin; and know that we are saved by grace, and are led into "life everlasting" because of that grace of God.

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*Our extolling of God  
would not be as rich  
as it should be,  
if we did not  
see all of our sins.*

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We ought also to take hold of that truth presented in II Corinthians 5:10, namely, that we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that we will know all of our sins, and in that way appreciate the salvation God's grace has realized for us. But we must also know our good works which God enabled us to perform, and at that judgment seat reveals to us, so that we are fully thankful, and with all our hearts can and will extol Him for what *He* did, not what *we* did. Our extolling of God would not be as rich as it should be, if we did not see all of our sins. For then we would not fully see God's grace.

We live today in a godless age. Today, even in the church world, more and more sins are not only committed but defended. Think also of the awe-

some fact that the church world is full of different kinds of churches, churches with different ideas about what God considers good, and what He calls sin and false doctrines. And let us bear in mind that *only one* doctrine is correct, not the one in this church and also the different one in that church. False doctrine is a sin, and it must be denied and opposed. So very necessary and important is David's prayer here that God search our hearts and our thoughts, and make us see what He reveals in His Word as the truth, and what He demands of us as a walk of love toward Him.

Suppose that you leave the eastern coast of our land, because you want to sail to a specific city on the west coast of Europe. And then, because your compass is not working correctly, you miss the city you want to reach, the city in which you had hoped to have joyous fellowship with loved ones. So, indeed, does false doctrine steer a church away from the Kingdom of Heaven. For that reason, too, our prayer must be the one David presents in the above text.

The all-important question is whether David's prayer is our prayer. Do we want our God to show us what sinful thoughts we have, thoughts which we consider pure and holy? Do we call Christian that which actually is antichristian? Do we, in this day and age in which sin is developing as swiftly in the church world as it is in the world of unbelievers, show by our actions that we think that David was all wrong when he asked God to lead him in the way everlasting by showing him those wicked ways in which his flesh was causing him to walk? And how many times today, this week, this month, this year did we with David pray that God lead us in the way everlasting by a walk that reveals that we have been born again, that we are children of God, and that we hate the sins in which we find ourselves walking? Do we really want to be led in the way everlasting?

Once more, let us bear in mind what God revealed at the very beginning of history. He told Adam that *one* sin, namely eating a piece of the

forbidden fruit, would bring death upon him. By *one* sin man deserves to go into hell. To deny that truth is to add the sin of calling God a liar, even as Satan did to Eve. Every sin denies that God is God! That is what Adam and Eve did. For we read that, after their first sin, God came and asked Adam, "Where art thou?" And Adam's answer was not, "I am guilty. I have sinned." Instead he pointed to Eve's sin. And when God approached Eve and asked her, "What is this that thou hast done?" she expressed absolutely no sorrow for her sin. She accused the serpent of beguiling her. Let us take a firm hold on the truth that to defend sin adds to it, and deserves greater punishment in hell!

How needful then is this prayer of David that our God search us and reveal to us our sins, so that we can confess them and truly be sorry for them. We must — and in the judgment day will — see *all* of our sins, even as we read of this in II Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." In that judgment day God will in His grace work thankfulness in our souls by revealing how guilty we are in ourselves, and what a work of His grace it is that He sent His Son to hellish agony to blot out our guilt. We need that appearance before the judgment seat to see fully the saving grace of our God.

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*... to defend sin adds to it,  
and deserves  
greater punishment in hell!*

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Let us not find joy in our sins. Let us with David pray that God in this life already reveal our sins, and thereby work in us gratitude for the salvation which He gives us through His Son. Our prayer for divine searching and revealing will by God's grace work in us everlasting thankfulness for that gift of salvation. □



It is not uncommon that churches, groups, and other magazines make special use of articles that appear in *The Standard Bearer*. This pleases us. Our witness to the Reformed faith and life gets wider distribution. We do ask, as appears on the masthead, that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Recently, the Evangelism Society of the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand made up a book of "Daily Devotions" from *SB* meditations. The society divided the meditations into short sections for daily reading. The result is an attractive, useful booklet. Those who might be interested in obtaining a copy should write

The Evangelism Society  
c/o Mr. Kevin Inskeep  
Main Road, R.D.  
Otaki, New Zealand.

The Hope Reformed Church of Pierre, SD has reprinted two articles by Rev. Arie den Hartog as pamphlets. They are "Family Values" and "The Christian and Sickness." Those who might like to have a copy of these reprints in pamphlet form should

write the Hope Reformed Church,  
317 S. Garfield  
Pierre, SD 57501.

The first issue of the *British Reformed Journal (BRJ)*, published by Reformed and Presbyterian Christians in the British Isles, includes an article by Rev. Ronald VanOverloop originally published in the *SB* in his rubric on missions. The editor of the *Journal* informs me that he intends to run the entire series as it appears in installments in the *SB*.

The *BRJ* is the publication of the British Reformed Fellowship. According to their own statement, this Fellowship is "a group of Christians concerned for the defence and propagation of the historic Reformed Faith in the British Isles." Their doctrinal basis is the "Three Forms of Unity" and the Westminster Standards. The objectives of the Fellowship are the following:

- (a) To promote a knowledge of the Reformed Faith in the British Isles, as defined in the Doctrinal Basis.
- (b) To organize meetings, conferences, preaching services and other activities in order to further the Reformed Faith and to give practical expression to the unity enjoyed by Christians of Reformed persuasion.
- (c) To encourage the formation of groups in different areas of the coun-

try who will seek to promote the Reformed Faith on a local level.

This Fellowship sponsored the conference on the covenant in Northern Ireland last year at which Professors Hanko and Engelsma spoke. They are presently planning a similar conference that is to be held in Scotland in 1994, the Lord willing.

As a means to accomplish their objectives, the Fellowship has begun publishing their *Journal*. It is to appear quarterly. The first, 40-page issue (January-March 1993) contains a number of worthwhile articles, including an introduction to the magazine by Rev. Gise VanBaren; "Distinctives of the Reformed Faith" by James North; "Personal Reflections on the Reformed Faith" by Editor Tony Horne; an introduction of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland by John Clarke; the article by Rev. VanOverloop mentioned above; and others. The subscription price in the British Isles is four pounds a year. Those who like to request a sample copy or who desire to subscribe should write the

*British Reformed Journal*  
9 Church Road  
Thornbury, Bristol BS12 1EJ  
England. □

— DJE

## Editorials

# Seeking a Symbol

The *Standard Bearer* is seeking a symbol.

We are looking for a design that can be incorporated into or joined with the name of our magazine on the cover. This design would come to identify the *SB*.

The emblem should be simple. It should be appropriate, indicating in picture form what the *SB* stands for.

What comes to mind at once is a device featuring the standard bearer of an army. Another possibility is a

design that represents pictorially a certain aspect of the Reformed faith that the *SB* exists to defend and promote.

Examples of the kind of thing we are after include the tulip as symbol of Calvinism and the burning bush that



serves as the ecclesiastical symbol of some Presbyterian churches.

The uses of such a symbol are several. It would enhance the appearance of the *SB* artistically. It would serve well in advertising the *SB* in other magazines, a venture we are engaged in with promising results. We would use the symbol on the letterhead of *SB* stationery. We would propose the use of it on the books published by the RFPA. It is possible that a symbol might be designed which could also function as the official symbol of the Protestant Reformed Churches, synod being agreeable.

We ask your help in finding this symbol.

Those with artistic ability can send us a drawing or sketch of the symbol they propose.

Others might want to send us the description of their suggestion in words. We are able to obtain the services of a professional designer to draw your verbal description.

Send your suggestion in one form or another to the *SB*,

c/o the Business Manager

P.O. Box 603

Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

In order that we can present our recommendation or recommendations to the annual meeting of the staff of the *SB* in June of this year, we ask that you submit your proposed symbol by May 15, 1993.

The one whose suggestion is adopted as the symbol of the *SB* will receive recognition in the magazine, with his or her design, and a five-year gift subscription to the magazine.

The *SB* is now seeking a symbol.

Do you have an idea? ■

— DJE

## An Important Book for the PRC

The Reformed Free Publishing Association has recently published a book of no little importance to the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). It is *A Watered Garden: A Brief History of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America*. The author is Gertrude Hoeksema. The book is attractively illustrated by Jeff Steenholdt.

The title, taken from Isaiah 58:11, lays stress on the church as a living body. The author uses the figure of the garden as the device that unites the various periods of the history of the PRC.

The importance of the book to the PRC is exactly that it is a history of these Churches. It will instruct the members themselves of the PRC, especially the coming generations, how to think about the Churches. It will form the opinion that many outside the Churches have of the PRC and what they stand for.

*A Watered Garden* will serve the PRC well in every way.

It is a popular history. Mrs. Hoeksema has written for the people, not for the professional historian. Nevertheless, she is thorough and accurate. The brief opening section

finds the roots of the PRC in the 16th century Reformation and in the reforming movements in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands in the 1800s. It also traces the origins of the PRC in the emigration to the United States of Dutch Reformed families in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This section makes plain that the PRC are confessionally Reformed, founded on "The Three Forms of Unity."

The lengthy second section is the account of the beginning of the PRC as a separate denomination of churches in 1924 in the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church over common grace.

Section Three treats of the establishment and growth of the PRC in the years following 1924.

Another long section deals with the events of the schism in the PRC in 1953.

The last section is the history of the PRC from 1960 to the present. The author presents this history in three chapters, entitled "The Awakening of the Sixties"; "The Outreach of the Seventies"; and "The Development of the Eighties."

Rightly, the book devotes special attention to the history of 1924

concerning the founding of the denomination (chapters 3-7). The doctrinal issues are clearly spelled out. Those outside the Churches who like to understand the PR position against common grace and for particular grace will do well to read chapter 5. In light of the subsequent history of the CRC, the "Testimony" of the CRC Synod of 1924 that adopted the doctrine of common grace is telling (pp. 58, 59). Intended as a warning against the misuse of common grace, it was in fact a chilling prophecy of the effects of common grace upon the CRC under the judgment of God.

Now (that) synod (has) expressed itself ... on three points that were at stake in the denial of Common Grace and thereby condemned the entire disregard for this doctrine, she feels constrained at the same time to warn our Churches and especially our leaders earnestly against all one-sided emphasis on and misuse of the doctrine of Common Grace. It cannot be denied that there exists a real danger in this respect ... it cannot be denied that our present danger lies more in the direction of worldly-mindedness than of false seclusion.... The consciousness of a spiritual-ethical antithesis becomes increasingly vague



in the minds of many.... The doctrine of particular grace in Christ is more and more pushed to the background. There is a strong tendency to bring theology into harmony with a science that stands in the service of infidelity ... it is peremptorily necessary ... that, though (the CRC) also maintains the above mentioned three points, she vindicates the spiritual-ethical antithesis tooth and nail.

Prophesying the spiritual development of the CRC was the only purpose that this "Testimony" served, since, for some unknown reason, it was never circulated among the CR congregations as a warning.

The hierarchical church polity of the CRC in dealing with those who would not declare themselves "unequivocally" to be "in full agreement" with the three points of common grace stands out in bold relief. Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West summarily deposed three Christian Reformed ministers and three entire consistories. The procedure especially of Classis Grand Rapids East in deposing Hoeksema and the Eastern Avenue consistory was a travesty of Reformed, Christian, ecclesiastical justice (cf. pp. 67-74).

There is detailed treatment also of the schism in the PRC in 1953 (chapters 10-15). The issue was doctrinal. The doctrine at stake was the covenant of God with believers and their children. Specifically, the question was whether the covenant promise at baptism is a conditional promise to every child or an unconditional promise to the elect children. Professor George M. Ophoff is quoted expressing the stand of the PRC:

It is plain that in the proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe," that is, "Salvation as a work of God is contingent on the faith of the believer," we deal with a heresy of the first magnitude, destructive conceptionally of God and of all true religion ... the term *condition* ... in the proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe," ... has place only in the perverted system of theology hatched

out by Pelagius and Arminius (p. 160).

During this bitter internal struggle, Herman Hoeksema indicated the central significance of the truth of the covenant for the PRC:

If you ask me what is the most peculiar treasure of the PRC, I answer without any hesitation: their peculiar view of the covenant.... He that has been captivated by this beautiful Reformed truth (of the gracious covenant of friendship with the elect in Christ — DJE) must have nothing of anything that smacks of Heynsian theology, nor will he ever retrogress into a traditional conditional theology. But rather than go backward, he will go forward and continue to develop the pure PRC truth of God's eternal covenant. To do this is the specific calling of the PRC. Failure to do this is our death. It is the end of our distinctive existence (pp. 163, 164).

*A Watered Garden* is not, however, an uncritical defense of the PRC. Gertrude Hoeksema takes note of the contribution to the troubled climate in the PRC in the years leading up to the schism of 1953 on the part of the "two-hundred percenters" in the Churches. She points out the defense by the PR preachers who advocated conditions against the charge of Arminianism in the covenant, namely, that it is God's grace that enables the children to fulfill the conditions. She also permits one of the ministers who left the PRC to state his conviction as to the seriousness of *denying* conditions:

To deny that conditional element as it is so clearly revealed to us in the Word of God would be a catastrophe indeed. It would be fatal to all preaching of the gospel, and would lead our churches astray (p. 165).

The history displays concern for objectivity in characterizing the climate in the PRC in the years immediately following 1953 as bitter and polemical. The preaching was defensive. No sermon could neglect con-

demnation of "conditions." The PRC were in "the doldrums" (p. 291). Intriguing is the author's analysis that a healthy change in emphasis occurred in the early to mid-sixties, when the PRC became more outward-looking. The preaching was more joyful and positive, and the Churches turned to the development of their heritage.

Although a history of churches, the book does justice to the organic life of the members of the PRC, particularly the establishment of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. This has always been viewed as a demand of the covenant that is precious to PR Christians.

Valuable appendices at the end of the book include the "Act of Agreement" of March, 1925 adopted by the three consistories of Eastern Avenue, Hope, and Kalamazoo I; the "Declaration of Principles" adopted by the PRC in 1951 as their understanding of the teaching of the Reformed confessions on the covenant; and a list of all the congregations and pastors that have been part of the PRC.

Every history invites criticism from the reader both as to what has been included and as to what has been excluded. My own judgment is that far too much space — pages 213-244 — has been devoted to the unappealing struggle after 1953 in the civil courts over property. The ugly episode in First Church, Grand Rapids over the hospitalization of Herman Hoeksema at the end of his life could better have been omitted altogether.

A serious error of fact slipped in on page 344 where "Report 44" on the interpretation of Scripture is attributed to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, rather than to the CRC.

All our people will want to read this history of our Churches. Parents, by all means assign it to your young people. They will learn something of their ecclesiastical identity, their spiritual roots, and their doctrinal and practical calling. This is now the introduction to the PRC for those who desire to become acquainted with this denomination.

Mrs. Hoeksema is a capable writer. The history is interesting.



The book can be ordered from the RFPA,

P.O. Box 2006

Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

The price for the hardcover book is \$19.95.

A *Watered Garden* replaces Herman Hoeksema's history of the

first eleven years of the Churches, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, which has long been out of print. Some organization should consider reprinting separately the section of *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America* that consists of explanation of the three points of com-

mon grace and the PRC' objection to this doctrine. If this is done, a similar treatment of the doctrine of a conditional covenant, central issue in the schism of 1953, might well be added.

—DJE

## Letters

### ■ A Supra, Pre-Trib, Pre-Mill Friend of the SB

In your editorials, "The Kingdom has Come" (Feb. 1 and 15, 1993), your system of doctrine seems to be your final authority, not the Bible. Enclosed is a book by Tim LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm*. I challenge you to read it thoughtfully and objectively.

I like the *Standard Bearer* very much, and some articles in it are outstanding. I am a supralapsarian, pre-trib, and pre-mill believer in my Lord and Savior Jesus the Son of God, the Christ. I agree with the five points of John Calvin. I read his *Institutes*. He was a great man of God even if he was amillennial.

In II Thessalonians 2:3, the word *apostasia* in the Greek is translated "falling away" by the KJV. The Bibles prior to the KJV translated the word as "departure" or "withdrawal," referring to the rapture. I believe that the Antichrist will not be revealed by God prior to the departure of the church from this earth to meet the Lord in the air.

I will remain a fundamentalist — one who believes that the Word of God, literally interpreted, is fundamental to Christian life and doctrine.

John E. Saari  
Jackson, TN

#### Response:

The word *apostasia* occurs twice in the Greek New Testament: Acts 21:21 and II Thessalonians 2:3. Both times it clearly refers to a spiritual departing from doctrine or truth. The English Bible that was the great predecessor of the KJV was the Geneva

Bible of 1560. In II Thessalonians 2:3, the Geneva Bible reads: "... for that day shall not come, except there come a departing first, and that that man of sin be disclosed, even the son of perdition." In the notes alongside the text, the translators of the Geneva Bible explained what is meant by the "departing": "A wonderful (that is, astonishing — DJE) departing of the most part from the faith."

— DJE

### ■ The Coming of Antichrist

I notice that some of our readers have taken exception to your editorials, "A.D. 1993: The Lord is Coming" (Jan. 1 and 15, 1993). I should like to add a little to this present discussion, which I know is being conducted in the spirit of Christian friendship and fellowship. I am in agreement with the Editor's response. However, may I make the following observations?

The Day of Christ shall not come except there be a falling away first ("he *apostasia proton*," Greek). This indicates that there is to be a great departure from the true faith as revealed in Holy Scripture. Now, I would tentatively submit that such apostasy has already commenced, indeed, has been with us for some time, and is daily increasing in its terrible consequences for the professing church in the world. How far into this apostasy God has decreed we should go is not for us to speculate, but one thing is certain, and that is that we are in the midst of this foretold and foreordained departure from the Protestant and Reformed religion.

Secondly, we are informed by

the Holy Spirit that the Day of Christ cannot come until "the man of sin" ("ho *anthropos tes harmartias*," Greek) be revealed. The apostle John indicated to us that "as you heard antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen" (I John 2:18) and further that "this is the antichrist which you heard is coming and now *already* is in the world" (I John 4:3). [Quotations from Greek-English Interlinear T.R.] Therefore, antichrist is already with us and has been throughout the time between the Advents, and that the religious aspect of antichrist has been and is fulfilled in the Pope of Rome who is Antichrist as our confessions teach. The only remaining thing to be fulfilled, as I see it, is the final manifestation of antichrist who shall be the Antichrist, the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition "whom the Lord shall ... destroy with the brightness of his coming."

We await then only the revelation of the final Man of Sin whom the present writer firmly believes shall be the last occupant of the Vatican.

Steven Watters  
Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland

### ■ Clear Teaching on Total Depravity

Thank you for the recent series in the *Standard Bearer* on Macleod's book and the clear teaching you gave on total depravity (Aug. 1-Dec. 15, 1992, "The Death of Confessional Calvinism in Scottish Presbyterianism").

John Robert Olson  
Charleston, SC □



## ■ Head Coverings and Tongues Speaking

I have two questions to which I have not been able to get satisfactory answers. The Netherlands Reformed Congregations, Free Reformed Churches, and some Presbyterian denominations require women to wear head coverings in worship. This they base on I Corinthians 11:2-16. To my knowledge, the Protestant Reformed Churches have no such requirement. Whereas I don't believe the Bible is teaching that a woman's head must be covered in worship I have difficulty explaining the meaning behind this passage. What are your views on women being required to cover their head in worship, and what is the Bible teaching in I Corinthians 11:2-16?

My second question deals with the "speaking in tongues" issue. What should be the Reformed response to speaking in tongues? I Corinthians 14 seems to indicate that, although the gift of prophecy is greater than that of speaking in tongues, we should desire the gift of speaking in tongues (cf. v. 5). At the very least, verse 39 says we shouldn't forbid it. Does the Bible give evidence that the gift of speaking in tongues was only for the early church, or should we too pursue these gifts? Concerning those people who hold to false teachings (Pentecostals, Roman Catholics) and claim to speak in tongues, is their gift from the Holy Spirit or from Satan? I would appreciate your thoughts on this matter.

These questions have arisen from discussion among several people, and I can assure you that your answers will be well read.

Paul Wiersma  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

### Response:

#### Head-Coverings

We answer first your question

about the "head-covering" for women at the worship of the church. Paul required such a covering of the women in Corinth according to I Corinthians 11:3-16.

The Protestant Reformed Churches do not require such a covering of worshipping women. They regard the covering referred to in I Corinthians 11:3ff. as an external token in that day of the wife's submission to her husband.

The undying principle in the passage is the husband's headship over his wife (vv. 3, 7-12). This headship involves authority. "Power" in verse 10 is literally 'authority,' that is, a sign of the authority of the husband over his wife. The headship of the husband over his wife is the same in this respect as the headship of Christ over every man and the headship of God over Christ (v. 3). The sphere in which this headship is to be shown is the public worship of the church (cf. vv. 4, 5: "praying or prophesying").

This basic, enduring truth, grounded in creation itself (vv. 7b-12), was manifested in the apostle's day in Corinth, Greece by the woman's having a certain "head-covering."

This covering was not her long hair itself, as is evident from the comparison between the covering and her long hair in verses 5, 6.

But neither was that covering a hat, or some kerchief perched on top of her head. The Greek original of verses 4-7 makes plain that the apostle refers to a veil hanging down from the head. A literal translation of verse 5 would read: "But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth without having (something) hanging from the head," etc. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, explaining the verb that occurs there, gives as the meaning of verse 6, "to veil oneself."

Those, therefore, who insist that the "head-covering" of I Corinthians

11 is law for the church in all places and times must require that their women wear veils at church.

The veil, however, was only a local and temporary manifestation at church of the lasting, binding principle that wives are subject to the authority of their husbands. The very fact that the veil was a mere article of clothing indicates this. This is how the notes on the passage of the Geneva Bible, great predecessor of the King James Version, explain the mention of the "head-covering" in I Corinthians 11:3ff.: "This tradition was observed according to the time and place that all things might be done in comeliness and to edification."

This was also Calvin's view of the "head-covering." With specific reference to the prohibition in verse 3 against the man's having such a covering, Calvin wrote:

Let us, however, bear in mind, that in this matter the error is merely in so far as decorum is violated, and the distinction of rank which God has established, is broken in upon. For we must not be so scrupulous as to look upon it as a criminal thing for a teacher to have a cap on his head, when addressing the people from the pulpit. Paul means nothing more than this—that it should appear that the man has authority, and that the woman is under subjection, and this is secured when the man uncovers his head in the view of the Church, though he should afterwards put on his cap again from fear of catching cold. In fine, the *one* rule to be observed here is ... *decorum*. If that is secured, Paul requires nothing farther (commentary on I Corinthians 11:4).

In his sermons on the passage, Calvin acknowledged that the matter of "head-coverings" had to do with local custom and that "the piety and holiness of the children of God is not comprised of this." In explanation of



the rule laid down in verse 4, that a man ought not to cover his head, Calvin taught his congregation:

Let us observe that St. Paul has only taken exception to something that was not appropriate and fitting according to the usage of the land. For (as we have shown) we are not to take those countries and measure them by our custom(s). Yet there was such disorder, as we said, that the men had exchanged (places) with the women, which was intolerable. This is why St. Paul says that a man, when he executes the function of prophesying, or prays on behalf of all so that all may answer, "Amen," must not have his head covered, as if he hid himself for shame (*Men, Women, and Order in the Church: Three Sermons by John Calvin*, Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1992, pp. 12, 24, 25).

The great principle of the passage is the headship of the husband over his wife as maintained in the public worship of the congregation. This is as basic and enduring in the history of the church as Christ's headship over every man and God's headship over Christ (v. 3).

This principle necessarily implies that women may not have the office of teaching or ruling in the church (I Cor. 14:34, 35; I Tim. 2,3).

### Tongues-Speaking

Your second question concerns tongues-speaking. As you point out, I Corinthians 14 makes plain that there was the gift of tongues in that day, although not all the believers received it. Also, verse 39 instructed the Corinthians not to forbid those who had the gift to exercise it.

Regardless whether one views tongues as the ability to speak foreign languages without study or as the speaking of new, unknown languages, it was an extraordinary gift and operation of the Holy Spirit. It was part of the miraculous of the apostolic time. With the exorcism of demons, special prophecy, miracles of healing, and the like, tongues-speaking was connected with the office of apostle in the early church. The purpose of the

miraculous, extraordinary operation of the Spirit was to validate the office and gospel of the apostles (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3; II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4).

When the office of apostle passed away, the miraculous passed away with it, including the gift of tongues. The miraculous was no longer necessary. The foundation of the church had been laid. The gospel of the apostles had been accredited. The church now had the complete Scripture of the Old and New Testaments.

The charismatic movement today acknowledges the inseparable relation between the extraordinary gifts and the office of apostle in that it allows for, and even requires, the restoration of the apostolic office in the church and the appearance and function of latter-day apostles. With new apostles come a new gospel, a new church, and a new Christ.

The inescapable implication of this analysis of tongues is that all tongues-speaking in the post-apostolic history of the church is sheer fraud, self-induced emotional gibberish, or direct demonic influence.

We recommend B.B. Warfield's *Miracles: Yesterday and Today* (originally published as *Counterfeit Miracles*). We have sent you a copy of the booklet published by the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, "Try the Spirits: A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism."

— The Editorial Committee

## ■ Rebaptism

Recently a Baptist friend of mine asked me, with considerable puzzlement, why it was that the Reformers, both British and European, were not rebaptized. How could they possibly accept their Roman Catholic (infant) baptism as valid?

I note that Prof. Hanko's book on the Reformed teaching about infant baptism does not grapple with the subject of *rebaptism*. Yet, in our context the whole topic of Rebaptism is very practical. Why were the converts of the Reformation period so

very clear that Rebaptism was unnecessary, yet so many folk today flounder in a muddle?

As it happens, I think I know the answer, but I have never seen it in print, and would welcome a good discussion in the *SB*. If there is something in print easily lendable, please refer to it.

D.J. Stephens  
Liverpool, England

### Response:

Thank you for writing. We appreciate your interest in this subject and the *Standard Bearer*.

John Calvin argues that the validity of Baptism does not depend on the merit of him who administers it. Writes he:

Now, suppose what we have determined is true — that a sacrament must not be judged by the hand of the one by whom it is ministered, but as if it were from the very hand of God, from whom it doubtless has come. From this we may then infer that nothing is added to it or taken from it by the worth of him by whose hand it is administered. Among men, if a letter is sent, provided the handwriting and seal are sufficiently recognized, it makes no difference who or of what sort the carrier is. In like manner, it ought to be enough for us to recognize the hand and seal of our Lord in his sacraments, whatever carrier may bring them.

This argument neatly refutes the error of the Donatists, who measured the force and value of the sacrament by the worth of the minister. Such today are our Catabaptists, who deny that we have been duly baptized because we were baptized by impious and idolatrous men under the papal government. They therefore passionately urge rebaptism.

We shall be armed against their follies with a strong enough argument if we think of ourselves as initiated by baptism not into the name of any man, but into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19]; and that baptism is accordingly not of man but of God, no matter who administers it. Ignorant or even contemptuous as those who baptized us were of God and all piety, they did not baptize us into the



fellowship of either their ignorance or sacrilege, but into faith in Jesus Christ, because it was not their own name but God's that they invoked, and they baptized us into no other name. But if it was the baptism of God, it surely had, enclosed in itself, the promise of forgiveness of sins, mortification of the flesh, spiritual vivification, and participation in Christ. Thus it was no hindrance to the Jews to be circumcised by impure and apostate priests; nor was the sign therefore void so that it had to be repeated, but it was a sufficient means by which to return to the real source (*Institutes of the Christian*

*Religion*, Book IV, Chapter XV, Section 16).

The above quotation constitutes the heart of Calvin's position on the matter. You may wish to read all that Calvin had to say on this question in sections 14-18 of Book 4, chapter 15 of *The Institutes*. Calvin's position remains the position of the Reformed Churches today.

It will interest you to know that the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches made a rather lengthy study of this question in response to a request for advice on the question from

her sister churches, the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore. Among other things, this study report contains translations of several prominent Dutch theologians (Drs. A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck, et. al.) who took the same position as Calvin. This material may be found in the 1988 *Acts of Synod and Yearbook of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America*. Copies of this report are available on request from the Protestant Reformed Seminary, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

— The Editorial Committee

□

## All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

### ■ New Editor for the *Banner*

The Rev. John D. Suk, 36, has been nominated to be editor of the *Banner*. Suk, co-pastor of the Ann Arbor (Michigan) Christian Reformed Church, is the only candidate Christian Reformed Church Publications Board is nominating. The synod will be asked to approve his nomination in June.

In an interview with the board, Suk said he sees the *Banner* as a vehicle for keeping people informed and for changing their minds. "We want to move people along in their Christian life," he said. At the same time, Suk added, the magazine needs to be exhilarating. "I'd like to give readers a feel that the Christian life is an adventure; it's not just a duty."

Before moving to Ann Arbor, Suk was pastor of Redeemer Christian Reformed Church, in Sarnia, Ontario, from 1985 to 1989. Suk was one of two nominees presented to the CRC Publications Board by a search committee. The other was Rev. Carl Zylstra, 44, pastor of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa.

Currently Dr. John H. Krom-

menga and Rev. Harvey Smit are serving as interim co-editors of the *Banner*.

*Banner*

### ■ Dutton Pastor Banned From CRC Pulpits

In August 85% of the male membership of the Dutton (Michigan) Christian Reformed Church voted to support the consistory's decision to secede from the denomination by legally disbanding the Dutton CRC and transferring the assets to a new ecclesiastical corporation, Dutton Independent Reformed Church. Following this action Classis Thornapple Valley, in which Dutton CRC resides, declared Rev. Paul Murphy to have the status of one deposed from office. Classis also recognized the minority as the continuing Dutton Christian Reformed Church. At its January 26 meeting the classis voted to close or disband the Dutton CRC. Only seven members of the minority indicated to classis that they wished to continue as the Dutton CRC. In another decision the classis declared that the seceding pastor, Rev. Paul Murphy, should be banned from CRC pulpits because of his status as one deposed from office. Classis said that "the action of classis at its September 3 and 15, 1992 meetings, declaring the status of Pastor Murphy in the CRC as though deposed from office in the CRC according to Article 14b of the

Church Order of the CRC, implies this negative response" to a question of the Dutton Independent Reformed Church about whether Murphy may preach or lead worship in the CRC.

Of the twenty-three pastors who have recently seceded from the CRC only three have been declared by their classes to have the status of one deposed from office. These are Rev. Murphy, Rev. Arthur Besteman (pastor of Beverly CRC Independent in Wyoming, Michigan), and Rev. John De Koekkoek (pastor of Agassiz Independent Reformed Church in British Columbia).

At least two churches, Escondido CRC and Ontario CRC in California, are sending overtures to the June synod urging an end to the deposition status for seceding ministers asking that "ministers resigning from the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church because of conscientious theological objections to developments in the Christian Reformed Church should be regarded as having been honorably released, not as having been deposed."

It will be very interesting to see what the CRC synod does with this.

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

### ■ Church Membership Declining in Germany

In the February 15 issue of the

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



*Standard Bearer* we reported on the sad state of affairs in the church in Geneva, Switzerland in an article under the title, "Ichabod." Something similar is happening in Germany, which cradled Martin Luther and the Reformation. Germany has turned its back on the Bible. According to a recent survey done for the German Bible Society in Stuttgart and for the Protestant Churches in Germany, 84 percent of people in former East Germany and 78 percent in former West Germany seldom or never read the Bible. In all of Germany, two-thirds of the unchurched said there was no Bible in their homes.

At the same time the Protestant Churches in Germany are reporting that increasing numbers of people have given up their church membership over the last three years because they no longer want to pay "church tax" payments administered by the government.

All this is not surprising when one considers that it was German theologians who gave birth to higher criticism of Holy Scripture and who thus became the fathers of 19th century liberalism. Martin Luther by God's grace had once brought the church back to the Bible. For Luther the Bible was God's inspired, infal-

libile Word, the only rule for the faith and life of God's people. This was the formal principle of the Reformation, *Sola Scriptura*. For the higher critics Scripture is merely the writings of men. If that be so, why bother to read the Bible?

*Pulse*

## ■ President Clinton and Abortion

On the second full day of his presidency Mr. Clinton made good on his campaign promise and rescinded all abortion-related executive orders which had been enacted in the Reagan and Bush administrations. The executive orders of Reagan and Bush which President Clinton rescinded are:

\*The Title X regulations — dubbed the "gag rule" by critics — which prohibited federally funded family-planning clinics from counseling about abortion.

\*The Mexico City policy, which forbade U.S. support for international family-planning organizations that actively promote abortion.

\*The prohibition of fetal tissue obtained from induced abortions being used in federally funded research.

\*The ban on abortions being performed at U.S. military bases overseas.

In addition, the President ordered the Food and Drug Administration to review its ban on importing the French abortion pill RU 486 for personal use. Mr. Clinton said he enacted the directives out of his vision of an America "where abortion is safe and legal, but rare." The anti-abortion leaders say the net effect will be just the opposite. Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, says, "The new President has taken actions ... that will result in the deaths of untold millions at the hands of the abortionists."

Abortion-rights advocates are jubilant over the new policies. Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority Foundation, says, "With a stroke of his pen, President Clinton ... changed the abortion debate forever." She's right. President Clinton's actions will usher in a new era in the abortion debate.

Richard Land is right as well. Abortions will increase dramatically as a result of Mr. Clinton's actions.

Such flagrant transgression of the sixth commandment of God's Law of Liberty will only incur the wrath of God. No one transgresses even the least of God's commandments with impunity. □

*Christianity Today*

Guest Article

Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani

# Addicted to the Ministry of the Saints

Rev. Mahtani is pastor-elect of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.

*I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.*

I Corinthians 16:15, 16.

By the amazing grace of God we have been delivered from the darkness of self-indulgence. We have put away drug addiction, drunkenness, gluttony, and all our former lusts. But we must remember that as new creatures in Christ we are to be "addicted to the ministry of the saints." Having reminded the Corinthians:



"Let all your things be done with charity" (I Cor. 16:14), the apostle Paul gives in our text a lovely example of this unique addiction.

Before diagnosing the addiction, Paul identifies the addicts. "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia...." From the first chapter of this epistle (see v. 16) we know that Stephanas was one of the converts Paul had baptized. His family is beautifully identified here: "the firstfruits of Achaia." They were the first converts in Greece. They were the precious fruit of missions. They not only heard the gospel, but believed! They were no longer dead in sins, but alive in Christ! Their lives proved it. They were addicted to the ministry of the saints!

The word "addicted" is found only once in the Bible (King James Version). However, the original Greek word is found eight times. Its basic meaning is "to appoint." In our text it is used with a reflexive pronoun and could be translated as "they have appointed themselves." Stephanas and his house did not perform this ministry as a task forced upon them. As the New International Version puts it, they "were devoted to the service of the saints." They had voluntarily and cheerfully given themselves to the ministry. They lovingly reserved time, energy, and resources for this lofty work. No longer were they madly in love with the world; now their affection was in the lofty things

of God's great kingdom. In time past they wrought the will of the Gentiles, when they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, abominable idolatries... but now they live according to God in the Spirit (see I Pet. 4:3-6). Now they were no longer drunk with wine, but they were filled with the Spirit of God! (Eph. 5:18). Surely it is not coincidental that in both these passages the apostles Peter and Paul emphasize in the verses following the blessed communion of saints. Are you walking in the will of God? Are you filled with the Spirit of God? Test yourself. Are you addicted to the ministry of the saints? What place do your fellow saints have in all your plans, activities, and ambitions?

It is true that in the body of Christ we all have different callings. Some are pastors or ministers (II Tim. 4:1-5) who preach the Word; others are elders (I Pet. 5:1-4) who are to rule by their good example and never as lords; yet others are deacons (I Tim. 3:13) who show the mercies of Christ. But we must never imagine that only those in the office are called to serve. The Scriptures call all God's people to minister. We are most familiar with Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, which describe the church as the body of Christ. In John 13:14 our Lord Jesus Christ taught us both by example and by precept to "wash one another's feet." All Christians are servants, called to minister to the body of Christ, each in his own God-given calling.

Remember, "even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Out of gratitude for His sacrificial love for us, we now walk as His servants, ministering to the needs of the saints. For example, the apostle Paul exhorts the Galatians: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1, 2). The Heidelberg Catechism in describing the "communion of saints" explains it

beautifully in Lord's Day 21: "all and every one, who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of Him, and of all His riches and gifts; (in this communion) every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members" (Q & A 55).

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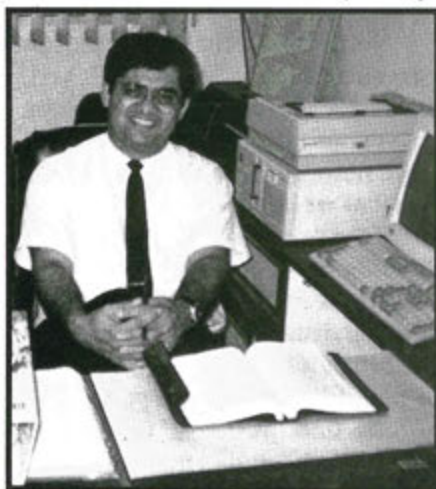
### *The Scriptures call all God's people to minister.*

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Our text also points to a very distinctive ministry. It is true that we are called to "do good unto all men." But remember: "especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Stephanas and his house were addicted to "the ministry of the saints." What, were there saints in the church of Corinth? Of course there were. Although the Corinthian church was troubled with many sins and weaknesses, Paul addressed her members as "saints." Let us remember this as we deal with the precious people of God. They are the "holy ones" of God. They have been sanctified! They have been washed in the blood of Christ! They are not perfect, but they are saints!

The fact is that these saints are also in great need. Pain, poverty, persecution, personal struggles and pressures continue to be the lot of the Christian. These special needs can be best met by fellow saints. We who know God's comfort can comfort our brothers and sisters. We who know deliverance and forgiveness can help to give hope to each other. We who have gone through dark tunnels but now see light can encourage and direct our fellow pilgrims. But we can do this only if we by God's grace see beyond one another's weaknesses and sins.

Yes, love covers a multitude of sins. The personality and the character and the attitude and the color and the smell we may not like. Fair enough. But remember, if he or she is a saint for whom Christ died, we may not speak against such a one harshly or disparagingly. If God be for our



*Rev. Jaiki Mahtani  
at the Helping Hand*



brother, how can we be against him? If the Holy God can forgive, how dare I take him cruelly by his neck? Instead we must learn to love the saints. The best way is by serving one another's needs. In all our labors in the church, home, school, world, let us ask the question: How does this serve the welfare of the saints of God?

Our text can properly be understood to refer to the distinct calling of Scripture: "Use hospitality to one another without grudging" (1 Pet. 4:9-12). "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). It is interesting that in both passages the exhortation to show hospitality is placed in the context of love. It is out of fervent charity for each other that we use our homes, our talents, our time, and our energies to serve one another.

So important is this matter of hospitality in the church of Jesus Christ that Scripture says an elder must be "given to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2); indeed he must be a "lover of hospitality" (Titus 1:8). Even the widows who are to be cared for by the deacons must have a record of this hospitable spirit: "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 Tim. 4:10). On the contrary Paul warns against the lazy, the "tattlers and the busybodies" (v. 13) in the church, who, instead of caring for the saints, go about destroying peace. A final passage in Hebrews has a similar tone: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love, which ye have showed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10; but see also the verses following, where a similar warning is given against slothfulness).

As we consider this subject of serving the saints, it is important for us to remember three things. The Scriptures teach us that we are to love God by showing love to the saints. A casual reading of 1 John 3:10-18, 1 John

4:20, 21 will make this abundantly clear. We may not even say we have faith (see James 2:14-17) if we cannot love our brethren in word and in deed. The difference between the child of the devil and the child of God is this: one is a murderer who kills his brother, either literally or by his words and actions; the other is a brother indeed, who loves and seeks to edify, nourish, or feed as the need may be.

Secondly, in loving the saints we must not forget to love God's servants (see 1 Thess. 5:11-15). God's Word exhorts us to honor the faithful in God's kingdom. Stephanas did exactly this (see 1 Cor. 16:16-18). He was willing to help and labor with the apostles. He even went with his two companions to visit the apostle Paul in Ephesus, apparently bringing comfortable news about the saints in Corinth. In this way they ministered both to Paul and the Corinthians. Paul commends them highly: "For they have refreshed both my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such" (1 Cor. 15:18).

Finally, let us remember that we will be judged on that great day according to this ministry of the saints (see Matt. 25:34-40). To those who in this life show love and compassion to the brethren, Christ shall say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" (Matt. 25:34). Jesus tells us who the blessed of the Father are. They practice "that religion which is pure and undefiled, visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction" (James 1:18). To the hungry brother they give bread to eat; to the sick they bring comfortable words; to the stranger they show hospitality. Indeed we shall stand in wonderment when Christ rewards us, for it will clearly be a reward of grace. In this life He gives us the grace of His Holy Spirit to perform such service, and in the life hereafter He will commend us for our labor of love. What blessed addiction to the ministry of the saints!

No wonder this addiction is so highly honored. We are called to submit to Stephanas and his house.

Ex-drug addicts or recovering alcoholics need a changed influence, a new relationship, and a transformed ambition. So also all of us need to submit ourselves to this godly addiction, become busy with our newfound friends in Christ, and be more consecrated to serving the saints. Stephanas and his house addicted themselves; now we should submit ourselves by following their lovely example.

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*... why try to be like a Moses  
or a Paul if we cannot even  
follow the simple example  
of Stephanas?*

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Sometimes we pass by these last chapters of the epistles, as we probably do Romans 16 and Colossians 4. Perhaps we feel these names are unimportant, as they are mentioned only once. But why try to be like a Moses or a Paul if we cannot even follow the simple example of Stephanas?

Notice too that this is a general exhortation to all the saints. "I beseech you, brethren...." The younger saints may not say that this is only for the mature and experienced; for this is the example of young converts, firstfruits of Achaia. But the older saints among us must also take seriously this word. "Submit yourselves unto such..." (see v. 16) and "acknowledge ye them" (see v. 18). Let every one of us, brothers, young or old, follow this godly example.

Notice finally that this addiction is urgently sought. "I beseech you, brethren...." Surely this is because the Corinthians needed this urging. But do we not also need the same? It is good that we be addicted to this ministry of the saints lest we return to the addiction of our former lusts. Let us be like these firstfruits of Achaia, who walked in true conversion by practical Christian service. Turning from our past addiction to drugs, alcohol, gluttony, or any other sinful way, let us now be addicted to the ministry of the saints. Serving the saints we not only follow the example of Stephanas. We walk in the footsteps of Jesus. □



# Circumcision

The believer today is a circumcised individual with a circumcision made without hands. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). The Old Testament rite of circumcision, the cutting of the foreskin of the male child, was a token of the covenant (Gen. 17:11). The outward sign, administered to the eight-day-old man-child born in the house or bought with money of the stranger, portrayed in a striking way the truth that the covenant friends of God were separated from sin and dedicated to the Lord. Circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16) speaks of regeneration; cutting away the sins of the flesh is a reference to sanctification.

The beauty of this token of the covenant was threefold: 1) Since the corruption of sin manifests itself with peculiar energy in sexual life (Gen. 3:7), circumcision was the symbol of the purification of all life; 2) Circumcision involved the sexual member by which the covenant seed would be brought forth, so that childbearing was sanctified; and 3) It was performed upon males of the eighth day, revealing powerfully that God's covenant is with believers and their children. God is pleased to save His church, not in a hit-and-miss fashion, but in the orderly way of continued generations. And when God saves someone not from believing parents, He makes of that one the initial stock of new, believing generations (Rahab, Ruth, Lydia, the Philippian jailer).

When it comes to the question of righteousness, circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth (Gal. 6:15), a question disputed on the mission fields (Acts 15) and in the congregations at Corinth and in Galatia. No more than we are made righteous by the sacrament of baptism were the Old Testament saints saved by circumcision. In Romans 4:11 Paul stresses that circumcision was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, which Abraham had "yet being uncircumcised." Here the Reformed churches find their definition of

sacraments: signs and seals of the righteousness of faith. Sacraments give to us visible symbols and guarantees that God counts faith in Jesus Christ for righteousness (Rom. 4:3). How foolish for the Galatians and others to cleave to an antiquated, outward sign rather than to the object of the sign, the death and resurrection of Christ. If a man insist on circumcision or any Old Testament prescription, he is debtor to keep the whole law, and Christ profits him nothing (Gal. 5:2-3).

That the use of Old Testament ceremonies is abolished amongst Christians, with the truth and substance of them remaining with us in Jesus Christ (Art. 25 of the Belgic Confession), is eminently true of circumcision. Just as Jeremiah cried to the Old Testament church, "Circumcise yourselves unto Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart" (Jer. 4:4), so does God say to us today, "ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11).

The bloody, Old Testament token of the covenant, performed upon little babies, is replaced with the unbloody, New Testament sacrament of baptism. Because baptism is also a sign of the covenant, because God never revoked the command to circumcise infants, and because God still saves in the same way as under the old covenant, i.e., generationally, infants of believers are to be baptized today. Paul makes clear in Colossians 2:11, 12 that spiritual circumcision (putting off, or cutting off, the body of the sins of the flesh) and spiritual baptism (the washing away of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ) are really identical. Of New Testament believers it is said that they have been circumcised without hands, and are buried with Christ in baptism. There is one God who saves one church; there is one covenant with believers and their children; there is one sign and seal, differing only in outward form. □

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# Conviction of Sin

The conviction of sin is one of the first works of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It is vital to salvation. There can be no coming to God, there can be no fellowship and communion with God, unless there is first of all conviction of sin. We need to pray for that work of the Holy Spirit in us.

The conviction of sin is also indispensable for our progress in the life of sanctification. We have our sinful nature with us until the day of our death. Deep within that sinful nature resides the potential for all kinds of sins. The potential for sin in our sinful nature is an awful power within us. It is possible for any and every child of God to fall into the most heinous of sins.

We know that from the fearful examples of the lives of the saints recorded in the Scriptures. We remember Noah, who became drunk shortly after God's gracious salvation of Noah and his family in the ark. We think of David, the man after God's own heart. Who would dare to compare himself with godly David? What deep and holy sentiments arose from his heart when he wrote the Psalms! Yet David could fall into the terrible sins of adultery and murder. After David committed these terrible sins he remained impenitent for almost a year. He was not convicted of sin and he lived before God's people as a hypocrite. God had to come to David through the prophet Nathan, who pointed the accusing finger saying: "Thou art the man." Only then was David humbled in his sin.

We must also remember the fearful fall of Peter. Peter was one of the greatest of the Lord's disciples. It was Peter who made the mighty confession concerning Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet Peter had a proud and sinful nature. He needed to be humbled under the mighty hand of God and through the sifting of Satan. In an hour of weakness Peter fell miserably. At the very time when the Lord was being tried and condemned by wicked men to be crucified, Peter was in the courtyard outside denying any knowledge of or association with the Lord. He was ashamed of the Lord, the very Lord who at the time was suffering in deep humility and being prepared to offer the great sacrifice for sin on the cross. After Peter committed this awful sin the Lord looked on him in deep sorrow, and Peter went out and wept bitterly.

We ought not to boast in ourselves, imagining that we are better than the great saints of God whose lives are recorded in the Scriptures. From their falls we ought to learn the power of sin and the shameful consequences of sin. The Canons of Dordt, in the very section in which they set forth the great truth of the preservation of the saints, speak of the real potential for the saints of God to fall grievously into sin, and of the dreadful consequences of such falls.

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by,

and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins, by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates. By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their conscience, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them (Canons V, 4, 5).

This is an excellent section of our Canons, packed with sound, practical, biblical advice. We do well to read this statement over many times, paying careful attention to every word.

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*The conviction of sin  
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life of sanctification.*

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True conviction of sin must be distinguished from that which is merely superficial. Even the natural man can at times become fearful about his sin. God has given to every man a conscience which accuses him continually concerning the sins that he commits. The natural man knows God's judgment of sin. There are times when he is terrified by the

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thought of this judgment. Such terror might even keep him from openly committing certain gross sins. Such a conviction of sin is not however according to the grace of God.

The natural man will not be convinced of the sinfulness of sin. His heart is hardened in sin. He does not regard sin as it is against the holy God. He has no true sorrow of sin in his heart. He seeks vainly to escape the judgment and consequences of sin. He might be terribly sorry over his sin because of the shame and misery that he suffers for it already in this life. This sorrow may even cause him to weep bitterly, as Esau did when he lost the birthright blessing. But such sorrow does not lead him to repentance. There is no love of God in his heart. He tries very hard to silence the condemnation of God in his conscience. He foolishly imagines that he can do his sin in secret and that there is no God of judgment. When he is found out in his sin he is only filled with hatred against God.

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*We need to be convinced  
of the fearful truth that God  
judges our hearts.*

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God sovereignly hardens the heart of the wicked man. As sin develops in his heart and life he becomes more and more brazen and open about his sin. He proudly imagines that he can sin as he pleases. The Bible tells us that in all of this process God gives the wicked man over to the wickedness of his own sin and the vile affections of his corrupt nature until God in righteous judgment brings the wicked man down to destruction and everlasting hell.

God in His great mercy has saved us from the terrible judgment of sin through the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He has delivered us from the guilt of sin and imputed to us the perfect righteousness of Christ Jesus. He also by His Holy Spirit delivers us from the power and corruption of sin in our depraved

nature and from the great power of the temptation of the devil and this wicked world. What a tremendous blessing this is! He saves us from the destruction and condemnation of our own dreadful sinful nature. He does this through the convicting work of His Holy Spirit.

Even as regenerated children of God we must be careful in regard to the conviction of sin. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked. We too often minimize the awfulness of sin in our life. We are terrified when we hear of the fall of a brother and when we see the shame and judgment that follows sin. We must think about our own sinful nature and the very real possibility of falling ourselves into great and shameful sin.

We need to realize however that conviction of sin must run deeper than that. Because of our deceitful heart we too can become accustomed to sin. We can come up with all kinds of reasons for justifying our own sin, and for minimizing our own sin in our minds even while we severely condemn the sin of others. Through repeatedly giving ourselves over to a certain sin in our life we can lose a sense of its terrible seriousness. We can easily imagine that, as long as our sin does not break forth in outward deeds of wickedness, we are not as bad as others. We can deceive ourselves into believing that as long as no one sees the evil thoughts of our heart we are pretty good. We can sometimes imagine that even God does not know the secrets of our hearts.

We need to be convinced again and again of the fearful truth that God judges our hearts. He that is content to allow sinful desires and thoughts to occupy his heart and mind must realize that God judges his heart. Such a man is living a very dangerous life as far as sin is concerned. When we allow such sins to continue in our hearts, it may become necessary for God to remove for a time His restraining grace from us and permit us to fall into open and gross sin. In this way the Lord must at times humble us and teach us the awfulness of our sinful nature. This can be a very fearful and

painful experience, even though the Lord does this for our good.

True conviction of sin comes through the mighty and gracious operation of the Spirit of God in our hearts. It begins with a profound consciousness of the heinous character of sin. The chief reason why sin is so terrible is that it is an offense against the Holy majesty of God. We have not yet been truly convicted of the sinfulness of our sin until we have understood something of this. True conviction of sin is part of love for God. It involves deep sorrow over having offended the God who created us and redeemed us. We are truly sorry for our sin only when we realize how terribly we have grieved the Holy Spirit of God by our sin. Sin separates us from God and interrupts the consciousness of His love and covenant fellowship.

Genuine conviction of sin can come only through the knowledge of our total depravity. Conviction of sin must go much deeper than sorrow over a specific sinful deed that we have done. We are convinced of the awfulness of our sin only when we realize that every sin we commit comes forth from our depraved and sinful nature. We must have sorrow of heart, not only for sinful deeds which we have committed, but also for the sinful nature that is ours.

This is the meaning of David's confession in the most beautiful of all penitential Psalms, Psalms 51. In acknowledging and confessing his great sin he is amazed by the sinful nature from which all his sins proceeded. Therefore he says in verse 5 of this Psalm: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The apostle Paul expresses true conviction of sin when in Romans 7 he cries out, "Oh wretched man that I am!" Not merely does the apostle speak of some shortcomings in his life, some minor failings which he perhaps had before he became a Christian, but he speaks of the wretched sinful nature which, even as a child of God, he still possesses and which causes him great sorrow and grief.



True conviction of sin leads the child of God to true repentance. When the Word of God finds him out he does not become offended and angry with God. He does not seek to minimize the awfulness of his sin; nor does he make excuses for it. Rather he humbly agrees with the perfect judgment of God and acknowledges the justice of God's condemnation. He hangs his head in shame and sorrow before God and earnestly pleads for mercy and forgiveness.

True conviction of sin is accompanied by a fervent desire to be delivered from sin, both from its dreadful guilt and also from its power in our life. True conviction of sin causes a child of God to desire to be thoroughly cleansed from all sin, not merely one particular sinful deed, but from all sin; not only from the deed of sin, but from the sinful and corrupt nature out of which that sin arose; not merely from outward sinful actions, but also from the impurity and depravity of heart and mind that produced it.

When we are truly convicted of our sin we will realize that our sins are many and that they are dreadful in the sight of God. With David we confess that "innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold on me, so that I am

not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: Therefore my heart faileth me" (Ps. 40:12).

There is in our modern church world much opposition and even hatred for the subject we have been discussing in this article. The reality of sin is denied, not only by the wicked world, but also by the apostate church. The philosophy propagated in most churches today is the notion that sin is something entirely of the past. We need not think about it anymore. To remind a Christian of his sin is only to make him morose and morbid. Sin must, at all cost, be entirely forgotten, since we have been made righteous in Christ. We must have positive thinking. Everyone must by all means be told how good and wonderful he is, how lovely and how beautiful, no matter how evil and sinful and abominable he in reality is, in God's sight. To speak of the dreadful sin of man will only give people a psychological complex that will have serious evil consequences for his self concept and self esteem. This is not psychologically healthy and ought therefore by all means be avoided. Talk of the awfulness of sin will do irreparable damage to his soul.

Nothing, however, could be further from the truth of Scripture than

this whole line of reasoning. The child of God needs daily to be convinced of his sin and of how awful it really is in God's sight. Only such conviction will lead to true repentance before God. Such conviction will by the grace and Spirit of God lead him to the cross of Christ for forgiveness and mercy. Daily conviction of sin is absolutely essential for communion with God, which is the heart of Christian living. Conviction of sin deeply moves the true child of God to see his great need of the mercy of God to blot out the dreadful sins of his past life. It causes the child of God more and more to know the seriousness of sin and the awful judgment it deserves. Conviction of sin causes the child of God to walk humbly with his God in the consciousness of his great dependence on God for strength to resist the temptations of sin in the world and to overcome the lusts of sin that reside in his sinful nature. Through constant conviction of sin we are kept from falling into gross sin and iniquity through all our days.

How great is the mercy of God that keeps us from sin and preserves us in holiness! It is in the way of holiness that we enjoy His favor and blessing and loving kindness in our daily life. This is our greatest joy and comfort. □

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Thomas Miersma*

## The Doctrine of the Trinity (2)

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In considering the doctrine of the Trinity it is important that we proceed from the unity of God's Word and the fullness of His revelation. The doctrine of the Trinity, as has been pointed out, is not founded upon one text here or there but upon the unity of God's Word as a whole. This is important especially when dealing

with corruptions of this doctrine or with various cults who would point to one or two texts twisted out of their proper context and lifted out of the fabric of Scripture. It was in this connection that we began with the unity or oneness of God. We saw that while Scripture clearly teaches such an essential unity, yet it also directs us



to a plurality of persons and to a threefold distinction. There is but one God, one Jehovah, and yet He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

### God's Triune Revelation of Himself by His Works (The Economical Trinity)

In treating the truth of the Trinity the Christian church has always proceeded from God's revelation of Himself in His Word and by His works. The principle involved is that God's works *outside* Himself reveal to us also what He is *inside* Himself. We know God and confess Him first of all by His revelation *outside* Himself to us.

This distinction is found in the oldest creeds of the Christian church. It is set forth in the summary of apostolic doctrine from the second century called the Apostles' Creed. In it we confess God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; Jesus Christ, His only begotten son; and the Holy Ghost. The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381) likewise confesses God the Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life. In these creeds it is first of all God's revelation outside Himself by His works which is confessed, though the internal reality of the Trinity is also confessed and indicated by them.

It is to this distinction that our Heidelberg Catechism points us when it asks in Question and Answer 24, "How are these articles (namely of the Apostles' Creed) divided?" The answer given is, "Into three parts; the first of God the Father, and our creation; the second of God the Son, and our redemption; the third of God the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification." The Catechism does not, by this threefold division of God's works, intend to divide the works of God internally so as to attribute each work exclusively to one person of the Trinity. Rather the Catechism points us to God's revelation of Himself by His works outside Himself that we might also understand His internal divine existence. This distinction is Scriptural. We may describe this aspect of

God's revelation as the Economical Trinity (a Trinity of works).

### Of God the Father

God reveals Himself to us by His work of creation as the source and origin of the universe, the Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth. As the Creator He is revealed in Scripture as "the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Jehovah is the Father of the universe by His work of creation. He is Lord and possessor of all. Moreover, man was so created in His image (Gen. 1:26ff.) that he may be said to have been made as God's "offspring" (Acts 17:29), a creaturely son. While the fall into sin has violated this original covenant relationship in which man stood, so that man is now of his father the devil and has lost the image of God, nevertheless by His creative work God is revealed as Father. In the re-creative work of salvation, also by the power of His grace, God is again revealed as our God and Father in Jesus Christ, adopting us as His children and begetting us anew by His mercy (I Pet. 1:3).

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### God's works *outside* Himself reveal to us also what He is *inside* Himself.

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Yet this distinction of God the Father, the Creator of all by His power and of His people by His grace, is not to be understood as ascribing this work of God to the first person of the Trinity alone. For God created the world by His Son, the Word (John 1:1-3), and in and through the operation of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:2). What this distinction does is point us to the Triune God as our God and Father. By His revelation of Himself as Father we are further pointed to His internal life—that there is in the being of God One who is first in order, the Father, the first person of the Trinity.

### Of God the Son, our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ

In like manner the Scriptures

reveal to us the personal presence of God as Savior and Redeemer. This is true first of all in the Old Testament. There is One who is Jehovah, who by a manifestation of His divine presence (theophany) appears and speaks His promises to Abraham and eats with him (Gen. 18). This special revelation of Jehovah's presence is called the Angel of Jehovah. He is not a created angel but a revelation of the divine presence of God as Israel's redeemer (Ex. 33:14, 15; Isa. 63:9) by whom God speaks with Moses face to face (Ex. 33:11), fills the pillar of cloud and of fire in the wilderness with the glory of God's divine presence (Ex. 14:19), and troubles the host of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:24). He is manifested in the cloud of glory that filled both the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and the temple (I Kings 8:10, 11) with the glory of God. It is the angel of Jehovah who meets Joshua as the captain of the Lord's host (Josh. 5:13-16), speaks unto Samuel (I Sam. 3:10), and was with Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:23-25). He is described as the Son of God (Dan. 3:25), the Son of man (Dan. 7:13), revealed also in His glory (Dan. 10). Repeatedly He appears in the Old Testament as the redeemer who works the salvation of His people. He is the promised Savior, the Lord that should come, the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1).

That which is somewhat veiled in the Old Testament as to His person and glory is clearly revealed in the New Testament. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us. He who was in the form of God "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). John says Jesus is the Word that was God, by whom the world was made (John 1:1-3). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He is truly the divine glory and presence come among us. He is not a mere creature, nor the highest of cre-



ated things, nor a created angel. This also is clear from the Word of God. Jehovah Himself has become our Savior (Isa. 59:16ff.) in Jesus Christ. He is not, as the Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults would have Him, the angel Michael who has become man. Throughout Scripture He is sharply distinguished from a mere created angel, is expressly identified as God and Jehovah, and is distinguished in both Daniel 10 and Revelation 12 from the angel Michael. He is "the Only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), God's "beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17), "the Son of God" (John 1:34). It is the Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person..." (Heb. 1:2, 3).

It is the Son who dies, sheds His blood for us, and redeems us. He is our mediator who by His death in our flesh reconciles us to God by His blood. Yet also this work is not the work of the second person of the Trinity in isolation. For He is sent of the Father, to do the Father's will, to speak the Father's word and not His own. He is moreover anointed with

the Spirit as our Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 61:1ff.), and "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14) as a sacrifice for sin. Also our redemption is a triune work of God, yet in such a way that the Son of God, the only begotten, is revealed to us as God come in the flesh, and we are directed by the wonder of His work to His unique Sonship within the being of God as the second person of the Trinity.

#### Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit of God is also revealed to us in Scripture. He is revealed first of all in His work of creation (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6) and as giving life and breath to every creature (Ps. 104:30). It is He who anoints our Lord Jesus Christ according to His human nature, qualifying Him for His work as mediator (Isa. 61:1ff.) and working conception in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:35). It is His work as our Sanctifier that stands on the foreground in Scripture, His work as the Spirit of Christ poured out upon the church. It is thus that He

labored by promise already in the Old Testament anointing the prophets and those called to office (I Pet. 1:11). He works our sanctification as the Comforter (John 14:26) who abides with us and makes us His holy temple (Eph. 2:22; I Cor. 6:19). By His power we are born again (John 3:3-6). He is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26), the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4), the Spirit of life in Christ (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:25), and the One who sanctifies us (I Pet. 1:2).

Yet this work of the Spirit also is never separated from the Father who sends the Spirit and from whom He proceeds (John 14:26; 15:26). Nor is His work separated from the Son, Jesus Christ, who pours out His Spirit upon the church and comes to us in the Spirit (John 15:26; 14:18). The work of the Spirit also is the work of the Triune God, yet in such a way that we are directed by the Spirit's work in the economy of redemption and our sanctification to the internal reality of God's own divine life and being — that God has also His Spirit. He is third in order, the third person of the Trinity. □

*The Strength of Youth*

*Rev. Barrett Gritters*

## RENEWING THE BATTLE (1)

### Drama, Television, and Movies

*I heard recently about a small group of Vietnamese families who were hiding out in the jungles of South Vietnam, thinking the war against the Viet Cong was still on. United States soldiers had promised almost 20 years ago to return to help these men fight against the Viet Cong. They were still waiting.*

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*A few retired U.S. soldiers accompanied a team from the United Nations and the Red Cross to retrieve these families and bring them to the U.S. When the Vietnamese were told to lay down their arms, they were shocked that the battle was over, dismayed that the North had won, and unbelieving when told that the United States had given up the fight, admitting that victory was impossible. These families still believed that the war could be won, if only they had the right weapons and commitment from the USA.*

*With a real pity for these backward men and women, the U.S. soldiers told them something like, "You may as well forget your dream and come with us. It's no use entertaining any hope for victory anymore. Let's go to the United States, and fight a different war."*

*Scooped up into the belly of the giant helicopters, the group was brought to the US where they were informed where the world really was, and what battles were important in the 1990s.*



**AN OLD BATTLE?** When an attempt is made today to engage in battle against drama, television, and movies, I am afraid that images of people like these poor, backward, Vietnamese come into mind. "What, someone is still trying to fight *that* battle?"

But there is a difference between the attitude towards the Vietnamese and one who battles drama and movies. There is sympathy for the Vietnamese who wanted to fight against the north. But there is little, if any, sympathy for those who would engage the enemy of drama and television.

My purpose in these articles is to renew the battle, promise aid to the bedraggled souls who still believe that the battle is worth fighting but think they are alone, and instill confidence that the fight is a worthy one, the foe a dangerous enemy of the Christian faith and family.

My confidence is that the church in the past was not wrong in its warnings sounded against drama, television, and movies.

My hope is that young and old will give ear to why the battle ought to be fought.

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### *Does the Reformed Christian still believe the antithesis to be an essential part of the Christian life?*

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My prayer is that there will be progress in our life of sanctification, our maintenance of the antithesis, our call to be separate.

**THE BATTLE LINES.** The battle lines today are similar to what they were 20, 30, or 40 years ago. The battle was against *drama*.

The lines have adjusted slightly in the hundred years since drama in the motion picture was introduced in the U.S. In 1947 the television was first sold commercially. Drama had found its way into the home. Advertising has since changed drastically,

following suit with most programs, by selling through sex. Now, video recorders and players make it possible to play almost any movie at home, regardless of rating. Plus, cable allows a home to receive any kind of programming almost 24 hours per day, sports included.

But essentially the issues are the same. First, drama is an illegitimate art-form, not approved by God, one which Christians should not engage in or be entertained by. Second, the content of most broadcasts and tapes are essentially anti-Christian. But at bottom the issue is this: "Does the Reformed Christian still believe the antithesis to be an essential part of the Christian life?"

**MAKE NO MISTAKE.** We have no battle with the television, VCR, or moving picture itself. The Reformed believer knows that there is not evil in things themselves, even as there is not blessing in things as such. No consistory may make a law against television, refusing to baptize children of couples who have a television in their home. Not only does this tempt families to move the television to the garage while the interview with the elders is conducted so that they can claim, "we have no television in our house." A rule such as "no television" finds no support in the Scripture.

Nevertheless, for some, having a television and VCR is not unlike a repentant drunkard buying a bottle of whiskey while his family is gone for a week, thinking he can keep it in the cupboard; or a penitent adulterer who moves his family next door to his former girlfriend.

Even so, our battle is not against the television itself, but against what comes into the home through the television — drama. Our controversy is not with a VCR, but with the movies that are played on the VCR.

**ARE WE ALONE?** The Protestant Reformed Churches — elders, pastors, parents, and others — are not the only ones in the world calling to arms against this enemy we identify

as "Drama, Television, and Movies."

Those who are familiar with the campaigns of "Focus on the Family" in recent years know that bombs of criticism have been dropped on the television and movie industry, as well as on the major sponsors of immoral programs. The cover story of "Citizen" magazine, February, 1989, was devoted to the thesis that most of television programming is "R"-rated.

Professors in Christian colleges have written books about the evils of television, calling the attention of Christians to the evil in this medium. John Ferre, of the University of Louisville, says that *Redeeming Television* (InterVarsity Press, 1992), by Professor Quentin J. Schultze of Calvin College, is "the strongest Christian critique of television on the market."

In *Christ and the Media* (Eerdmans, 1977) Malcolm Muggeridge, former TV personality for the BBC, speaks of television's inherent evils.

Even unbelievers are fearful of the devastating effects movies and television are having on modern culture and morals. Citizens' groups lobby to "clean up the air-waves."

So the Protestant Reformed voice is not alone in the call to engage this enemy.

But our voice almost echoes in silence when it identifies one aspect of the enemy as drama itself. Aside from Muggeridge, who claims the medium of the television itself is evil, most of the critics, like Schultze, want to "redeem" drama from the corrupting effects of the fall. They believe that, if the content of the programs would be changed to something healthful and moral, drama and movies would be profitable for the Christian. For this reason, some Christian magazines run, for their readers, reviews of newly-released movies (even "R"-rated ones!).

My thesis is that the assault must not only be on the corrupt content of the movies and television. Drama *itself* must be identified as an enemy. With a few exceptions, this has historically been the stance of the churches.



This is a strange sound in the world today. Even among the readership of the *Standard Bearer*, there may be some who, with condescending but real pity, say, "That battle has long been lost. The man must come to terms with reality. He's living in the 50s and 60s. There are new wars to be fought." Or they may say, as did some in the 60s, "That was never a justifiable war."

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*At stake in the battle  
is the life and existence  
of the Christian family  
and church themselves.*

---

My request, nevertheless, is that you hear the issues and arguments. For the sake of faithfulness to Christ and holiness, let's be willing to give a

new hearing to the case. If the enemy is what we identify him to be, then the church is warned by the blowing of this trumpet call, and the watchman is freed from the blood of those who perish. If he is not, I welcome your response showing the error of that identification.

**WHAT IS AT STAKE?** At stake in the battle is the life and existence of the Christian family and church themselves. At stake is holiness, without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

In the next few months, God willing, I hope to begin by showing that drama itself is not legitimate entertainment for Christians. Then, I want to point out the corruptions that this illegitimate art-form inevitably leads to. Third, I will show from history that there has been no truce with or surrender to this enemy. Fi-

nally, I want to go to the root, and plead for a renewed commitment to the antithetical calling that every believer has, whether he claims to be Reformed and Presbyterian or not. The will of the Lord who redeemed us is, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

**A CALL TO ARMS.** I call Christian parents, Reformed young people, and all who love the Lord, to join the battle, renew the conflict, be confident that this is a current conflict, and that effective, powerful weapons are ours in God's Word and Spirit.

The enemy makes large advances. He mocks daily. He cries out, "I will prevail against you, and ye shall be our servants." Will the church engage him? She must. Or be overcome. □

## *Report of Classis West*

Classis West met on Wednesday, March 3, 1993, in South Holland, Illinois. Classis met in three sessions and finished its business at about 10:30 Wednesday evening. Rev. C. Terpstra served as President of Classis.

Some of the routine business of Classis involved classical appointments, subsidy requests, and elections. Classical appointments were scheduled for Isabel, SD; for Trinity PRC of Houston, TX; and for Boise, ID. Seven subsidy requests totaling \$137,568.00 were approved for 1994 and will be forwarded to Synod, 1993 for its approval. Rev. M. DeVries was re-appointed to the Classical Committee, Rev. R. VanOverloop was elected as Synodical Deputy, and Revs. R. VanOverloop and G. Lanting as Church Visitors. The ministers

chosen as delegates to Synod, 1993, were Revs. R. Dykstra, C. Haak, S. Key, T. Miersma, and R. VanOverloop. Elder delegates chosen were Mr. Robert Brands, K. DeJong, Egbert Gritters, J. Lenting, and E. VanVoorthuizen. Since Rev. R. Hanco is leaving Classis West for Northern Ireland, Classis appointed a new Stated Clerk, Rev. R. VanOverloop.

Several matters were not routine. Classis approved an overture to Synod, 1993, seeking to establish a procedure for admitting ministers from other denominations under Article 9 of the Church Order. The Hope PRC of Isabel, South Dakota was declared to be dissolved by the providence of God.

Classis set April 14, 1993, as the date for a special meeting of Classis

West to be held in Randolph, Wisconsin, for the purpose of examining Pastor Jaiki Mahtani of the ERCS of Singapore, who has accepted the call from Trinity PRC of Houston, Texas. Monies remaining from a fund established for the support of Rev. A. Spriensma were set aside by classis to assist Pastor Mahtani and his family in moving themselves and their belongings to Houston.

Classis also decided the dates and meeting places for the next two meetings of Classis. The next two meetings of Classis West are scheduled for September 1, 1993, in Lynden, Washington, and March 2, 1994 in Redlands, California. □

Rev. R. Hanco  
Stated Clerk



### Evangelism Activities

If you read the report of Classis East that appeared here a couple of issues back, then you no doubt are aware of Classis' examination and subsequent admitting of Rev. Peter Breen, a retired Reformed Church of America pastor, to the office of minister of the Word and sacraments in our churches. Since that meeting of Classis, Rev. Breen has been able to preach for several of our churches in the Grand Rapids, MI area.

On Sunday, February 14, Rev. Breen found himself preaching both services in the First PRC of Holland, MI. First's pastor, Rev. W. Bruinsma, accompanied by a couple of elders from his church, went that day to preach for the Messiah Independent Reformed group in Overisel, MI, a town just east and south of Holland. This group, as its name suggests, is comprised of families and individuals who have recently found membership in other Reformed churches impossible. What will come of this contact remains to be seen, but God's Word never returns to Him void (Is. 55:11).

The Evangelism Committee of First in Holland also recently sponsored a three-part Bible Study Class on "The New Age Movement in Light of Holy Scripture." These classes were open to the public and were held on three successive Thursday nights: February 25, March 4 and 11. They were held at First and were led by their pastor, Rev. Bruinsma. These classes promised to look at just what the new age movement is all about and how it has become a dangerous enemy to Christ and true Christianity.

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

The Evangelism Committee of First in Holland has also just recently published Rev. C. Haak's pamphlet "Our Only Comfort" in Spanish: "Nuestro Unico Consuelo." This will no doubt help them better to reach the large Spanish-speaking portion of Holland's population.

The Evangelism Society of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI met with Mr. George Koster, the chaplain at the Kent County Jail. Mr. Koster gave a presentation concerning possible evangelism work at the jail.

### Ministerial Calls

Rev. C. Haak declined the call he was considering to serve as pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI.

### Congregational Highlights

The Council of the Lynden PRC in Lynden, WA is sponsoring a series of five meetings on the subject of marriage for their young married couples. Plans called for discussion groups to be held on two Sunday nights in February, two Sunday nights in March, and the last meeting on a Friday night in April with a potluck and fellowship time to follow.

The congregation of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX said goodbye to their pastor, Rev. R. Hanco and his family, with a farewell program after their second service on Sunday, February 21. They organized their thoughts around the theme of "God's Covenant Faithfulness." They also chose to read from Romans 10:1-15, which ends with these words: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things." One can only imagine the feeling of emotion showed by Trinity. On the one hand they rejoice that our churches have a missionary, but on the other, their hearts are heavy with the leaving of their pastor and family.

Trinity also has to have patience

now to deal with the problems of immigration that will have to be worked out with Rev. Mahtani and his family coming to Houston from the Republic of Singapore.

The Council of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI decided to survey their congregation concerning possible interest in the formation of a daughter congregation. This survey was conducted due to the continued growth of Hope's congregation.

The Council of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL recently approved a revised church building floor plan and hoped to come to the congregation soon for authorization to obtain the services of an architect for blueprints. The Council also intended to present to the congregation a plan for financing the building project.

The Choir of the Loveland, CO PRC presented a special concert after the evening service on Sunday, February 21.

### Mission Activities

Rev. R. Hanco was to be installed as missionary to Northern Ireland and the members of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship on March 7. Plans called for the installation service to be conducted by Rev. Hanco's father, Prof. H. Hanco.

Presently the Hanco family is scheduled to depart for Northern Ireland on March 15. Rev. G. VanBaren and his wife plan to return to the Hudsonville PRC on April 13. This will give the VanBarens about three and a half weeks to introduce the Hanco's to the CRF and the work to be done. □

### Food for Thought:

I am resolved, in the strength of peace, to preach all the truths of the gospel so far as I know them; and leave God to take care of the consequences.

*A. Toplady  
Works, p. 542.*



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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## Spring Lecture/Conference

### on Personal Witnessing

Friday, April 2, 1993  
Saturday, April 3, 1993

#### Speakers:

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop  
Pastor of Bethel  
Protestant Reformed Church  
on

"Winning Souls"  
Friday 7:30 P.M.

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg  
Pastor of Kalamazoo  
Protestant Reformed Church  
on

"Witnessing Under Persecution"  
with slide presentation on Romania  
Friday 8:30 P.M.

Rev. Steven Key  
Pastor of Randolph  
Protestant Reformed Church  
on

"Preparing Yourself to Give an  
Answer"  
Saturday 9:30 A.M.

Question/answer session  
and open discussion  
Saturday 10:30 A.M.

at

Hope Protestant Reformed Church  
1580 Ferndale S.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

if overnight accommodations are  
necessary  
call (616) 532-8737 or 677-3389.

Tapes available from  
Ken Elzinga  
3277 Lombard  
Grandville, MI 49418  
Phone (616) 532-8737

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon  
Protestant Reformed Church ex-  
presses its sincere Christian sym-  
pathy to Henrietta Klein and family in the  
death of her sister:

#### HILDA HUDSON.

May they find comfort in God's Word,  
"The eternal God is thy refuge, and  
underneath are the everlasting arms"  
(Deut. 33:27).

Rev. R. Dykstra, President  
Grace VanDenTop, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congrega-  
tion of the Loveland Protestant Re-  
formed Church express our heartfelt  
sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ronald  
Koole and family in the death of her  
brother,

#### MR. RICHARD VAN BEEK.

May the grieving be comforted with  
the assurance of God's Word that "all  
things work together for good to them  
that love God, to them who are the  
called according to His purpose" (Rom.  
8:28).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.  
Mr. Robert Brands, Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

There will be a special meeting  
of Classis West of the Protestant Re-  
formed Churches in Randolph, Wis-  
consin, on Wednesday, April 14, 1993,  
at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing, for the  
purpose of examining Rev. Jaiki  
Mahtani, pastor-elect of Trinity PRC  
of Houston, Texas. All delegates in  
need of lodging or transportation from  
the airport should notify the Clerk of  
Randolph's Consistory.

Rev. R. Hanko,  
Stated Clerk

### NOTICE!!

The new Stated Clerk of Classis  
West is:

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop  
1047 Florida Lane  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007  
Phone: (708) 529-4676

All material concerning Classis West  
should now be sent to him.

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular  
session on Wednesday, May 12, 1993 at  
the Southwest Protestant Reformed  
Church. Material to be treated at this  
session must be in the hands of the Stated  
Clerk by April 12, 1993.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

The R.F.P.A. Board continues to  
make progress in the work of acquiring a  
supply of bound volumes of back issues of  
the *SB* — including the large task of  
extracting from the first 20 volumes all of  
the articles written in English. The comple-  
tion of that project is still some distance in  
the future.

For now, we have a limited number  
of bound volumes of the last 15 years  
available at \$16.00 each. To order, write  
the Business Office:

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

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study of the  
Grandville PR Church wishes to ex-  
press its heartfelt sympathy to our  
fellow members, John and Arlene  
VanderWoude and Rod and Sandy  
Kooiman, in the death of their son and  
brother,

#### JIM VANDER WOUDE.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the  
hills, from whence cometh my help"  
(Psalm 121:1).

May God comfort them by His  
Word and Spirit.

Jon Huiskens, Pres.  
Judy Key, Sec'y.