

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

How could the Church of Alexander, the Hodges, and Warfield in the 19th and early 20th centuries become the Church of the Auburn Affirmation of 1923, tolerating her ministers' denial of doctrines that are fundamental to Christianity? ... How does a Reformed church go modernist? How does this happen seemingly overnight?

Read: Hodge, *The Harbinger*,
and the Hope of Presbyterianism — page 341

Vol. 69, No. 15
May 1, 1993

Meditation — Rev. Wilbur G. Bruinsma	
Children of Polished Stone	339
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
Hodge, <i>The Harbinger</i> , and the Hope of Presbyterianism	341
Letters	344
The Reader Asks	345
Feature — Rev. Eugene C. Case	
Concerned Presbyterians	345
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker	348
A Word Fitly Spoken — Rev. Dale H. Kuiper	
Order	350
The Strength of Youth — Rev. Barrett L. Gritters	
Renewing the Battle (2)	
Drama, Television, and Movies	351
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — Rev. Bernard Woudenberg	
The Split of 1953	353
Guest Article — Rev. Steven R. Houck	
The Power of the Preaching (1)	356
Book Review	358
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	359

Editorially speaking ...

Last October, the pastors and sessions of two congregations in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) invited the editor of the *Standard Bearer* to Mississippi to give two Reformation Day lectures in their churches. He was also privileged to preach at the worship services of two PCA congregations on the Lord's day. The minister chiefly responsible for this invitation was Pastor E.C. Case of Woodville, Mississippi.

Knowing Pastor Case as a man committed to the Reformed faith and knowledgeable concerning developments in the PCA, the editor of the *SB* asked the Presbyterian pastor to inform the readers of the *SB* of these developments. The article in this issue entitled, "Concerned Presbyterians," is the response to this request. We thank Pastor Case, and we look for similar contributions from the South in the future.

This seems to be a "Presbyterian issue" of the *SB*. The editorial carries on a discussion with a Presbyterian magazine about Presbyterianism. There is also a review of a book that recounts one of the most important events in the history of the Presbyterian church in our country.

Readers of the *SB*, we trust, have an interest in Presbyterian churches, their history, and their struggles. For these churches have come down in history as sisters to the Reformed churches. The truths for which they contend are usually the same truths that are precious to us Reformed.

DJE

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.,
4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418. Second Class
Postage Paid at Grandville, Michigan.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer,
P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie
den Hartog, Rev. Barry Gritters, Mr. Fred Hanko, Prof. Herman
Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Steven Key, Rev. Kenneth
Koole, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Dale Kuiper, Mr. James
Lanting, Rev. George Lubbers, Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers, Rev.
James Slopea, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren,
Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard
Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 538-1778
(616) 531-1490
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00 elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Children of Polished Stone

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace: ... Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.

Psalm 144:11, 12, 15

King David was able to observe the nation of Israel in a unique way. He was able to view her as one does who stands back and admires the beauty of a forest from a distance. Although he could see the individual trees in their own particular beauty, he could also admire Zion as a whole. How often he spoke of this mighty nation in glowing terms: here was Zion, the church of the living God! It is this beauty of Zion that prompted David to write the words of this Psalm.

What is it that made this nation as a whole so happy? No doubt, the root and source of Israel's happiness was Jehovah. "Happy is that people whose God is Jehovah." But with what had God blessed Israel in their service of Him? What had he given to David and the people over whom he ruled that made them as happy as they were?

There were two ways God dealt with Israel during the reign of David. One was the way of national prosperity. In this David rejoices, "that our

garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: that our oxen may be strong to labor; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case."

But it is the other way that concerns us. That which was first and foremost in bringing national happiness was that the youth of the nation were characterized by spiritual vim and vitality! This was to David the beauty of Israel: a nation filled with godly youth!

And this is true today no less than it was then. The most important factor that contributes today to the happiness of Zion, that is, of the church, is the spirituality of its youth. When the church and its leaders see young people walking in vanity and lies, then they grieve and are sad. But when her young people walk in the paths of righteousness and truth, then the church rejoices and is glad. This is what David describes for us when he uses the figures of this passage in Psalm 144.

Take a close look, young person, at how David describes godly young people.

First of all, he describes you as plants grown up in their youth. You are full-grown plants! Young plants, it is true, but fully grown! I know, it's pretty hard to convince parents and ministers of that at times. But that is what David says in this Word of God. Our young men and women, despite their youth, are healthy, thriving, flourishing, and fruitful plants. They are filled with the vigor of life; they

are able to be stepped on or bent beneath the elements of nature, only to spring back in all their vitality. That is quite a beautiful picture of covenant youth!

But David, remember, is describing *godly* young people. He is describing what characterizes godly youth from a spiritual point of view. You are not tender in the faith. The heresies and godlessness of this world cannot easily fool you or snuff out your spiritual life. You are filled with spiritual life, and that life brings forth fruit in your lives in the form of good works, even though you are yet young. And when this is seen by your parents and grandparents, when this is seen by all the church, then the church and your family in the church are made extremely happy.

Maybe it would do us well to consider exactly how it came to be, that you young people are plants grown up in your youth. Since the time when you were infants, godly young people, the Lord has worked in your hearts by His grace. Before you were even aware of it He placed a little seed in your hearts—a seed of regeneration. That seed gave to you a new life. Whereas before that time you were dead spiritually, that work of God saved you and gave you spiritual life.

Because of that life you were given spiritual eyes and ears. Your eyes and ears were no longer blinded and deaf to the Word of God, as they would have been if God had not worked in you by His grace.

As you developed and grew, so also did that little seed of regeneration. The instruction you received as infants in the arms of your parents,

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

and as time went on also in church, met with spiritual receptivity. God was working in your hearts by His Spirit in order that all the instruction you received by parents and ministers and Christian school teachers took root in your hearts and souls.

That seed of regeneration has sprouted into your consciousness, and now you have become full-grown plants. You have reached a stage of spiritual strength, and in that strength you bring forth fruit! In short, the fear of God is in your hearts! You know the truth, you speak the truth, and you walk the truth! This picture which David uses to describe godly young people ought to be a real encouragement to you. And you ought to know that this makes the entire church of Jesus Christ happy!

This picture of a full-grown plant provides us with a picture of the spiritual strength of youth; the next speaks of their spiritual beauty. David writes that godly youth are "cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace." Perhaps this figure can be more easily understood if we would translate it this way: godly youth are as polished pillars which garnish a palace. The cornerstones of this passage actually refer to the beautiful, well-sculptured pillars that surrounded the palaces of kings. Much time was spent carving, finishing, and polishing those pillars. All of this was accomplished by hand, but in time the rough-hewn stone out of the side of the mountain was slowly but surely, with chisel and hammer, shaped and polished into the pillar that eventually was set in the palace of the king. As such it adorned that palace. It was the majesty and beauty of that palace.

Another beautiful picture of godly youth! God has spent time shaping, molding, finishing, and polishing you young people in your lives. God has done that. He has accomplished this by means of the hammer and chisel of instruction and discipline. And God shapes and refines children the more by their own struggles and trials in life. Maybe that is something that we ought to think about a little more, young people. God directs you into

the way of struggles and difficulties. He puts these before you in life. But as He does, He never leaves you. He is always there guiding you, shaping and molding you, refining you as silver and gold is refined by fire. God sculpts you by means of these struggles, as well as by means of instruction, discipline, sin, friends, church, school—all in order that you might take your place in the palace of His church.

And having refined and polished you, God places you in His church as beautiful pillars—not little stones in the back wall where few people can see you, but pillars where everyone can gaze upon your beauty and strength. You, young men and young women, adorn the church with the fruits of the Spirit that are in you! You are polished stones in the church of Jesus Christ! Happy is the people that is in such a case!

The church rejoices in godly youth. But the church makes her boast in God. We cannot help but behold the hand of God in the work of His church. Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah. When we look upon young men and women who love and seek the Lord, then we have to say, "Our God is Jehovah!" Every time we view our godly youth we cannot fail to see the covenant faithfulness of Jehovah. God tells parents, "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations."

Covenant parents believe that promise of God. We believe it, because God swears it by His own name: Jehovah, the I Am That I Am, the faithful, never-changing God of His people. If God did not swear to us by that name we might begin to doubt. We would not doubt God's ability to save us, but we would doubt His desire to save us. Who would save the children of those who fail so miserably to fulfill their calling as parents? How often we as parents ask forgiveness of God for our unfaithfulness, our failures, our weaknesses, our sins as parents. If God worked in the hearts of children strictly on the basis of what we as parents have done,

there would be no salvation of our children. But God is Jehovah, who remains faithful to His covenant promises from one generation to the next.

God saves our young people—not through the work of parents, but through the precious work of Jesus Christ on the cross. You, young people, are sons and daughters. Not only are you the sons and daughters of your parents, but, more importantly, you are the sons and daughters of the living God! And you are so because you have been adopted by God in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Through Christ our sins are forgiven us. Through Christ we are redeemed from the bondage of sin and death. Through Christ we are given hearts that are cleansed from sin and iniquity. It is in the cross of Christ, then, that the church of Christ, parents and children alike, make their boast. Neither do godly youth become complacent in their calling as God's children in the midst of this world. They joy in the God of their salvation and they live out of the holiness of Christ.

*If God worked in the hearts
of children
strictly on the basis
of what we as parents
have done, there would be
no salvation of our children.*

But there is another truth that we do well to bear in mind. Though God saves His church in the line of continued generations, not all children born into the church and into the sphere of the covenant are saved. "They are not all Israel that are of Israel." For that reason David also speaks these words in verse 11: "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." When David refers to strange children he is not speaking of the children of a foreign nation. He does not wish in this passage to be

delivered from young men and women of foreign nations who happened to be in Israel for one reason or another. David refers here to those children of Israel who themselves were strangers to God.

David was painfully aware in his own personal life of the truth taught in Romans 9:7, 6: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." David calls such children strange because, although they were within the sphere of the church and covenant, though they outwardly were called church and the covenant seed of that church, nevertheless their hearts were far from God. They were Israel in name only and not in heart!

And this revealed itself in their lives too. These young people spoke vanity. Their words were not the same as those found on the lips of a true child of God. They were empty and void of any spiritual understanding. In fact, the things they said indicated that they were no different from the wicked world. Their right hand,

the hand that normally was one of truth and justice, was now a hand of lies and deceit. These strange children spoke pious-sounding words in the ears of parents and ministers. But their hearts were far from the Lord. When these children spoke, they sounded sincere enough, but their words were lies, because as soon as their parents' backs were turned, they walked in the way of sin, trampling underfoot the commands of God. And when this is observed, when rumors begin to float around of what is happening, then the church is extremely sad and grieved. She is not happy when her young men and women walk in the way of sin.

How hard it is to say concerning these children who are our own flesh and blood, "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children." But David says that, and the church does too. We know that God does not take pleasure in wickedness. We know He hates the workers of iniquity. And because of this we wish to be delivered from the hand of ungodly youth. Such youth can only have an adverse effect on the godly youth in the church. They give a bad name to those who do not deserve a

bad name. They are as well a bad influence. May God rid us of such young people!

O, it hurts to say such a thing! We love our own flesh and blood! But we are talking of the happiness of the church here! The whole church grieves over young people who walk like fools. Their evil deeds cannot be hid. The church hears of them. Such young people only cause unrest, grief, and even discord in the church. For Zion's sake, for the peace of Israel, David says, and we with him, "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children!"

As God cleanses His church of evil doers, and prospers the way of those young men and women who walk in uprightness, the church becomes as beautiful as a palace surrounded by its pillars of polished stone. In our youth will be seen the strength and beauty of the church of Jesus Christ, a church which reflects the beauty of her Lord. Then the church proceeds in confidence that the Lord preserves her from one generation to the next. "Happy is that people, that is in such a case!" □

Editorial

Hodge, *The Harbinger*, and the Hope of Presbyterianism

The *Harbinger* is a religious magazine published by the Kingdom Victory Group, Inc. in Marietta, Georgia. The editor is David E. Goodrum. The staff and writers are mostly Presbyterian conservatives. They include Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.; L. Byron Snapp; Curtis I. Crenshaw; Kenneth G. Talbot; G.I. Williamson; Reg Barrow; Carl W. Bogue; and Edwin P. Elliott, Jr.

A "harbinger" is someone, or something, that presages or foreshadows what is coming. The first robin is harbinger of spring. President Clinton's act in the first days of his presidency of removing restraints against the murder of unborn babies was a harbinger of hard days ahead for those who honor the sovereignty and righteousness of God in His law.

The *Harbinger* intends to be a harbinger of the coming victory of the kingdom of God on earth, including, I would think, the victory of Presbyterianism.

An Accurate Review

The January, 1993 issue features a critique of my review of Presbyterian theologian A.A. Hodge's book,

Evangelical Theology: A Course of Popular Lectures. Originally published as *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes*, the book was republished with the new title by the Banner of Truth Trust in 1976 and reprinted in 1990. My review of the book appeared in the September 15, 1992 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

After some positive comments about the book, my review stated that "the evangelical theology of A.A. Hodge is weak and erroneous in basic areas of the Reformed faith — astonishingly so." It then went on to document this charge. The review mentioned Hodge's doctrines of creation; predestination; the image of God in man; the covenant; and the church, as the areas of weakness and error.

The editor of the *Harbinger* tells us that the critique of my review of Hodge was written at the editor's request:

In the September 15, 1992 issue of the *Standard Bearer* magazine (published by folks in the Protestant Reformed Churches), the Editor, Mr. David Engelsma, wrote a review of A.A. Hodge's book, *Evangelical Theology*, in which he pointed out a number of supposed theological errors in Hodge's views, expressed in that book. Dr. Jerry Crick, at my request, has written an excellent article after investigating this issue.

The critique by Dr. Crick, recent graduate of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, begins by freely acknowledging that certain of my criticisms of Hodge's theology in *Evangelical Theology* are well-founded:

In a September 15, 1992 review of A.A. Hodge's lectures on doctrine, published under the title, *Evangelical Theology* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), the editor of the *Standard Bearer*, David Engelsma, made certain assertions which might have served to considerably unsettle many of those who have long held the notion that the Princeton Theology is that to which the seminaries and ministers of today need to return. In order to avoid loquacity by the present writer, let it be understood

that the editor of the *Standard Bearer* was quite accurate in most of his observations to the effect that "the evangelical theology of A.A. Hodge is weak and erroneous in basic areas of the Reformed faith — astonishingly so." Before the reader gasps in horror and disbelief at such a seemingly arrogant statement, consider the following brief observations from Hodge's work (p. 24).

Dr. Crick then calls attention to Hodge's doctrines of creation and of the church. Crick misses, however, the statement by Hodge concerning church organization and government that is most troublesome. In the context of the competing claims of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian Churches that their church polity is that which Christ has ordained, Hodge wrote:

Yet the permanent results of biblical interpretation unite with the history of Christ's providential and gracious guidance of the churches in proving that he (Christ) never intended to impose upon the Church as a whole any particular form of organization. Neither he nor his apostles ever went beyond the suggestion of general principles and actual inauguration of a few rudimentary forms. The history of the churches during all subsequent ages shows that these rudimentary forms have been ever changing in correspondence with the changes in their historical conditions.... These various denominational forms of the living Church are all one in their essentials, and differ only in their accidents.... All of these, since they exist and are used as instruments of the Holy Ghost, have in that fact a providential justification (pp. 363, 364).

This is a denial that Presbyterian church government is the government revealed by Christ in Scripture for His Messianic kingdom, the church. The Presbyterian confessions teach differently. The Westminster Confession of Faith declares that "the Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers" (30.1). The Form of Presbyterial

Church-Government maintains that Christ has appointed officers for His church; that Christ has "instituted government and governors ecclesiastical in the church"; that Scripture "doth hold out" church assemblies; and that these officers, this government, and these assemblies are those of Presbyterianism. This is also the confessional stand of Reformed churches in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession: "We believe that this true Church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word...."

"Arminian to the Core"?

My criticism of Hodge's doctrine of the covenants, however, Crick rejects:

Another criticism of the editor of the *Standard Bearer* was Hodge's treatment of the covenant of grace as it is conditioned upon faith. The editor states that Hodge's treatment "is Arminian to the core," and "this is to make the covenant of grace in reality another covenant of works. The work is now faith." ...When Hodge speaks of faith as a condition, he should be understood as using that term in the sense of the personal responsibility of man to believe in the Gospel in order to be saved ... the reader will not find him to be "Arminian to the core." (pp. 28, 29).

In the interests of accuracy and honesty, the editor of the *Harbinger* ought to inform his readers that I did not charge that A.A. Hodge was Arminian to the core. Although Dr. Crick gets it right in his critique, the *Harbinger* splashes on its cover the question, "Was A.A. Hodge of Old Princeton Really 'Arminian to the Core?'" This is also the title of Crick's article. I did not write that Hodge was Arminian to the core, nor would I write this. What I wrote was this: "The lecture (of A.A. Hodge) on 'God's Covenants with Man' is completely unsatisfactory. It is Arminian to the core." "It is Arminian," not: "He is Arminian." There is an important difference.

Crick's explanation of my criti-

cism of Hodge's doctrine of the covenant also leaves something to be desired:

The underlying presupposition of the editor's criticism here is that there is no such thing as "common" grace, in keeping with the supralapsarian position of the Protestant Reformed Church, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema being the primary theologian of that denomination. Hoeksema's position against common grace is well known by Reformed theologians; therefore this position must be seen as the basis for the editor's criticism of Hodge's treatment (p. 28).

This is really an unscholarly response to my objection to Hodge's doctrine of the covenant, unworthy of Dr. Crick who is obviously both a scholar and Reformed. Suppose I were to respond to his defense of Hodge's doctrine of a conditional covenant this way: "The underlying presupposition of the Presbyterian theologian's defense of Hodge is that man must do something to effect his salvation. This is in keeping with the theonomic position of Christian Reconstruction, R.J. Rushdoony being the primary thinker of that movement. Rushdoony's position that obedience to the law is necessary for salvation is well known by Reformed theologians; therefore, this position must be seen as the basis for Presbyterian theologian's defense of Hodge."

How would Dr. Crick respond?

Not very happily, I am sure. He would let me know in no uncertain terms that theonomy had nothing to do with his defense of Hodge; that I had misrepresented theonomy; and that he was his own man, thank you, not the slavish follower of the primary thinker of the movement, quite capable of thinking for himself. In addition, he would ask me to judge his defense on the merits of the arguments that he himself brought up. He would be right. Why does he not do to me as he would that I do to him?

My criticism of Hodge's doctrine of the covenant had nothing to do with common grace. I neither mentioned nor alluded to common grace

in the whole of my review of Hodge's book. I deliberately refrained from quoting a passage in the book in which Hodge forcefully expresses the Protestant Reformed objection against common grace's attributing good works to the unregenerate:

All true morality has its root and ground in, and derives its only adequate motives from, the doctrines of Christianity and from the fellowship of God with man which Christ secures. A rebel against supreme and fundamental obligation cannot possibly be righteous in any relation, however subordinate. And the only motives which render any action completely righteous are supreme love to God, and love to man for God's sake; for "whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do," if we would claim the meed of the righteous, we must "do all for the glory of God" (pp. 273, 274).

My rejection of common grace did not secretly underlie my criticism of Hodge's doctrine of the covenant. Were I as ardent a defender of (Kuyperian) common grace as the mighty Abraham himself, I would still vigorously oppose Hodge's doctrine of the covenant. It is exactly my desire that Presbyterians like Dr. Crick, even though they may be committed to Kuyper's theory that God blesses the unregenerate in this life with material gifts, will yet critically examine the doctrine of the covenant proposed by Hodge.

This is what Hodge taught about the covenants in chapter IX of *Evangelical Theology*.

...the covenant imposed by a superior upon an inferior is simply a conditional promise. Hence we have the covenant of works ... and the covenant of grace (p. 166).

God offered to man in this gracious covenant of works an opportunity of accepting his grace and receiving his covenant gift of a confirmed, holy character, secured on the condition of personal choice. God gave Adam and Eve the best chance he could, and he put them surely under absolutely the most favourable conditions that we can conceive of. He brought

them into a new garden, and he introduced them under the most favourable circumstances, with one exception — he allowed the devil to go into the camp. Why he did that I do not know; but with that exception the conditions were the most favourable we can conceive of (p. 168).

But this fact of the covenant of works does not stand by itself. It is a part of a great whole, and if you leave out any element of the system you will not get an understanding of the covenant. This covenant of works which God introduces ... is part of that greater system which culminates in the covenant of grace... (p. 170).

The covenant of grace is just the human temporal side, which makes human redemption possible and gives its benefits freely to us. In the case of every one to whom the gospel comes, and to whom it gives salvation, it is done upon the condition of faith. Now, here is a covenant with a condition — whosoever believes shall be saved, whosoever believeth not shall be damned (p. 172).

This doctrine of God's covenant, not Professor A.A. Hodge himself, I called, and call, "Arminian to the core." That the very essence of God's covenant is its being a conditional promise, that is, a promise dependent upon man; that God in Paradise was giving Adam and Eve the best chance He could; and that the covenant of grace, in explicit comparison with the conditional covenant of works, is described as giving salvation upon the condition of faith, are the application of fundamental Arminian tenets to the doctrine of the covenant. It is of the very essence of the Arminian system of salvation, from election to perseverance unto final glory, that it is conditional.

In defending Hodge's conception of the covenant, Dr. Crick must not quote from the "Three Forms of Unity," as he does, to prove that the Reformed confessions teach that faith is the necessary way and means of salvation and that it is an activity of the one who has faith. No one denies this. But he must find confessional basis in these Reformed creeds for the notion that this necessary, active faith

is a condition — an act of the sinner upon which the covenant and promise of God depend for their realization and fulfillment. He may save himself the trouble of looking. He will find no such teaching.

On the contrary, the Canons of Dordt, denying that faith is a "prerequisite, cause or condition" of election, affirm that faith is to be regarded as itself proceeding from God's election with all the other gifts of salvation (I/9). In so many words, the Canons reject the teaching that views "faith... as a condition of salvation," judging this the Arminian view of faith (I, Rejection of Errors/3). When this Reformed creed comes to relate faith to the salvation of the elect sinner, it presents faith as "the gift of God." It denies that the relationship between faith and salvation is that "God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ" (III, IV/14). The conditional relationship is ruled out.

In this as in all else, the Canons are only the further explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. The Reformed faith, therefore, confesses an unconditional salvation. This is of the very essence of the Reformed system of salvation from election to preservation. Salvation is gracious. With specific refer-

ence to faith, salvation is *by means of* faith, not *because of* faith.

The Main Concern

Important as all of this is, this was not the main concern of my criticism of the theology of A.A. Hodge as taught in *Evangelical Theology*. My concern was Hodge's tolerant attitude toward all kinds of errors and heresies: evolution; hierarchical church government; denial of predestination; Arminianism; and even Romanism. A.A. Hodge minimized the significance of basic doctrinal differences. The inevitable results had to be a lack of sharp, antithetical preaching and a neglect of discipline. Since he was a professor in the seminary, these results would certainly soon show up in the pastors whom he trained.

This explained something that had long puzzled and troubled me. How could the Presbyterian Church in the USA so quickly and thoroughly fall away from the gospel? How could the Church of Alexander, the Hodges, and Warfield in the 19th and early 20th centuries become the Church of the Auburn Affirmation of 1923, tolerating her ministers' denial of doctrines that are fundamental to Christianity? How could this Church cast out her truest and best son, J.G. Machen, with hatred and scorn, because he condemned and opposed

theological liberalism? How does a Reformed church go modernist? How does this happen seemingly overnight?

A.A. Hodge's republished *Evangelical Theology* made everything clear.

With reference to Hodge's tolerant attitude toward heresies, I concluded my review this way:

If this was the theology of old Princeton in the days of its glory, the refusal of hundreds of Presbyterian ministers to condemn fundamental departures from the faith and to take a stand for the truth in the early 1900s becomes understandable. Indeed, it is understandable that the Presbyterian Church apostatized into modernism. And if this theology is the theology of evangelicalism at the end of the 20th century — and the sounder evangelicalism at that — evangelicalism today is in no better shape. Nor is its future any brighter.

Let every Presbyterian and Reformed church that is still standing for the confessional Reformed faith take heed.

If the *Harbinger* and its Presbyterian stalwarts are truly a sign of good things to come for Presbyterianism in the United States, they must say no to this aspect of the evangelical theology of A.A. Hodge. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Clearing the OPC

I could not let the opportunity pass without thanking you for your rebuttal of Mr. Ernie Springer's letter in your editorial, "1994? — 'Maybe Wrong'?" (the *Standard Bearer*, March 15, 1993). There is only one thing I should like to add. Early in his letter Mr. Springer mentions that he is a member of the Orthodox Presbyte-

rian Church. I, too, am a member of the OPC and would like to clear our denomination's good name of any false conclusions your readers may have come to concerning our eschatology. I am not aware of any other OPC member, including Mr. Springer's own pastor, who gives one iota of credence to Mr. Camping's date-setting for our Lord's second advent. There have even been OPC

churches in the New Jersey Presbytery which have taken "official" stands against Mr. Camping's eschatology. Among the OPC members I know, Mr. Camping's view has met with only chagrin, anger, and disdain.

Again, thank you for your fine rebuttal.

(Mrs.) Susan D. Fletcher
Haddon Heights, NJ

■ Must the Minister Preside?

My question concerns Article 37 of the Church Order of Dordt. This article requires that the minister preside at consistory meetings. What is the reason for this? Why may not an elder preside? Is not this rule contradicted by Acts 6:4?

I very much appreciate the *SB*. It is a magazine with much in-depth teaching helpful for daily life.

Harv Nyhof
Holland, MI

Response:

Very little is written by the com-

monly regarded authorities on church polity about your question. Our answer would be that the minister is to preside because he is the most qualified for this task. The ministers are trained in church polity in the seminary. They gain more experience in the work of the consistory since they serve continuously, while the elders serve for terms of three years.

Monsma and Van Dellen write, "The presidency at Consistory meetings the Church Order attributes to the Ministers and not to the Elders. This is done not because the office of Elders is inferior, but because as a rule the Ministers are better qualified

by reason of their special training and more extended experience.... The president merely presides and regulates as a brother amongst brethren" (*The Church Order Commentary*, 1954 edition, p. 169). We could find nothing in the Dutch authorities that speaks to this question.

If one understands that the work of the consistory is part of "prayer and the ministry of the word," the minister's presiding over consistory meetings would in no way contradict the rule of Acts 6:4.

Editorial Committee

Concerned Presbyterians

Memories of twenty years ago were evoked for many as approximately 150 people, most of them members of the Presbyterian Church in America, assembled at the Ebenezer Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC on March 23, for what was billed as "Concerned Presbyterian Day." Dr. Morton H. Smith, Dean of the Faculty at the Greenville (SC) Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and former Stated Clerk of the PCA General Assembly,

made direct reference to this twenty-year connection in his speech to those assembled. He recalled that it was almost exactly twenty years ago that he made a similar address to the Convocation of Sessions of Churches in the old Presbyterian Church in the United States—a convocation which led directly to the First General Assembly of the PCA (then known as the Continuing Presbyterian Church) in December, 1973.

On that former occasion Dr. Smith spoke to the issue of "How Is the Gold Become Dim" (Lam. 4:1)—a survey of the decline of the PCUS. With heavy heart Dr. Smith announced that he felt compelled to take the same topic for his address these twenty years later, only this time with refer-

ence to the decline of the PCA. The only hopeful note was that, whereas on that former occasion those who gathered had pretty much given up on effecting any change in the PCUS and were resigned to separation from their mother church, on the occasion of the Charlotte meeting there still remains a feeling that the cause of Reformed Truth and Presbyterian Order is not altogether lost in the PCA. Few of those assembled likely would be of a mind to move toward separation from the PCA any time soon.

The Charlotte meeting was called under the auspices of "Concerned Presbyterians"—another feature contributing to the twenty-year connection. One of the principal groups

The Rev. E.C. Case is a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). He is pastor of two PCA congregations in Mississippi.

active in the movement leading to the formation of the PCA was called "Concerned Presbyterians." The present group has no direct connection with the former, but the adoption of this name can only be viewed as a conscious attempt to arouse people to certain dangers that threaten the doctrinal and church political integrity of the PCA in ways similar to those which led to the decline of the PCUS. Many of those involved in the present movement are also associated with the *Presbyterian Advocate*, an independent magazine which addresses issues within the PCA; and *Advocate* Editor, Dr. David C. Lachmann, was the moderator of the Charlotte meeting.

In addition to Dr. Smith, addresses were heard from Dr. Stanley D. Wells, a Ruling Elder from Phoenix, AZ, and from Dr. Carl W. Bogue, Jr., Pastor of Faith PCA in Akron, OH. Dr. Wells, who has served on the Judicial Business and Christian Education Committees of the PCA General Assembly, as well as on the Standing Judicial Commission of the PCA, spoke on "Judicial Matters in the PCA." Dr. Bogue's topic was "Worship." Following these addresses, Ruling Elder George R. Caler, of Faith PCA, Akron, OH, and a member of the committee that arranged the Charlotte meeting, read "A Declaration of Concern and A Call to the Presbyte-



Rev. Eugene Case

rian Church in America to Be True to Her Declaration." This statement, which summarizes the concerns addressed in the speeches made at the Charlotte meeting, is in the form of a memorial to be placed before the Twenty-first General Assembly which will meet, D.V., in June, in Columbia, SC. Ruling and teaching Elders present at Charlotte were invited to sign this memorial and were encouraged to circulate it to obtain other signatures prior to the Assembly.

The memorial begins by recalling the "Message to All Churches of Jesus Christ Throughout the World," which was adopted by the First General Assembly of the PCA (by then called the National Presbyterian Church). This message was a testimony, making the case for separation from the PCUS and setting forth what kind of Church was being brought into existence. In that "Message," the new denomination affirmed its commitment to the authority of Scripture as "the inerrant Word of God ... the only infallible and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice." Moreover, it was asserted (in a quotation lifted from the "Address to All Churches" which had been adopted by the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in 1861) that the church "has no right to utter a single syllable upon any subject" except as the Lord "puts words in her mouth."

As to the system of doctrine found in the Word of God, the new denomination affirmed this to be "the Reformed Faith as set forth in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms," to which she declared herself to be "committed without reservation." Also from the 1861 "Address" was lifted a section including the statement, "We are not ashamed to confess that we are intensely Presbyterian" — this by way of asserting the belief that Presbyterian Church Order is biblical Church Order "according to the pattern shown in the mount." There was a particular concern, in connection with this, that the work of the church be done by the appointed courts of the church and

not by agencies outside the church or erected by the church.

Perhaps the most significant statement in the whole document (the "Message to All Churches" — 1973) was this: "We declare that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God." As pointed out by Dr. Smith in his address, this truth is affirmed also in other early deliverances of the PCA, so that while there is strong emphasis on evangelism and fulfilling the Great Commission, the end is never merely to "win souls" or organize churches, but rather to glorify God — to seek to meet what our Shorter Catechism (Q&A 1) asserts is "the chief end of man." This emphasis, of course, has profound implications for the whole work of the church, and especially for worship — one of the principal concerns addressed at the Charlotte meeting. As Dr. Bogue pointed out, only that worship is God-glorifying which is conducted on the basis of the regulative principle enshrined in the Westminster Standards on the basis of the clear teaching of the Word of God.

The problem in the PCA, and the reason for the Charlotte meeting, is that the PCA has come short of her initial declarations in all of these areas, and that not slightly or insignificantly but in ways that are alarming and ultimately destructive of the doctrinal and church political integrity of the denomination. Moreover, it is apparent that the PCA has come short of these declarations, not incidentally, but as the result of a conscious effort on the part of many in the church to move the PCA away from the strong emphasis of those earlier declarations.

It would be too great an imposition upon the reader to get into much detail relative to these matters, but a few examples may be in order to demonstrate that the concerns expressed at the Charlotte meeting are substantial.

In the area of the inerrancy and especially the sufficiency of Scripture, many of us in the PCA are alarmed at the willingness of some Presbyteries to receive and ordain men to the office of teaching Elder "who hold to

the possibility of 'new revelation' from God through prophecy or other means" (Memorial, p. 2, para. A). By and large, the General Assembly, in handling judicial cases arising out of this practice, has sustained complaints against this sort of thing. However, these decisions affect only the particular court complained against; and, in one case, the same Assembly rendered opposing decisions in cases from two different Presbyteries — a confusing situation, to say the least. The problem, of course, is that Assembly decisions, made by majority vote, with no debate allowed, and with the possibility that some of the commissioners present for one vote may not be present for the other, are subject to all the problems of popular democracy. One does not have to sit in many Assembly meetings to realize this is no way to run a church.

In terms of worship, the PCA is, again, confusion. Unlike the PRC, in which those visiting in one or another congregation will find uniformity in worship, one never knows what one may run up on in a PCA church. The range runs from strict adherence to the regulative principle (even to the singing of Psalms only, unaccompanied by instrumental music) to charismatic-style services. A major controversy has erupted in recent years over the use of drama and dance and such things as the substitution of movies, etc., for the preaching of the Word — i.e., entertainment in place of worship. Several protests have been entered at General Assembly meetings where, for several years now, commissioners (not to mention the Holy God) have been assaulted by the placing of more than one kind of "strange fire" upon the altar of worship services, so-called. Reliable reports indicate that things are even wilder in certain of the individual churches. Dr. Bogue, in his address, gave a devastating Scriptural rebuke to these practices.

Not much more needs to be said, really, about Presbyterian order than that it is a dead letter in the PCA. The committees of the General Assembly have become virtual boards. Worse

than that, their work has been turned over, for all intents and purposes, to the staffs of these committees who, in effect, drive the work of the committees. The mission committees even dictate to the Presbyteries as to who is and is not an acceptable candidate for missionary service. The reports these committees make to the General Assembly are little more than public relations promotions, and any attempt seriously to debate policy on the floor of the Assembly is generally greeted with rebuke for being overly zealous for doctrinal purity, for not being "open" to the working of the Spirit, and with calls to "trust" the committees.

As far as judicial cases are concerned, these are now handled, on the Assembly level, by a Standing Judicial Commission which, in effect, acts as a court above all courts in the church. Several articles in the *Presbyterian Advocate* have detailed abuses by this Commission which have led to the denial of due process to various parties in certain cases. Dr. Well's condemnation of this procedure was withering. As one who has served on the Commission, he pointed out how the SJC has the power, and has in fact exercised that power, to deny justice to aggrieved parties by such tactics as changing the issue addressed in the case, denying or limiting access to the record of the case, and limiting debate. He sees it as being as corrupt and devilish as anything conceived in the bowels of the Vatican.

We have gone on for much too long and have not yet addressed the matter of doctrinal fidelity, which is currently being debated in the PCA in terms of the "strict" or "full" subscription versus the "loose" or "system" subscription view relative to the ordination vows taken by officebearers in the PCA. For a full and excellent treatment of this issue, we would commend the booklet by Dr. Morton Smith, *Subscription to the Westminster Standards in the Presbyterian Church in America*, which was reviewed by the Editor of the *Standard Bearer* a few issues back.

It remains only for us to make some concluding remarks concerning the Charlotte meeting and the future of the PCA.

One would hope, of course, that this meeting will give rise to a movement which will be productive of an awakening in the PCA to the dangers posed by the current drift in the denomination. Whether this will, in fact, happen is problematic.

Those who seem determined to de-emphasize the distinctives of the Reformed Faith and Presbyterian Order are firmly in control of the committees and agencies of the PCA General Assembly. At the present time, dissatisfaction on the part of the church at large with their direction of the Assembly is not overwhelming. If every ruling and teaching Elder present in Charlotte signed the Memorial, they would still constitute but a small percentage of those eligible to sit and vote at General Assemblies. Nor is there the sort of dissatisfaction in the pew that there was 25 or 30 years ago, when people were fed up with out-and-out modernism in the pulpits and the wild-eyed socialist schemes of the bureaucrats in the denominational headquarters of the PCUS. Few in the pew, today, realize the importance of what happens beyond the local congregation.

In addition to this, there is the problem that many elders — ruling and teaching — are not willing to invest the time and effort necessary to study the issues before the Church, nor are they willing to take the risk of making a stand for the truth. Many who are eligible to attend Assemblies

*Few in the pew, today,
realize the importance
of what happens beyond
the local congregation.*

do not even consider attending. Many of those who do attend gripe and complain about the amount of time taken up by what passes for "debate" at the Assembly. Somehow, they do

not think that debating points of doctrine and order is doing the work of the church. One wonders what they think ecclesiastical assemblies are supposed to do. They do not want to hear and deal with judicial cases, and yet we call our assemblies "courts." They are, in their own way, as unfaithful to their calling as any heretical officebearer.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the situation in the PCA has not, as yet, come anywhere close to where we were in 1973 in the PCUS. We have not yet reached the point where men are openly tolerated in their denial of the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and so forth. No one who answers in the negative to the ordination vow regarding the receiving and adopting of the Westminster Standards is likely

to be ordained in our Presbyteries. As the Memorial points out, the problem is not in the area of profession and confession so much as in the area of practical application. Dr. Smith, for example, was very careful to say, at the outset, that the PCA is not apostate. But it is of no small concern to many of us that, even if the issue should become one of open and professed opposition to the teaching of our Standards, it is still exceedingly difficult to stir people to action until the matter begins to affect them personally, in their local congregations. We saw this in the PCUS. The conservatives in the Christian Reformed Church could probably relate the same thing. This sort of "spiritual inertia" does not bode well for those who seek to recall the PCA to her foundational principles.

Those who met at Charlotte were specifically warned that we must not allow this movement to degenerate into a "party caucus" of the sort known to be operating in the PCA, comprised of those who think the current course of the denomination is just fine. Dr. Smith was particularly forceful in denouncing the substitution of power politics and political maneuvering in place of submission to the Scripture and the Constitution of the church as the voice of God in leading us to fidelity in practice as well as profession. No reformation of the church has ever been effected by adroit political posturing. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This must ever be the watchword of those who seek the reformation of the church. □

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

■ A Precursor of Things to Come

The congregation of the LaPorte Church of Christ in Fort Collins, Colorado is having its property confiscated by the state because it refuses to pay a \$10,075 fine for violating election laws. In 1988 the church lobbied against a proposed Fort Collins gay-rights ordinance without registering as a political action committee. The pastor of the church, Rev. Pete Peters, maintained he was exercising his freedom of religion in opposing the ordinance. Said Peters, "Christ did not say, 'Go all over the world, but first sign up with Caesar as a political action committee.'" Rev. Peters gives every indication that he will fight to

the death for his convictions on this matter. In a recent sermon he warned his congregation that his church would hold no passive protests. "You will not find us at a prayer meeting holding hands. We need our hands. We will be praying, but we can pray and do other things," he said from the pulpit, on which he hung a wooden plaque with the words "We don't dial 911" surrounding a carved gun.

Rev. Peters ought to be reminded of the admonition of Jesus to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Rev. Peters ought also be reminded of the teaching of Romans 13:1-7.

Aside from all this, the incident does indicate what is in store for the church of Jesus Christ in the last days. Every institution and every person — gays, abortionists, atheists, *et al.* — must have their rights protected by law in our society. Everyone, that is, except the Christian and the church.

Fort Collins Coloradoan

■ A Decision That Satisfies Neither Side

Under this title (cf. September 15, 1992 issue) we reported on the decision concerning women in church office taken by the 1992 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Faced with the question of ratifying the 1990 synod's decision to open all offices to women and to make the necessary changes in the Church Order, the CRC synod decided not to ratify change in the Church Order, but to "... encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders."

That this decision satisfies neither those who advocate opening all offices to women nor those who oppose having women serve as ministers and elders is becoming increas-

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

ingly evident. According to the latest figures there are now 32 churches with 7255 members who have left the CRC. These churches are militant opponents of women in church office. Their numbers are increasing, though they represent only about 2.3% of the total membership of the CRC.

Meanwhile Classis Grand Rapids East, in which reside several churches which have already installed women into the office of elder, is sending three overtures on women in office to the Synod of 1993. One overture calls for ratification of women in office by a two-year process ending in 1994. Another requests a local exemption for Church of the Servant CRC. A third overture, from First CRC, asks that Synod 1993 ratify the 1990 decision opening all offices to women without waiting for 1994.

The first overture, which came from Sherman Street CRC, proposes that synod change the church order so that women may serve in all offices and that this change be ratified by the synod of 1994. This overture passed unanimously with little discussion.

First CRC's overture attracted considerably more attention. First CRC asked that classis send an overture to synod to "appeal the decision of Synod 1992, Art. 105, B, 4 to 'not ratify the change in Church Order Article 3' and overtures the Synod of 1993 to ratify the decision of the Synod of 1990 by changing the Church Order Article 3 to read: 'All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of minister, elder, deacon and evangelist.'" According to First CRC's pastor, Rev. Morris Greidanus, the intent of the overture is to have synod rescind the decision of 1992 against ratification and then have synod vote again on the 1990 proposal to open all offices to women. After being advised that the overture is proper and legal, by Dr. Henry DeMoor, professor of Church Polity at Calvin Seminary, and after lengthy discussion, the classis unanimously approved the overture.

The classis then addressed the request of the Church of the Servant

CRC for exemption from the ban on women elders. The main ground cited by the Church of the Servant is "because through the years a large number of members have joined COS who could not maintain membership in churches where women's gifts were not fully utilized in leadership functions, serious damage would be done to our fellowship if the decision of the 1990 Synod, which approved women serving as elders, could not be implemented." Church of the Servant began the practice of installing elders in September of 1992 in spite of the 1992 synod's decision. Rev. Jack Roeda, pastor of Church of the Servant, said this overture was an alternate plan if Synod 1993 did not ratify women in office. Classis also approved this overture, though not without several amendments and a lengthy discussion.

What ought not escape our attention in all this is the language used by those who favor having women serve in the offices in the church. They speak of "utilizing women's gifts to serve in the church." And they speak of "leadership functions" and "serving" the church. We submit that the issue in this discussion and debate is not the use or non-use of women's gifts in the church, nor is the issue that of serving the church. It is true that Christ speaks of the officebearers in terms of their being *douloi*, slaves, to Christ and their fellow believers (Matthew 20:20-28). Women must use their gifts in the service of their fellow believers in the church. The question is, to whom does Christ give the right, the authorization, the authority to preach, rule, shepherd, and collect and dispense the alms? The Church Order of Dordt, the forms for the ordination of ministers, missionaries, elders, deacons, and professors of theology and the Reformed Confessions all say clearly that Christ gives that right to qualified male members of the church. And they say that because Holy Scripture clearly teaches this truth.

It will be interesting indeed to see what the CRC synod of 1993 does with these overtures. Clearly the de-

cision of 1992 has satisfied no one. We predict that, if not in 1993, the CRC will sooner or later open all offices to women.

The Outlook
Reformed Believers Press Service

■ Personalia

Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, who recently presented two academic guest lectures on the *Canons of Dordt* at the Protestant Reformed Seminary, has been named as the new president of Westminster Theological Seminary (California) by that institution's Board of Trustees. Dr. Godfrey has been Professor of Church History at the seminary since 1981. He will begin his duties as president in June of 1993. Dr. Godfrey succeeds Robert G. denDulk, who has served as president of Westminster West for the past five years.

Godfrey is a graduate of Stanford University (A.B., M.A., Ph.D.) and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.Div.). He taught church history at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) from 1974 to 1981. Dr. Godfrey writes extensively and is a frequent lecturer at important conferences like the Banner of Truth Conference, the Pensacola Theological Institute, and the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology.

Westminster Theological Seminary in California was established in 1979. The current enrollment in its Masters and Doctoral programs is 171 students. □

Christian Renewal
The Outlook
Reformed Believers Press Service



Order

The Word of God places great emphasis and value upon good order. We will undoubtedly be surprised at the frequency with which this word appears and the implications that it has. There are several root words, both in the Hebrew and the Greek, that convey the sense of good order. All these words agree in their basic meanings: to set aright, to ordain, to arrange, to set in order, to walk orderly.

The church and her members are to demonstrate orderliness in all their lives, "for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all church of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33). God hates confusion, and is always characterized by orderliness, harmony, and peace. This is the outstanding virtue of the covenant life which the Father and the Son live in the Holy Spirit. This is likewise true of the eternal decrees that are ever before the divine mind. The word "ordained" (as in Acts 13:48, "...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed") refers to election, and comes from one of the words mentioned above, meaning to set in order, arrange. Thus, Reformed theologians have good reason to discuss the order of God's eternal decrees, to study their arrangement, and to make distinction between infra- and supra-lapsarianism. This is not vain and curious prying, but a fruitful and legitimate labor.

God revealed His regard for order immediately in creation, by first dividing the light from the darkness, then separating the dry land from the seas, and then creating the plants, animals, and man (Gen. 1). God showed His high regard for order by forming the multitudes of Israel into a nation at Sinai and giving them definite marching orders (Num. 10:11ff.). All the things of the tabernacle were set in order before God (Ex. 40), and the priests who served God there did so according to schedule and definite orders (Luke 1:8). The better priesthood of Jesus Christ is after the order of Melchizedec, having no beginning of days nor end of life (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5, 6, 7).

God bestows upon His church gracious salvation in Christ in an orderly manner. He does not save and gather His church in a confused, individualistic way, but He does so in the orderly way of believing generations; believing generations are grafted into the Tree of Life. And the application of salvation to the elect believer follows the order of salvation suggested in Romans 8:30. The young people learn this order as regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification.

The church in her worship, labor, and organic life reflects the good order that is in God (Tit. 1:5), showing that they know and love God as dear children. We follow an order of worship regulated by the Scriptures. Our assemblies strive to do all things decently and in good order (I Cor. 14:40) by proceeding according to an adopted Church Order. Our Bible-study societies have constitutions for this same purpose. The apostle Paul behaved himself orderly among the churches (II Thess. 3:7), for orderliness is essential to the church's unity. He also commanded believers to withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly (I Thess. 3:6, 11).

The life of the child (Jud. 13:12) and family life is to be rightly ordered and arranged. This involves keeping to a daily schedule, having regular devotions, requiring respectful obedience on the part of the child, being consistent in discipline, and insisting on neatness. Especially are we to have our houses in order as we see the day of our death approaching (Is. 38:1). Our personal lives, the very steps that we take, are to be ordered according to God's Word (Ps. 119:113), for "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. 37:23), and he that "ordereth his conversation aright shall see God's salvation" (Ps. 50:23). □

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

RENEWING THE BATTLE (2)

Drama, Television, and Movies

"I will set no evil thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." Psalm 101:3

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Ephesians 5:11

Dateline: Central Command, Hell, 1940s
Subject: Covert Mass Destruction of Enemy

In the reddish glow of the command center, surrounded by his dark angels, Satan turns over in his mind his hatred for the Woman and Her Seed. Premeditating his destruction of the Seed, he asks his minions during their council of war: "What more effective weapon to be used against the remnant of Her Seed? What to swallow them up like nothing before, who keep the commandments of God? What, to convince the majority of the Lamb's followers to speak of as "not wrong in itself" and therefore to have, and then abuse? What more powerful and alluring than ever employed before?"

"Who will show me what poison can be administered in relative secrecy? A clandestine effort, this one, slowly to numb their senses, poison their minds, dull their Christian, achh!, nerves. Who will show me this? To him will I give up to the half of my kingdom."

And of all the vile but brilliant concepts brought forth in answer to the appeal of the Master Deceiver, none is accepted with more enthusiasm, none received with more shouts of triumphant joy than the suggestion: "Television, movies, drama, in each home."

I am convinced that at the judgment day, we will find out that there was such a council of war. I am convinced too that we will find that there was never a tool wielded by the devil with such destructive force in the church as the television and video.

There is evidence the devil's plan has succeeded. In my hearing recently, someone lamented, "There are two battles I think we are losing: mothers working, and movies." I had no opportunity at the moment to encourage him not to lose hope and give up the battle. But I can imagine why he feels so. Some parents let their children rent movies for a Fri-

day evening with their friends — the same movies that were shown at the movie theater, months before. Others let their children watch the television, unsupervised. Freely, children speak of the latest episode of "Married, With Children." And some naively think it has to do with family values. Alas, if only they knew.

Has the devil succeeded in your home? Will he?

IT'S THE CONTENT. More than ever before, our objection to television, movies, and videos, is their *content*. More than ever before, the content of television is poisonous. Although a major objection we will lodge against television is against drama itself as an art-form, we begin by showing the *corruption* of it, as well as the objections to it regarding its spiri-

tual killing influences. And what powerful influence it has.

At a broadcasters' convention recently, Ted Turner, television mogul, reportedly told his audience, "Your delegates at the United Nations are not as important as the people in this room (meaning the assembled broadcasters).... We are the ones that determine what the people's attitudes are. It's in our hands."¹ No greater influence has been wielded upon the billions of the world by so few people than the influence wielded by the television and movie industry.

What is that influence?

In the great majority of videos, as

¹ Quoted in "Television or Dominion," printed sermon of Rev. Steven Schlissel, Still Waters Revival Books, no date.

well as television's movies, comedies, soap operas, or other series, God's commandments are thrown down and openly mocked. And no wonder. Much of the television industry believes as the television mogul said, "Christianity is a religion for losers. I don't want anybody dying for me." Let's consider the content of movies for a few minutes to make this plain.

The first table of the law is broken when God's name is blasphemed with regularity. I may not reference this here. His worship is mocked, as are His people. One movie, "Alien 3," portrayed a penal colony in space, peopled by drooling, vicious rapists and murderers who say, "We're all Christians." Idolatry of the basest form is flagrant. Actor Shirley Mac Claine is not alone when she screams, "I am God." God's people may not entertain themselves with this.

The second table is more plainly violated, proving the hatred of God in the hearts of the producers.

Murders are handed to us on silver platters for our entertainment. Gross, graphic, violent murders are part of many movies. The Christian critics are quick to expose this. But what doesn't get the sting of their criticism are the other forms of murder: dishonor and hatred of the neighbor, desire for revenge, envy, and anger. (The young people have memorized this from Lord's Day 40 in their *Heidelberg Catechism* classes.)

In a book whose title doesn't indicate very well its worth, Phil Phillips documents well the murderous rampage on which television has gone in the past decades, especially in the cartoons.²

Another item not often mentioned by fundamentalist Christians is the plain violation of the *fifth* commandment — dishonor of authority. Almost all the situation comedies have the children and adults showing no real "honor, love and fidelity to ... father and mother and all in authority...." In a recent *TV Guide* that we purchased for this research, one reviewer made this plain when he said about the Simpsons, "Even though you have to tell your kids you'd kill

them if they said those things, there's still real love portrayed."³ But he's wrong. Love is shown by *honor*. God's people do not want to be entertained by this. Poisoned.

Because the fifth commandment is the basis for home and family life, the Christian home and family are also squarely under attack—in every way.

If violence and rebellion are major ingredients in the devil's mixture, sex is the major ingredient he adds to the poison. Time and space fail me to give examples of this, not only of the gross sins that we "detest with all our hearts," but also the activities and words that "can entice men thereto," which we also detest (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 41).

*In the most subtle ways,
the devil serves up the lie
as the truth.*

A recent newspaper article was entitled, "Movies, TV, flood teens with sex," an apt metaphor, read in the light of Revelation 12:15. A letter from the American Family Association sent to me last week had such open references to the explicit sexual content of prime-time programs that I feared my children might see it. One popular prime-time program had two men and a woman discussing their joys in masturbation. Others have homosexual themes, or refer to sexual experimentation with animals — on prime time. The soap-operas would be bankrupt if sex were cut out. The talk shows of morning and afternoons pump up their ratings regularly with sex. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." And in America the body is for fornication. We are back in Corinth.

Dramatizing sex is not a 20th century innovation. "By the third century A.D., ... the Roman stage had become so thoroughly corrupt (sexual intercourse was a regular part of the program)...."⁴ Nor will it ever change, in spite of the vain hopes of those who

would "redeem television." Already 40 years ago television was cause for great concern. In a pamphlet entitled, "The Movie," the Rev. Richard Veldman wrote, "What are the themes they portray? Horror, crime, sex, carnal love, sin of every kind! What meets the eye? Passionate embraces...."

"I will set no wicked thing before my eyes."

An entire article could be written about the violation of the ninth commandment. Deliberately is the lie told about what life is like. Purportedly the television programs and movies portray real life. Some even try to convey real events. But none succeeds in portraying life accurately, and most twist it beyond recognition. Even the world recognizes this, warning its own against the lies propagated in subtle ways. The glamour of war. The happiness of riches. The pleasure in gain. The normalcy of the "unnatural" homosexual relationship (see Romans 1:26,27). The goodness of fornication. The benefit of revolution. The humor of drunkenness. The goodness of hedonism. In the most subtle ways, the devil serves up the lie as the truth.

More difficult to detect in the toxin is the large dose of violation of the eighth commandment. I mean by this not that we are taught to steal in the gross, open sense (but is that missing?). I mean rather the more subtle sin of stealing, which the tenth com-

2 *Saturday Morning Mind Control* (Oliver Nelson, 1991) is a book well worth reading, not merely for its expose of the anti-Christian content of Saturday morning television, but also for its analysis of the ruinous effects of most television, "Sesame Street" included, on the minds and souls of children. This I will deal with, in part, in the next article.

3 February 27-March 5, 1993, page 16.

4 Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: A Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview*, Eerdmans, 1985, page 94.

mandment shows belongs to the eighth. It is that "kleptomania of the heart" that the Reformed creed describes as "all covetousness, all abuse and waste of his gifts," and the sin which the Scripture warns against in I Timothy 6, belonging to those who "will (to) be rich," "supposing that gain is godliness" (vv. 5,9).

In no place is this more plain than in the commercial breaks of almost all programming. Advertisements promote, indeed, live off, the violation of the eighth commandment.

ADVERTISEMENTS. Some would defend their regular use of the television by saying, "We watch only sports, game shows, innocent programs like the police and emergency dramatizations" Aside from the glorification of violence and danger on the police shows, as well as the materialism that lies behind the game shows, what of the advertisements sandwiched in between the programming?

Even Jane Pauley (of television fame and "Dateline" infamy) ex-

presses horror that the most violent (like graphic murder scenes) and sexually explicit (like a vicious rape) clips of movies which will be shown later in the evening are shown in the ads between the early evening news and game shows.⁵ Deborah Norville says of her son, "I don't want him watching commercials."⁶

But sex says it all. Nude bathers sell soap. Underwear clad men sell briefs. Bikini clad women sell vacations and beer. Sex will sell everything from cars to cameras, toothpaste to tobacco. (And what irony: the government has determined tobacco to be too harmful to its citizens to allow promotion of it on television anymore.)

Every Christian who loves holiness ought to be horrified at what jumps out at him from the screen to sell every imaginable product. He

5 *TV Guide*, Feb 27-Mar 5, 1993, page 25.

6 *TV Guide*, page 28.

will ask himself, "Before the face of God, may I entertain myself with these 'legitimate' programs and watch, at the same time, the materialism and sex in the breaks?"

We are sorely tempted to say, "If you are serious about a holy life, you will not own a television. If you love God, you will get rid of your set." Even though we will not say that because of its insufferable legalism, there is room in every Christian heart for that sympathy, because every Christian sees the corruption in almost every use of the medium. How difficult to find anything profitable. "Why look?" is the question many would ask. It's not unlike a father rooting about in a toxic waste dump to find food for his family, knowing that there is something good there, when his cupboards at home are full. Why?

Before God, how would you answer?

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

The Split of 1953

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Philippians 2:1,2

The adoption of the *Declaration of Principles* by the synod of 1951 in no way resolved the tensions within

the churches. Actually there was one more opportunity left to register objections to it. Protests could properly be brought to the next meeting of synod (which option was extended to the 1953 synod when the *1951 Acts of Synod* did not appear in time for such protests to be properly prepared). And meanwhile open discussion and disagreement over the *Declaration* and its content freely took place. Should elements of Liberated theology be accepted in our churches, or not? The debate went on; and, through it all, it became perfectly evident that our churches were no longer a harmoniously united whole. In fact, there

was good reason why some had been so insistent on that preamble which was added:

Declaration of principles, to be used only by the Mission Committee and the Missionaries for the organization of prospective churches on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions as these have always been maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches and as these are now further explained in regard to certain principles.

There were those who clearly had no intention of abiding by those principles; and they had no desire to ex-

Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

pose themselves to the possibility of being judged by them.

* * * * *

In fact, the difficulties were already working before the synod of 1951 ever met. On the fifteenth of April, the Sunday after Classis East declared itself in favor of the adoption of the *Declaration*, in a service at First Church in Grand Rapids, the Rev. Hubert DeWolf preached a sermon in which he first intimated that there were those in the congregation who were guilty of dead orthodoxy, or in his words, of "wearing Protestant Reformed on their coat lapel"; and he followed it up with this remark, "God promises every one of you that if you believe, you will be saved." This was, of course, a typical Liberated scenario. Here was the minister of a Reformed congregation, gathered with the members of his congregation, a gathering of covenant people, both accusing them of dead orthodoxy and promising them salvation on the condition of faith. It was as though he was letting it be known that, regardless of what the classis had decided concerning the *Declaration*, he had no intention of abiding within its doctrinal framework.

As might be expected, DeWolf's remarks did not go unchallenged. The following evening the consistory received a number of protests which were to preoccupy it for some time, and which left them with a grievous dilemma.

On the one hand, there was a deep longing to avoid a bruising battle, and a collapse of denominational life as we had come to know and love it. Through the years we had built up a small but stable form of church life, to which most were deeply committed. Our people were in a large part studious and well informed; they knew their Reformed doctrine, and were unusually conscious of what was going on in the church world about them. It seemed impossible that we could be so deeply ruptured with dissent and conflict that all of this would be lost. Something, it seemed, had to be done to avoid it.

But it was happening. In spite of

the fact that our very identity as churches had been built on a defense of the principles of particular grace, there were those who were beginning to chafe under it, and to call for something different. They seemed convinced that it was fully within their right, and in accord with our tradition, to defend contrary views of doctrine as long as within their minds they were, often rather quickly, in harmony with Scripture and the confessions.

Underlying this all, however, was another unmentioned but very real factor, a struggle for power. Throughout our history the denomination had been dominated by the presence of Herman Hoeksema. Although he had no personal desire to control, it was true that when he spoke people listened. His mental and theological abilities, as well as his debative powers, and the strength of his personality, were such that what he suggested was almost always followed. He provided to the churches a kind of father image which was not easily denied. For years this had been recognized and accepted, by some graciously, and by others grudgingly, but in almost every instance without bad feelings. But now this was changing. Some were clearly becoming impatient. These were men who had studied under him, and had grown up under his guidance; but they were moving on into mid-life. They considered themselves to have developed their own abilities and experience to the point where they were worthy of being followed too. And more, once they had tasted a few moments of recognition by some of the prominent scholars in the Netherlands, who at the same time showed rather little regard for Rev. Hoeksema and his views, it seemed perfectly evident that their time to exert leadership had come. The age old problem of passing power from one generation to the next was upon us; and, as is so often the case, we were faltering.

Particularly in First Church, in many ways the mother congregation of the denomination, this was so; and the arguments swirled. Efforts to

defend DeWolf and his statements were everywhere.

After all, it was noted, he had not concluded his sermon without observing that "faith is the gift of God which He sovereignly bestows upon his elect." Wasn't that enough? Didn't it prove that he was in the end Reformed? The statement had been clearly designed, of course, to protect his Reformed identity; and with many it was enough.

In turn, it was argued that the word "promise" which he had used can be used more generically. It could be taken to mean nothing more than that what followed was assured to be true and reliable, with nothing gracious implied. Thus when the biblical statement, "If you believe, you will be saved," is promised to all men, it need mean nothing more than that the Gospel should be proclaimed as true for all to hear; and who could argue with that? All of this ignored, of course, the Liberated context and framework within which his sermon had been made.

So the battle raged on, with endless efforts to prove DeWolf's statement and intent to be quite innocent.

But underneath it all was that power struggle: were they going to continue to follow Hoeksema or not? It was clear that the consistory of First Church, as well as the congregation and the denomination, was divided. There was a close numerical balance between those who followed Hoeksema and those who were ready to try DeWolf. For more than a year they vied back and forth, until finally, in August of 1952, at a time when both Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Hanko were away on vacation, a decision was put through to drop the matter.

Upon their return, Hoeksema and Hanko may have winced; but they decided to let the matter rest, in the hope that tension had now subsided and peace would return. But this hope was not long to last. Within a few weeks, at the very beginning of the next month, DeWolf preached two striking sermons. The first was one that highlighted the distinctives of the Reformed faith. Hopes of re-

stored unity soared. But the next week all was dashed. Rev. DeWolf preached again, and in the middle of his sermon made the stinging remark, "Some may call it a means, and some may call it a condition, but I say, the act of conversion is a prerequisite to entering into the kingdom of heaven." These were words made to cut; for, all through the debate over conditional theology, of which most were now quite weary, Rev. Hoeksema had made the point that, while the word "condition" can have a proper use, within the context of our day it almost always is not well used because it so readily implies that one thing is a prerequisite to the other; and that is what makes it wrong. And now DeWolf, bypassing the word "condition," was taking that very term "prerequisite," and affirming his allegiance to it. The results were quick to come.

After the service that night Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff refused to shake hands with Rev. DeWolf; and the following evening their protests were laid on the consistory's table. And, this time, matters were not allowed to linger. By the end of October a decision was adopted which read:

Motion made that this consistory maintains the sermon of Rev. H. DeWolf delivered Sunday evening, September 14, 1952, is partially heretical and not Reformed as expressed in grounds presented in the protest of Rev. H. Hoeksema, and this Consistory condemns the sermon as such.

But the division within the consistory was close, and efforts to proceed with suspension faltered, particularly when the neighboring consistory did not clearly cooperate. Several attempts were made—but stalled; until, at a consistory meeting in the middle of February, from which again Rev. Hoeksema was absent, a motion was put through to drop the matter. But this time it did not work. Hoeksema and Ophoff appealed their protests to classis.

Classis East met in those days in April, and to that meeting the protests were presented. They were re-

ceived and placed in the hands of a committee of three ministers and two elders for study, with advice to be given to a continued session of classis at the end of May. The committee met and worked through the material at length; but in the end its advice was divided.

The three ministers took the approach of carefully redefining DeWolf's statements so as to leave in each a very innocent possible meaning; but DeWolf himself scuttled their efforts by announcing that what they made of his statement wasn't at all what he had meant. The result was that classis turned to the minority report, and adopted the decision:

Classis advises the Consistory of First Church

a. To demand that Rev. DeWolf make a public apology for having made the two statements in question.

b. That the Consistory also publicly apologize for having supported the Rev. DeWolf with respect to the two statements in question.

Classis further advises the Consistory of First Church

a. That in case the Rev. DeWolf should refuse to apologize; which our God graciously forbid, the Consistory proceed to suspend him from office of the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, according to the pertinent articles of the D.K.O.

b. That in case any elder or elders should refuse to submit to the proposed action as stipulated under 3b, which God graciously forbid, such elders or elder be disciplined according to the articles of the D.K.O. pertaining thereto.

And then it went further. It appointed a committee to deliver its instructions, and to see that they were followed.

It was the evening of June 1 when the committee came to First Church consistory. A motion was passed to accept the advice of the classis, giving Rev. DeWolf and his supporting elders two weeks to consider and do what was required. This should have settled the matter; but it didn't.

Two weeks passed, and by June 15 no apologies were forthcoming.

Thus it was decided to distribute to DeWolf and his followers copies of an apology prepared for them to consider and sign. The following Sunday, during the course of the evening service, Rev. DeWolf read the following statement:

As far as those statements are concerned, I am ready to say that I am sorry that they were not clear and therefore left room for a wrong interpretation. I would like to explain that by the first statement I had no intention at all to teach that God promises salvation to all men and that it depends on man's own will whether or not he will be saved. I have never taught this and could not have intended to teach this by that statement. By the second statement I did not mean to teach that a natural man must convert himself while he is in the power of darkness, outside of the Kingdom of God. Also, this is contrary to anything that I have ever preached. If therefore, I have offended anyone by not stating clearly what I meant and thus giving occasion for misinterpretation, I am sorry.

This was intended, no doubt, to be received as his apology, although in reality it did little more than express his regret for having been misunderstood.

The following night again the consistory met, this time chaired by Rev. Hoeksema. All twenty-four elders were present. Little difficulty was anticipated, since those who had been declared guilty were now party in the case and no longer eligible to vote on the matter. Rev. DeWolf appeared, and again presented the statement he had made from the pulpit the night before. But the consistory was clearly not satisfied; and a motion followed that he be required to retract and apologize for what he had said. When, however, the vote was called for, the DeWolf supporters cast their votes along with the rest; and the clerk of the consistory (a supporter of DeWolf) recorded an eleven to eleven vote (later a twelfth elder insisted he had voted in favor of the motion as well, but that his vote had not been recorded). Rev. Hoeksema

announced the motion passed — the vote of DeWolf's supporters being illegal. But others adamantly insisted it had failed, so that the meeting broke down in confusion. Finally, Rev. Hoeksema got up and left, telling them that he could have no part of such disorder and rebellion.

The following night another meeting was called without the supporters of DeWolf; and suspension was enacted in accord with the advice of classis. The two factions never met together again.

During the course of that week, however, it also became evident that

DeWolf and his followers had no intention of honoring their suspension, and were determined to interject themselves into the following Sunday service. This left Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Hanks with their supporting elders before a dilemma; and they decided that, rather than risk the disruption of public worship, they would call for the service of the church to be held in the auditorium of Grand Rapids Christian High School. This they did, while DeWolf and his supporters met in the First Church building. Efforts were made to negotiate a combined use of the building by both

sides until the matter was settled; but this was denied, and that fall the use of the building was denied even to the Theological School, which had met there all through the years.

That fall both factions appeared at classis. DeWolf and his men were denied recognition; and they left with three other churches to form a classis of their own. In March a continued meeting of synod was scheduled to meet; but that too was divided, with factions meeting in two different places. The "Split" in the Protestant Reformed Churches had taken place. □

Guest Article

Rev. Steven Houck

The Power of the Preaching (1)

There are many who do not recognize the power of the preaching. They see the preaching as merely an offer of salvation by God to the lost sinner, an offer which the lost sinner can accept or reject. They say that God loves everyone, and that He therefore sincerely desires the salvation of everyone. He expresses His love and desire by making His generous offer in the preaching.

Thus the preaching is merely the presentation of certain information. It is information about man and his need of salvation, information about God and His loving offer, and information about the need of man to accept that offer. It is important information, but only information. It is not power.

That idea of the preaching makes the preaching so powerless that the ultimate result (whether or not a man repents and believes) is not dependent upon the preaching or upon

God's love and desire, but upon the will of the man who hears. In the preaching God may admonish, plead, and even beg the sinner to accept His offer, but, if the sinner refuses, God can do nothing.

Such a conception of the preaching is totally contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture. The Scriptures make it clear that the preaching is nothing less than an almighty power.

In Romans 1:16 we read, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God...." Here it is the gospel which is said to be the power of God. But in I Corinthians 1:18 we read, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Here it is the preaching, not just the gospel, which is said to be the power of God.

In these passages the word "power" is the Greek word from which we get our English word "dynamite." The preaching is the dynamite of God, a highly explosive power.

That is because true preaching is

the Word of God. In the preaching, God Himself speaks. When the words of the preacher go forth from his mouth, the Word of God also goes forth. In I Peter 1:25 we read, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The gospel which is preached is the eternal Word of God which proceeds out of His mouth.

Is God's Word powerless? Is it only the giving out of certain information? Does it express a helpless love and desire of God which must bow before the will of man?

No, God's Word is the almighty power of God.

Isaiah 55:10, 11 makes that very clear: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which

Rev. Houck is pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lynwood, Illinois.

I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Just as the rain and snow which come down from heaven do not return empty-handed but bring forth fruit (seed and bread), so God's Word does not return void. It brings forth the fruit which God desires. It accomplishes the eternal will of God. Since the preaching is the Word of God, it is the power of God which always brings about the sovereign will of God.

That means that, for God's chosen people, the power of the preaching is the power of God unto salvation. It is not an offer of salvation. Nor is it merely a presentation of the plan of salvation. For God's chosen people, it is the power that actually brings them to salvation.

By the power of the preaching God's elect are drawn out of darkness into God's marvelous light. By the power of the preaching they become new creatures in Christ. By the power of the preaching they turn from their hatred and rebellion against God and come to faith and repentance. All that belongs to conscious salvation comes to the elect by means of the preaching. The preaching is the spiritual food that feeds their souls.

Notice Romans 1:16 again: "It is the power of God unto salvation." I Corinthians 1:18 says, "...unto us which are saved it (preaching) is the power of God." In I Corinthians 1:21 we read, "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches the same thing. In Question and Answer 65 we read, "Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed? From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel...." In the Canons, Head 5, Article 14, we read, "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word...."

However, the preaching is not only a power unto salvation, for the

reprobate wicked it is also a power unto damnation. For the reprobate, it is a power which causes them to remain in their sins so that they do not come to faith and repentance. It is a power that causes them to continue in their hatred and rebellion against God. It causes their unbelief, hatred, and rebellion to become more and more manifested. The more they are under the preaching, the more aggravated they become.

This is the teaching of Holy Scripture. In II Corinthians 2:15, 16 we read, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" Here the apostle is not talking of himself and others as mere men, but as preachers of the gospel. Preachers of the gospel are a sweet savour of Christ. As they preach, they have a sweet smell about them. That sweet smell is the aroma of Christ. That sweet smell is not only a smell of life unto life in them that are saved, but it is a smell of death unto death in them that perish. It is an aroma which brings death and damnation to the reprobate wicked.

I Peter 2:8 says that Christ is, "...a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: where unto also they were appointed." Christ, as He is present in the preaching of the gospel and brings His Word through the minister, is a rock upon which those who were appointed unto disobedience stumble and fall into hell.

This is also the teaching of the Reformed faith. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 83, we read, "What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? The preaching of the holy gospel, and christian discipline...; by these two, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, and shut against unbelievers."

Even though it is not popular, it is the truth. The preaching is the power of God which works in two directions. It is the power of God unto

salvation and the power of God unto damnation.

What is the nature of that power? Wherein does the power of preaching lie?

Negatively, it does not lie in the external word, the sound which comes from the preacher's mouth. Many believe that whatever power the preaching has, it is found in the words themselves. The more eloquent, reasoned, and persuasive the words, the more power the preaching will have. Thus all the emphasis is put upon the outward presentation. The preacher who can present the information in the best manner is the best preacher.

Closely connected with that is the assumption that man is able to receive that information and make a proper decision on that basis. The external words of the preaching have to be presented well, so that man will see that what is preached is true, and upon the basis of that information choose to accept God's offer of salvation.

That, however, cannot be true. I do not mean to undervalue the importance of preaching in a good manner, but that is not where the power lies.

Is it not true that a preacher may preach a very persuasive sermon, but while some believe as a result of it, others do not? Is it not also true that a preacher may have a poor delivery, and while some are not moved by it, others are? Regardless of the manner in which the external word is presented, there is this twofold effect.

Scripture teaches that it is not the external word that is the power of the preaching. We read in I Corinthians 1:17, "For Christ sent me ... to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Christ sent the apostle Paul to preach the gospel, but not with wisdom of words. If all a preacher has is wisdom of words, the preaching is of none effect. It has no power.

In I Corinthians 2:14 we read, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.... And I was with you in

weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom...." The apostle Paul did not come, in his preaching, with excellency of speech and wisdom. He came in weakness, fear, and trembling. His preaching was not with enticing words. There is no power in all of that.

Further, the natural man is not able spiritually to receive and understand persuasive preaching. His heart, mind, and will are enslaved to sin. He is totally depraved, so that, no matter how good the preaching, he cannot

receive it. The natural man not only cannot accept any kind of offer which God is supposed to make in the preaching, he cannot even spiritually understand it.

The proof is found in I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Notice also the words of Jesus in John 8:43, 47: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. ... He that is of

God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The natural man does not understand Christ's speech because he cannot spiritually hear that Word of truth. Only those who are of God can spiritually hear. If a person is to hear spiritually and understand the preaching of the gospel, he must be regenerated, so that he has a new heart, mind, and will which are made alive to the things of God. Apart from that, all the good preaching in the world will not save a single soul.

(to be continued) □

Book Review

The Presbyterian Conflict, by Edwin H. Rian. Philadelphia: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1992. 242 pp. (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

From this exceptionally valuable history of the conflict between faith and unbelief in the Presbyterian Church in the USA in the early 1900s, there is much to be learned.

The book tells the story of the struggle between theological modernism and genuine Christianity that resulted in the formation of Westminster Theological Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The champion of orthodoxy was J. Gresham Machen. *The Presbyterian Conflict* gives the history of that controversy of which Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* gives the doctrinal issues.

What can be learned for the life of Reformed and Presbyterian churches today? Much in many ways. Among the lessons taught by this church history are the following. First, the apostasy of a church is due in large part to the sinful failure of the orthodox — the "conservatives" — over a long period of time to discipline heretics. Second, the doctrines that are first challenged in a departing church are the distinctively Calvinistic doctrines, primarily, predestination. Third,

when the crunch finally comes in the denomination, the modernists discipline the orthodox for their church political sins, hiding from the people the real issue, which is doctrinal. Fourth, the worst enemies of the cause of Christ are not the outright modernists, the Harry Emerson Fosdicks, but the "moderates" — those ministers and elders who personally believe the basic truths but who will not take a stand, the C. E. Macartneys. They are responsible for handing the church over to the forces of Arminianism and modernism. Fifth, when reformation comes, the faithful are a mere handful, a remnant. The issues were fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, including the inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement. But only 34 ministers, 17 ruling elders, and 79 laymen went out of the huge PCUSA to form what is now the OPC. Although others joined later, the OPC has always been small. Sixth, the little church newly reformed is immediately wracked with internal dissension. Rev. Carl McIntire, e.g., fundamentalist rather than Reformed, soon went his own ecclesiastical way.

At the heart of the conflict was the question of tolerance. The infamous Auburn Affirmation, signed by 1300 Presbyterian ministers, pleaded for tolerance of the denial of such basic

Christian doctrines as the inspiration of Scripture, the virgin birth, and the vicarious atonement of the cross. An article in a recent issue of the liberal *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (Vol. 45, No. 3-4, 1991), "Princeton and Union: The Dialogue of Pluralism," bears out that the issue of tolerance was central to the struggle: "... the 'Auburn Affirmation,' the plea for toleration in the Presbyterian Church that so exercised J. Gresham Machen and the conservative party" (p. 163).

It was not, however, a matter of the tolerance of the modernists versus the intolerance of the orthodox. Rather, the modernists were intolerant of the intolerant insistence on sound doctrine on the part of the orthodox.

Adding to the worth of the book is the "Appendix" containing several significant documents from the history. These include "The Auburn Affirmation"; the report of the "Committee for Reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary"; and the "Resolution of Executive Committee for Establishment of Westminster Theological Seminary."

This is required and fascinating reading for Reformed and Presbyterian people. If we do not learn from this history, we will have to repeat it. □

Evangelism Activities

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI recently sponsored a two-day combined Spring Lecture/Conference on Personal Witnessing. This conference took place on the 2nd and 3rd of April in Hope Church's auditorium.

On Friday evening Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL, spoke on "Winning Souls." Rev. VanOverloop based his remarks on Proverbs 11:30. Using that text for a base, he emphasized that we do not have the power to persuade, but that winning souls involves, rather, our walk in righteousness. God uses us and our godly conversation to influence others around us.

Rev. VanOverloop's lecture was followed by a slide presentation presented by Rev. B. Woudenberg, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, on "Witnessing Under Persecution." These slides dealt with the Hungarian Reformed Churches in Romania and their history under the rule of communism. Rev. Woudenberg showed slides taken on two trips to Romania. One could not help but be amazed that, even under a communist state which had no place for the church, the church still continued. On Saturday morning the conference was concluded with a lecture given by Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, on the subject "Preparing Yourself to Give an Answer."

Rev. Key stressed the truth found in I Peter 3:15, that we must always be ready to give an answer. Rev. Key gave very clear and concrete instruction on just what giving an answer is all about, and what an awesome responsibility we have as Christians.

A question and answer period

brought this very worthwhile conference to a close. If you are interested in hearing more, tapes are available from Ken Elzinga, 3277 Lombard, Grandville, MI 49418. Phone (616) 532-8737.

The Reformed Witness Committee of our Doon and Hull, IA PRCs, along with the First PRC of Edgerton, MN, sponsored a lecture on March 26 at the First CRC in Edgerton. Rev. M. DeVries, pastor of First PRC in Edgerton, spoke on the timely topic, "The Marks of the True Church." If you would like to receive a cassette tape of this lecture, write to Edgerton PRC, P.O. Box 403, Edgerton, MN 56128.

The Church Extension Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC also sponsored a lecture recently. Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC, was the featured speaker. He spoke on "Satanism." If any of our readers would like a cassette tape of this message, simply send \$3.00 along with your request to: Loveland PRC, 705 E. 57th St., Loveland, CO 80538.

Mission Activities

Just a couple of notes about Larne, Northern Ireland for this issue. As most of our readers know, the Hanco family arrived safely in Northern Ireland on March 17. A family of 10 with 30 pieces of luggage! The shipping container with the rest of the Hanco's possessions arrived one week later.

Rev. VanBaren preached both services the first Sunday the Hanco's were there and conducted the catechism classes and Bible study. Since then Rev. Hanco has gradually taken over. Rev. and Mrs. VanBaren left Saturday, April 3 for England, leaving the Hanco's on their own. It also looks like the Hanco children will be starting school April 26, when the last term of the school year begins. (The school year goes through June.) The Hanco children have also discovered

that they will be wearing uniforms to school. They were not very excited about that ... but their mother thought it was wonderful.

Congregational Activities

The congregation of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX is eagerly preparing for the arrival of Rev. Mahtani and his family from Singapore. Part of their preparation involves the repair and remodeling of their parsonage. It is also noted that this work is proceeding well — with the help also of some members of our northern PR churches who spend part of the winter season in Houston.

The Hope Choral Society of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI presented their annual spring concert on March 21. This was followed one week later by a concert given by the Faith Choral Society of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. These two concerts dealt with the theme of our Lord's suffering and death.

Young People's Activities

On Saturday, March 13, the young people of the west-Michigan area got together with parents and other supporters to make apple pies. On that Saturday, in the gym of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI, these young people made 1,700 pies. In the process, they set their own personal best-record by making 1,300 of these pies before 1:00 P.M. These pies were then taken to different area churches where people who ordered them could pick them up at certain designated times. This event has been held for two years now and it seems to get better and better. Even the pies taste better — or should I say, they tasted better. We still have a couple in the freezer, but not for long. □

Food for Thought

Those who look to be happy must first look to be holy.

Richard Sibbes

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

THE STANDARD BEARER

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

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

NOTICE!!

Do you know of the other Protestant Reformed magazine? Many of you have subscriptions to other Reformed publications, but what do you know about the *Beacon Lights*? In the late 1930s an organization was started in the Chicago area by young people of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This organization was called the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. The purpose was to unite and provide spiritual edification for the members and to promote and maintain the doctrinal standards of the PRC. One of the means proposed to fulfill their objectives was the publication of a paper targeting the young people. In 1941, the first issue of the *Beacon Lights* was published. This was followed by four more, and was met with so great a response that Rev. C. Hanko, the first editor-in-chief, proclaimed, "The *Beacon Lights* is here to stay!"

Through World War II, the *Beacon Lights* was a source of comfort for 400 or more servicemen, and it remained in our churches through the trials in 1953. Though the magazine has seen many changes, it is still very much the same. Many changes in technology have taken place, but the magazine is printed still on a 40-year-old printing press. We have had 16 different editors, from ministers, to teachers, to other lay people. Our current issues contain many of the same topics and articles as were found in the first issue — editorials, current events, Bible outlines, and book reviews. Other topics no longer apply, such as Military Mailbag. Our subscriptions total about 930, and the magazine is sent to young people in at least seven different countries.

Currently, we are in our 52nd volume. A new editor and several new staff members have recently been appointed. We have adopted a new format for the magazine, we are exploring new ideas, and we share a renewed commitment to this cause of the Kingdom of Christ. We believe that the *Beacon Lights* has served to spread the Word of God and to strengthen Reformed believers in the midst of the world, and that by God's grace it will continue to do so.

Some of you have received a complimentary issue of the *Beacon Lights*. If you have not, and are interested in receiving this magazine, please send your requests to *Beacon Lights*, P.O. Box 375, Jenison, MI 49428.

For the *Beacon Lights* staff,
Steve Lotterman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27, 1993, our parents,
**PROF. and MRS. HERMAN
HANKO,**

will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our God for giving us godly parents, who brought us up in the fear of His holy name. We pray that God will continue to bless and keep them in all their ways.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psalm 90:1).

- Ron and Nancy Hanko
- Neal and Jeanne Hanko
- Ken and Mary Hanko
- Steve and Bev Hanko
- Carlyle and Marcia Miersma
- Tim Hanko
- Daniel and Sharon Kleyn
- Karen Hanko

20 grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing on May 1, 1993, our parents and grandparents,
**MR. and MRS. ROBERT
BLANKESPOOR,**

celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents. We thank the Lord for the years they have shared, and for the constant love, the covenant instruction, and the guidance they have given us through the years. May the Lord continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- Paul and Cheryl DeRoon
- Dolan, Dayna
- Brenda, Rachel, Sharla, Kathie, Timothy, Daniel

George, Iowa

NOTICE!!

Randolph Protestant Reformed Church is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. A commemorative program and picnic are being planned for the weekend of September 17-19, 1993. More details available later. Former members and all friends of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church are invited to join us for this special occasion.

TEACHER NEEDED!

The Board of Protestant Reformed Special Education is seeking applicants for a teaching position in the self-contained classroom at Heritage Christian School. Interested individuals should contact Greg VanOverloop (616) 669-0665.

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1992 appointed Hudsonville (MI) Protestant Reformed Church the calling church for the 1993 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1993 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 8, 1993 at 9:00 A.M. in the Hudsonville (MI) Protestant Reformed Church.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 7, at 7:30 PM. Rev. G. VanBaren, president of the 1992 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Henry Boer, 7872 Cardinal Dr., Jenison, MI 49428. Phone: (616) 669-9433.

Consistory of
Hudsonville Protestant Reformed
Church
Henry Boer, Clerk.