

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**



Rev. Ron Hanco family arrives in Northern Ireland

See "News From the Domestic Mission Committee" — page 371

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May 15, 1993*

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In This Issue...



The sign which stretched across the garage doors of the Hankos' new home in Northern Ireland was only part of the warm welcome they received from the Covenant Reformed Fellowship. In addition to a good turnout at the airport, there was also, not long after their arrival, a welcome program, with moving expressions of joy at the arrival of the missionary-pastor. One of the highlights of that evening, surely, was the children's part in the program. Linda Callender, one of the young ladies of the CRF, wrote a poem of welcome; and all of the children memorized it, in order to recite it in unison when the Hankos arrived. Though the mere reading of the words is a poor substitute for hearing them from the lips of those precious little ones, we do nevertheless include here the poem, in the hope that it will communicate some sense of the spiritual pleasure involved in this new development in the relationship of the PRC with the CRF — a pleasure which belongs properly on both sides of the Atlantic.

Over the years we have prayed to God
To give an answer to our call.
Now in God's counsel and decree
He has given ear unto our plea.

For this week you have traveled many
miles
To come over to this Emerald Isle.
From Houston, Texas, U.S.A.
God's brought you into our midst today.

God willing over the years to come
The catechism you will instruct us from.
And as the gospel you proclaim
May glory and honour be brought to
God's Name.
So on behalf of the Fellowship gathered
here tonight
We count it a privilege and delight,
As children of the covenant seed
We give you a very big welcome indeed.

In this connection you might also want to read, in this issue, the News from the Domestic Mission Committee, an annual feature in the *SB* to review for our readers the activities of that denominational committee from one synod to the next.

D.D.

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Rest for the Weary

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

There are in these words of our Savior three very important questions, which call for very specific and limited answers.

The first question is, What does Jesus mean by rest? The second is, What must be done for us to come to the blessedness of that rest? And, by all means, the question that must properly be answered is, Who is promised this rest?

To understand that word "rest" we should bear in mind the fact that rest comes through the finishing of a particular work. We should then also bear in mind the awesome truth which we find already in Genesis 2:2. For after our God in six days created the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain, He rested on the seventh day. And that, by all means, should be explained to mean that He enjoyed His finished work. He did not then become idle. Nor did He separate Himself from that which He had brought into being. He is, and through thousands of years has been, upholding that creation, using it for His own glory.

When then in His law He tells us that on the Sabbath Day we should

rest, He does not mean that we must do nothing. Do we not, in His holy law presented to us in Exodus 20:11, read that He blessed and hallowed that Sabbath Day? Yes, He ceased creating the heavens and the earth. But He did that in order to enjoy them, and use them for His own glory.

Our resting on the Sabbath Day, which God realized for us through Christ Jesus, His Son and our Savior, is entering into and enjoying the finished work of salvation. On His cross our Lord Jesus Christ earned a full salvation for us. His suffering of God's wrath on the cross earned for us that full salvation. For He suffered the punishment which we, as the members of His body, deserve. And He earned an everlasting rest for us, because of which He now calls us to come unto Him, and promises us the rest which He earned for us.

Let us cling firmly to the blessed truth that Christ's return will be for us the full enjoyment of an everlasting Sabbath. Christ's return will bring us the enjoyment of that complete and wonderful work of salvation.

In Revelation 22:3 we find the blessed truth that with body and soul we will some day be where there is no curse, and where there is an everlasting life of covenant fellowship for us at God's right hand. In Hebrews 1:13 and 14 we are comforted by the truth that we will be sitting at God's right hand, with the angels "sent forth to minister, for them who shall be heirs of salvation." That pictures beautifully for us the rest unto which our Savior calls us.

In this life we often incorrectly

and hopelessly labor, trying to escape the curse which by nature we deserve. However, when Christ returns, that wonderful truth in our text will take place. Christ will give us, both in body and soul, a rest in which we will by no means be idle, but be constantly active with heavenly joy and glory. Christ calls us to come unto Him, so that we will enjoy a rest which will be unceasing, and where we will know His love, a love which we will enjoy in new glorified bodies. Our salvation is that work of God's grace whereby we are delivered from our sinful flesh, and are able to walk constantly in love toward God.

To this glory we will come, because Christ has already earned it, is already enjoying it, and is now preparing the way for us to arrive fully into it with heart and mind and soul and strength. He came into our flesh in His grace. We then will come unto Him, because He saved us so that we could rest with Him in heavenly glory.

In our text Christ is not *inviting* us to come unto Him in order to enjoy that rest. "Come unto Me" is a *command*, not a request. Christ is not asking us to let Him give us the rest which He has earned by His cross. "Come unto Me" does not mean "Come and let me give you rest." Indeed, He has the right and power to give us rest because of what He did for us. However, His words to us do not mean that He is asking us to do something, so that He can give us what we request. He does not plead with us, beg us, and wait to see whether we want it.

To claim that He invites us to do

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what will let Him give us rest presents Him as our servant, rather than our Savior. We in no way, and at no time, let Him do something. His work does not depend upon us, and He does not have to wait for us to come to Him. We in no way and in no sense let Him bring us one blessing. Rather is it true that He even gives us the desire for that rest of which He speaks.

Has a baby ever been born because it moved its parents to give it life? Has such a child come into being because it wanted to be one of us? No, a thousand times No! We must insist that *all* of our salvation, including the desire for it, is His gift to us, and is given us because He began the blessed life of salvation in us. So beautifully we sing that truth, when we sing the first stanza of our *Psalter's* 383rd song, based on Psalm 139:14. Correctly and humbly we sing:

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me;
I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.

That beautiful song of praise to our God is based on what He, through the psalmist, wrote in that verse of Psalm 139. Through David our God presented this truth: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

*We come unto Him
only because He has
not only come unto us,
but also come into us
by His Spirit.*

In the light of that truth we must consider that call of Christ for us to come unto Him to be given rest. The fact that Christ calls us to come unto Him, and then He will give us rest, is not an invitation. In His grace Christ Jesus informs us of what He will do. He does not present that blessed rest

as that which we get, if we fulfill the condition of coming unto Him. We come unto Him only because He has not only come *unto* us, but also come *into* us by His Spirit. We read in Acts 17:28, "For in him we live and move and have our being." Still more, Christ Himself declared this in John 6:44, where we read: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." He also said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me." And it is for that reason that Christ called the elect who were living in His day, and also calls us today, to come unto Him for the enjoyment of that everlasting heavenly rest.

What is also striking and comforting is the parable that Jesus gave us in Luke 18:9-14. In that parable a Pharisee boasted of what he had done, and exalted himself above the publican who cried out, "God be merciful to me the sinner." (In the Greek, as written by Luke, we find Jesus declaring that this publican called himself *the* sinner.) We must come to God in the consciousness that we are sinners, and deserve not the smallest blessing. One sin of Adam caused him to die spiritually that very day. And instead of running to God confessing his sin, and expressing his sorrow, he tried to run away from God and to save himself from the punishment that he deserved. Also, instead of confessing his sin in sorrow and grief, he added to his sin by putting the blame on his wife, Eve. And our God did not tell Adam what he could do to return into a rest; but He told Satan what *He* would do. He would make His elect come unto Christ, with enmity in their hearts against Satan.

Indeed, our Savior does call those who are laboring and heavy laden to come unto Him in order to obtain the blessed rest which He earned for His elect. When He spoke those words there were people going to the temple, seeking salvation by means of the types and shadows which God had given them. But they and we must come unto God's Son, who came into

our flesh and died on the cross in order to earn that blessed rest for us, by blotting out our guilt.

Before His birth, and according to God's law given through Moses, there were priests, and a temple wherein blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies. To the temple the children of God went for the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins. But now, since Christ, the Lamb of God, had come, and by His cross blotted out all the guilt of His elect, the call is to come unto Him for the enjoyment of that rest. Do we not in John 1:29 find John the Baptist saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"?

No, coming unto Christ will not in this life take away physical weariness. Coming to Christ may in fact bring upon us severe persecution (cf. Rev. 13:11-17). But that persecution by the antichristian world will not keep us from that rest which Christ earned for us. That persecution will by God's grace bring us out of this life, which is a continual death, and into the blessed everlasting life which Christ Jesus earned for us — the rest which Christ earned for us, and which will be given us in both body and soul.

We will come unto it, because He came into our flesh and opened the way for us to receive a wonderful rest. And He not only calls us to come unto Him to enjoy that blessed rest, but He also gives us the desire for it, and the ability to come unto Him.

That rest is so wonderful. It puts an everlasting stop to our physical and spiritual weariness. As we read in Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Coming unto Christ we shall come to spiritual perfection and physical blessedness, as members of His body.

□

The Date is 1924

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) is suffering internal strife and division. In the past few years, a number of congregations and several thousand members have left the denomination. Most have left because of the Church's opening the offices of minister and ruling elder to women and the Church's approval of theistic evolution. Involved in these decisions, the secessionists charge, is the rejection of the authority and clarity of Holy Scripture as the inspired Word of God.

Both those who have separated from the CRC and the spokesmen for the CRC propose dates that account for the troubles of the denomination.

Many of the seceders point to 1972 when the CRC adopted a report on the nature and extent of biblical authority, "Report 44." This report advocated a new way of interpreting the Bible. Others who have left the CRC refer vaguely to the early 1950s as the time when the Church took a liberal turn.

Spokesmen for the CRC also have their date. In the 1970s, certain prominent conservatives began agitating for polarization and a split, spreading accusations of heresy and unholiness that were either false or exaggerated.

As the controversy heats up and secession occurs, representatives of other denominations are ready to suggest their own dates. The Canadian Reformed Churches cry up 1944 as having great significance for the CR woes. This is the date of a doctrinal controversy and church split in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Evidently some conserva-

tives in the CRC accept this notion. Last fall a meeting of the Reformed Fellowship in Grand Rapids heard a speech entitled, "For the Unity of the Church?! The Synods of 1614, 1942, 1992." The "1942" in the title refers to a synod whose actions led up to the schism in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church recently gave a speech in which he related the struggle in the CRC to a Presbyterian conflict in the early 1920s.

Lately, writers in the magazine of the Reformed Church in the US, the *Reformed Herald*, have found dates in their Church's history that somehow bear on the situation in the CRC.

There is one date that none of the parties ever so much as mentions — not the CRC, not the seceders, not the Reformed and Presbyterian churches that are looking on. One would think that this date had fallen into the black hole of ecclesiastical history.

The date is 1924.

It is strange that the Reformed and Presbyterian churches are ignorant of this date. They have much to say about the struggle in the CRC. No doubt, therefore, they are well informed about developments in that Church over the years. Yet 1924 manages to escape them.

That neither the CRC nor the seceders bring up this date in their anguished consideration of the causes of their troubles defies belief.

1924 is a date in CR history. It is not someone else's date arbitrarily and unhistorically imposed on the CRC, but the CRC's own.

1924 is a date of importance in the

history of the CRC. Mere historical objectivity recognizes this. The theological controversy was serious. It concerned truths that are basic to the Reformed faith. It convulsed the whole Church. The CRC adopted significant doctrinal statements. There was a split in the Church that resulted in the largest number of persons expelled or leaving in all the history of the CRC until recently. 1924 represents the only formation of another Reformed denomination out of the CRC from her founding in 1857 to the present.

1924 raised every issue with which the CRC now struggles. Is the issue that of sovereign grace, taking form in the teaching of universal atonement; in the denial of eternal reprobation; and in the practice of an evangelism that tells everyone that God loves him and sincerely wants to save him? 1924 at its heart was the controversy in the CRC over the issue whether the grace of God in the gospel is universal and resistible or particular and efficacious.

Is the issue that of the church's calling to be separate from the ungodly world, surfacing in openness to evolution; in acceptance of movies and dance; and in loosening the restraints against divorce and remarriage? 1924 was the controversy in the CRC over the antithesis — the spiritual separation of the church from the mind of the world and the spiritual separation of the Christian from the world's way of death.

Even the issue of church polity that suddenly has become a hot topic in the circles of both the CRC and the seceders was fought out and settled

in the CRC in 1924. The CRC adopted and practiced the policy that classes and synods, the major assemblies in Reformed church government, have the right to exercise discipline, deposing ministers and entire consistories. Thus, the CRC rejected the autonomy of the local church.

1924 is not merely an important CR date with striking similarities to the present conflict in the CRC. It is the fundamental explanation of the troubles in the CRC. No one supposes, of course, that it is the only explanation. The theology of Karl Barth, I suspect, perhaps through G.C. Berkouwer at first, has also powerfully influenced the CRC, especially in the areas of Scripture, the historicity of Genesis 1-11, and predestination. But also this influence could have been resisted, if it were not for 1924.

In 1924 two great truths of Scripture were at stake in the CRC: sovereign, particular grace founded on the eternal, double predestination of God and the antithesis as the expression of God's holiness. A secondary, although by no means minor, issue was the autonomy of the local congregation in the synodical union of churches.

The doctrine of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924 fatally compromised sovereign grace by extending the love of God revealed in Christ and God's saving will to the reprobate. This was the first point concerning the general offer of the gospel, "the well-meant offer of the gospel."

The second and third points of common grace bridged the antithesis. They did this, not so much by calling rain and sunshine divine blessings of the ungodly, but by teaching a work of the Holy Spirit within the unregenerate that restrains sin in him and that enables him to perform good works in the sphere of everyday earthly life. The unbeliever is no longer totally depraved. There is in him, e.g., Charles Darwin, a Spirit-worked wisdom; and there is in her, e.g., the Hollywood moviemaker, a Spirit-created goodness. The Holy Spirit is present in the unbelieving

world working truth and righteousness.

The CRC repudiated the autonomy of the congregation in 1924 in that classes actually deposed three ministers and three entire consistories. The CR synod of 1926 approved these actions.

There is not a shred of doubt that the theological, moral, and church political developments now disturbing the CRC are the outworkings of 1924. This is clear enough from the very nature of these developments. They are departures from sovereign grace; the breakdown of the antithesis; and the exercise of a church polity that sees synod rather than the local congregation as the church.

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Besides, the CRC herself calls attention to 1924 as the source of her present decisions and actions. She makes this explicit. Prof. Harold Dekker *appealed* to 1924 in support of universal atonement, and Dr. Harry Boer *grounded* his official objection against reprobation, and, thus, against the whole system of doctrine taught in the Canons of Dordt, in part in 1924.

The synodical decisions themselves that made movies and dance a legitimate part of the Reformed life and that approved theistic evolution as the Reformed view of origins argued from 1924 and common grace.

When, of late, the major assemblies have disciplined ministers and consistories, the precedent cited was 1924/1926.

The date is 1924.

I do not write this because I have the slightest hope that the CRC, the seceders, or the bystanding Reformed and Presbyterian churches will acknowledge this. All have their reasons. Jesus Christ will bring up 1924

at the Final Judgment when judgment begins at the house of God, when injustice is righted, when the crooked is straightened, when Christ's cause is publicly vindicated, and when it is demonstrated that the Lord preserved His truth and His church.

Nor do I write this because 1924 justifies the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). We are justified only by the grace of God in Jesus Christ through faith alone. Indeed, 1924 does not *sanctify* the PRC. With the true church everywhere, the PRC are engaged in a life-and-death battle at the end of the ages to maintain the gospel of sovereign grace. Faithful maintenance and right understanding of the Reformed creeds do not lessen the white-hot heat of this war whatsoever. With all the saints, we members of the PRC are fighting to keep ourselves, in our generations, from this present evil world. Adult members, young people, and families can perish with the wicked world, even though the decisions against common grace are in place on the books. We are sanctified only by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

1924 does not save us.

The Triune God saves us.

But God has given us a solid, doctrinal foundation upon which to stand in the battle. He has directed us in the way of holiness — the holiness that says "yes" to Him and that says "no" to the world that hates Him. He has also immeasurably helped us in the maintaining of the truth and holiness by establishing among us a view and practice of the church as the local congregation.

The date is 1924.

If we turn away, we will be beaten with quadruple stripes.

But I write on behalf of truth — truth in church history.

I write also for our own people, old and young. They take an interest, born of a concern of love, in the struggles of that Church whose only daughter we are.

Our people ask why.

The date is 1924. □

— DJE

■ Uncomfortable with Self-Esteem

In the series of articles on self-esteem in the December 1, 1992 through February 1, 1993 issues of the *Standard Bearer*, the wonderful doctrine of being highly esteemed in Christ was used for the concept of "Proper Christian Self-Esteem."

Before we become too comfortable with the phrase "proper self-esteem," it should be noted that "self" is still before "esteem." It still indicates self motivated esteem with regard to oneself.

That's just the problem with us Christians. By nature we are just like everybody else. We feel good about ourselves if we can put "self" first. It gives our ego a boost, and we can go around with a big smile on our face.

If the concept of "proper self-esteem" is to build up oneself, then we're heading in the wrong direction as Christians. Scripture says, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (II Cor. 10:18).

The esteem we have in Christ is not of ourselves. We did not choose to be highly esteemed in Christ. To be highly esteemed in Christ is just one of the many benefits of being ingrafted into Christ by a true faith. It is a gift from God that He bestows on His church.

However, our understanding of this high esteem is only in small beginning. It's like the concept of being righteous in Christ. We can only begin to understand what it is to be perfectly righteous. Incidentally, this is not called "proper self-righteousness." Only in heaven will we fully comprehend and experience these benefits to the glory of God.

That is why it is so important that our churches hold fast to the precious doctrines of our Reformed heritage. The purpose is that young and old alike may receive proper instruction

in what is necessary to know in order to live and die happily. Even though we will have problems with self-esteem all our life, we will find true joy and comfort in learning more and more to know how great our sins and miseries are, how we are delivered from all our sins and miseries, and how we are to express our gratitude to God for such deliverance.

Larry Nelson
Loveland, CO

■ Female Veiling

Appreciating your *Standard Bearer* of April 1, 1993, I noted with interest your comments on "head coverings." You and Calvin apparently see the matter as one of "decorum" or as for that culture of the Roman colony of Corinth. Yet one asks whether this is what Paul says in the text. Further, how does one discover that a matter is of mere culture and not normative?

Paul actually gives a reason why females ought to veil themselves and that is "because of the angels" (I Cor. 11:10). You obviously interpret this as because of the culture and, therefore, not presumably to offend them. You may be correct, but how can you tell except Christ or Paul or another apostle tell you so?

It appears then that the whole issue turns on the methodology used in discovering a matter in Scripture to be normative in Christ's church. You certainly are correct the headship is enduring as a creation ordinance. Yet still we are left with the imperative of female veiling, and, as Paul says in verse 16, "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." Is this custom normative?

James Frew
Springside, Irvine, Scotland
* * * * *

It is with much interest that I read your answer to the question concerning "Head Coverings" in the *Standard Bearer* of April 1, 1993.

In your answer you make it clear that the Protestant Reformed Churches do not require such a covering for worshiping women.

I appreciate the *Standard Bearer* for its solid Reformed and biblical content. However, your answer concerning this matter of covering the head has me puzzled.

In your answer you say:

1. They (PRC) regard the "covering referred to in I Corinthians 11:3ff. as an external token in that day of the wife's submission to her husband." While the "undying principle in the passage is the husband's headship over his wife."

We do heartily agree that indeed the undying principle is the husband's headship over the wife, but it is more than just external. It is not just an undying principle, but an abiding principle as well. For the following biblical reasons:

- a. when praying or prophesying without a headcovering she dishonors her head (v. 5).
- b. she is the glory of the man (v. 7).
- c. woman came from man (v. 8).
- d. woman was created for man (v. 9).
- e. because of the angels (v. 10).

2. You state that the covering was "not a hat or some kerchief perched on top of her head. The Greek original of verses 4-7 makes plain that the apostle refers to a veil hanging down from the head." I would answer that whether a hat or veil, it is a symbol of the "undying principle." There is nothing to indicate that this symbol is timebound. Furthermore, Paul speaks of a covering, be it hat or veil.

3. You continue to make your point by saying that this was also Calvin's view. But Calvin is here speaking of a covering for men, whether because of this precept they can wear a hat at any time. This is not the same.

Discussing this precept of women and head coverings I have never heard why our sisters, wives, and mothers

do not wear hats anymore? What is wrong with wearing a hat? I can truly say that a woman with a hat looks distinguished. Without sticking out my head too far, I dare say I am not the only man to say so. Especially when the Lord by the mouth of His apostle

Paul demands that she be covered during worship, we ask the question, "Why not wear a hat?"

Sad to say, women are coming to church in our day, supposedly to worship the Lord, who miss more in the line of clothing than just a hat. Are

our sisters, wives, and mothers sure that instead of veiling the head, they are not veiling rebellion?

Gilbert Zekveld
Newcastle, ON, Canada

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

When Friendship Fails

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

There was something special about attending seminary in the years following the "Split of 1953." In many ways it was more like a graduate course than one of ordinary seminary study. The days were short; the assignments were few; and little outside reading was required. Only occasionally were we given tests; and, when we were, they were seldom seen again. We only wondered whether they were ever really read—or given a grade. Clearly our work was measured by the personal evaluation of the professors, rather than by concrete standards. But somehow that did not matter. We were immersed in the work of theology, and enjoyed pretty much every minute of it. No one had to make us study. The excitement of what we were doing was enough for that.

And work we did. Practically from the moment we entered school, and long before we were given courses on how to do it, we were making sermons; and we were preaching them as well. When the time came for these courses to be taught, therefore, we

were quite aware of what we needed to know, and perhaps absorbed their content with greater appreciation than we might have otherwise. We taught catechism classes, led societies, and even attended consistory meetings at times. Many of the churches, particularly out west, were being reorganized after the convulsions of "the split" and needed whatever help they could get, even if it had to come from a young seminary student. And we usually attended the meetings of classis as well. Important matters were nearly always being dealt with, and the advice of the professors was needed. So school would be dismissed, and we would be there along with the professors, not as though it were required, but because we were concerned with what was going on. By the time we graduated, therefore, we had a backlog of experience in ecclesiastical matters. Ours was an education on the run, with book learning integrated with practice. We lived the life of the church from the start.

And that, in turn, molded our education. Each new event which came up in the churches was something to be talked out as we studied. While making our way through our courses, we saw the application before our eyes. The churches were reaching for recovery from the traumatic and painful experiences they had undergone, and we were there, patiently and carefully guided by professors who shared their concerns with us each step of the way.

All of this, of course, was dominated by the presence of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. It was not a matter of demand or imposition on his part. In fact, he was personally quite unassuming, and he avoided pressing himself to the fore. It was simply the power of his personality and his theological prowess which could never be ignored. His personal concerns were actually quite incidental, although they were there; there was nothing cold or merely academic about him. A great part of his overwhelming stature, not usually understood, was in his ability to maintain a very warm and affable rapport with his students, his whole congregation, and anyone to whom he spoke. There was in him a certain warm projection which would not be denied. To our advantage, perhaps, the mellowing of years had set in. Some minor effects of the massive stroke he had suffered some five years before were still there. He walked always with a slight limp; and there was a tremor in one hand. He certainly no longer had that energetic drive which marked his younger life; and, it was said, his voice no longer retained the timbre it once possessed, as impressive as it still remained. But his mind was as sharp as ever, influencing every aspect of what we learned. To be with him day after day was to be part of his life, and of the theology which he had mastered, and in which he had lived his days.

His method of teaching was in a

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large part Socratic. His classes were dialectic, a continuing theological dialogue with us as students. It was almost as a matter of principle with him, as he once said in a sermon about the men on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus' question, Luke 24:25-27:

The Lord said, "What things?" The Lord wanted to draw them out.

You know, that is one of the most fundamental principles of education. The most fundamental principle of education is that, if you approach a man that has a problem, you must let him talk. Let him talk.

Do that too when you talk to others. Take my advice in that respect. When you talk to others about our Reformed truth, or about Reformed doctrine, others that do not know the Reformed truth, or do not want it even, let them talk. Let them present their own problem.

He did that himself. We would come to class with our questions, as faltering and foolish as they would sometimes be, and patiently he would hear us. Nothing was forbidden. In fact, he often said, "You can be as big a heretic as you want, as long as you leave it here in class" — and, we well understood, as long as it was presented with respect and honest concern. (He had no great patience with dishonest duplicities; and woe be to the student that tried them on him.) When we were through, he would move in, open up the subject, analyze it and bring it to its conclusion, often by bringing it directly back to Scripture. Few were the subjects he could not handle; and whatever he said was always worth listening to.

But he was not the only one there.

Each week the Rev. Gerrit Vos would appear to teach us Dutch, which was only a backdrop for exposing us to an entirely different dimension of church life, and of our ecclesiastical history. He had his own academic and theological abilities; but above all he was a man with a feeling and love for people. He had lived through the history of our churches from their very start; and he loved to reflect on it in terms of the personali-

ties involved. Many a fascinating hour was spent by us listening as he unfolded the personal side of ministerial life, and as he carried us off into the past. It was hard to assess, but that too filled an important part of what school was all about.

And then there was the Rev. George Ophoff. In his own quiet, unassuming way, he had helped to lay the foundation of our churches. If Rev. Hoeksema presented a worked out theology, studying under Rev. Ophoff was like observing theology in its making. His life was absorbed in it, and he pursued it with a total commitment to integrity which would not be quelled. When a problem presented itself his mind would be taken captive — to a point where endless anecdotes arose about his absentmindedness. Other things no longer mattered. Slowly and carefully he would take a problem, muse on it, examine its every facet, try this approach and that, being never satisfied until he was sure every aspect of it had been laid to rest. And much of that came through right in the classroom as we listened and watched, and even took part. No matter what the subject, would he or we bring up a matter which struck his mind, everything else would be put aside, and we would pursue it to its end. This could be abused, and we did not always complete the material we should have; but there was a value in walking with him through these workings, a value which one could never regret.

(In fact, one can still go back and examine his work from this point of view in those extended studies which fill the early volumes of the *Standard Bearer*. Even now they may at first appear rather laborious and heavy. But, if one takes the time to study them through, he will find them to be delving into the heart of each matter, as with carefulness he pursued every aspect of what he chose to address. In the end, there was real value and perception in what he said. In fact, there is a certain shame in the fact that none of those writings have as yet been gathered into books for ready access; for within them is contained

much of the foundation upon which we stand.)

Those days in which we studied with him were the ones in which our denominational identity was being put to the test. Some of the original principles had been openly abused, and no one was more sensitive to that than Rev. Ophoff himself. He would therefore go through it with us again and again. To sit in his classes was like a three-year course in the basic principles of Reformed Church Polity, that is, in effect, in the real meaning of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

* * * * *

Our churches from their very beginning were founded on certain basic principles and commitments. It was not just a matter of the theoretical rejection of Common Grace; it had to do with the very nature of Christianity and the life of God's church. If there was one thing we had come to fear in our painful expulsion from the Christian Reformed denomination, it was not just Common Grace, but the manner in which it had been imposed upon the people of God, the specter of legalism, authoritarianism, and that ecclesiastical hierarchy by which it had been brought about. In that the underlying principles of the Reformation were undercut.

In a way the methods of study followed by us in school were an almost unconscious expression of that. Our professors, regardless of what their detractors have often said, were not men simply committed to certain abstract formulations of thought; and we were made to see this firsthand. When we came to class, it was not just to be told what they thought — although we were told that as well; the professors had done their work and prepared their materials, which they presented for us to learn. They were not ashamed of that. But, at the same time, we were taken into a living pursuit of theological development itself. It was that which they wanted us to master, much more than just facts. Their goal was theology in its working, preached from the pulpit, taught to the people, and lived in the

life of the church. It was the life of friendship with God, the fulfillment of the covenant of grace.

Essentially it all had its source at the beginning of their own ministries, as came out perhaps most of all in the history of the Janssen Case, extending from 1918 to 1922. Rev. Ophoff had been too young to be an actual participant in that, but Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Danhof had, and Rev. Ophoff picked it up from them soon after.

In the early days of their ministries, the Reverends Hoeksema and Danhof had been part of a group of dedicated ministers and professors in the Christian Reformed Church who came together from time to time to pursue theological discussions, and to share their concerns regarding certain liberal and unscriptural influences which were finding their way into their church. In time they even started their own theological journal, *The Witness*, as an organ of expression for what they thought. The result of this was that they came to focus their attention on the modernism being promoted by Prof. Janssen at Calvin seminary, the theological school of their church. The negative aspect of this was perhaps to be regretted; but together they pursued it with diligence — Hoeksema and Danhof doing much of the work — until finally Janssen was cast out. That was what carried their hope — not the dismissal as such, but the possibility that by their working thus in dedicated cooperation together, with the Word of God as their guide, not only theology but also a church life free from worldly infringements might perhaps be revived.

But it did not happen. No sooner was Janssen gone, than suddenly everything changed. That bond of friendship and cooperation, out of which they had worked to that point, broke down and was gone.

Throughout the treatment of his case, Prof. Janssen's tactic had been, not to defend his own positions, but — and not without reason — to launch a counterattack on Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Danhof because they had both publicly repudiated the doctrine

of Common Grace. He apparently understood, as others did not, that what he was teaching followed naturally from that very doctrine which they had rejected; and, accordingly, if he could insist on its validity, his positions ought also to stand. It did not work. Those who judged him in the end were too concerned with how his teachings would be received by others; and those teachings were too blatant for that day. So he was dismissed, but not without his argument having had its effect.

There was a popularity to the doctrine of Common Grace, spreading especially from the seats of higher learning in the Netherlands, which the erstwhile companions of Hoeksema and Danhof were not willing to sacrifice. Prof. Janssen had brought home to them the realization that, if they were going to allow themselves to become identified with the positions of Hoeksema and Danhof, there was much to be lost. Somewhere along the line these men decided that that was more than they could stand. The first thing to bring this out had to do with *The Witness*. Although this journal was established with the purpose of providing an avenue for free theological thought and development, they were not about to allow Common Grace to be questioned on its pages. So Hoeksema and Danhof were dismissed as editors — and the paper soon died.

For awhile there were a number of public exchanges by means of independently published pamphlets; but that did not last long before, in the early months of 1924, a torrent of ecclesiastical protests began to pour in on the heads of these two men, many of them bearing, not the names, but the imprint of influence by their erstwhile friends.

The truly disturbing and disillusioning factor in this all, however, was the fact that suddenly the willingness to deal with each other on a personal plane was gone. In spite of the insistence of Scripture that discipline must be enacted first through personal contact (Matthew 18:15-17), and of the Church Order that nothing

may be dealt with at major assemblies which has not been finished at the minor (Art. 30), these protests were rushed through the channels to classis, and even to synod, without any kind of reasonable opportunity for the accused to answer. At synod itself, where he was openly attacked for his teachings, Rev. Hoeksema was repeatedly refused the right to speak on his own behalf. Only once was he given the floor, and that in a special evening session; but direct answers to his accusers he was always denied.

Nor did this stop with synod. In fact, once synod was over, the classis immediately stepped in, and in a manner that was nearly bizarre. Everything was done to avoid personal contact and confrontation. Although the professors of the seminary, his former friends, were clearly in charge, they never appeared on the floor. Classis would meet and demand from Hoeksema and his consistory a written defense, which would be privately handed over to the professors. They would send up a written answer, which would be quickly adopted by classis and sent to the accused, again for written response. Clearly Hoeksema was not to be allowed the privilege of open debate; his power of speech and influence was too well known for that. Through all the months involving the treatment of this matter, direct contact and discussion was disallowed. Classis was nothing but a legal channel to pass documents back and forth. Hoeksema and Danhof, and finally Ophoff as well, had to be gotten out.

And that was the travesty of it all. The institution of the church had become simply a channel of legalistic, authoritarian imposition, a hierarchy ruling by demand. Decisions were made, and positions taken, without regard to the working of the Spirit and to the right of the individual believer to be busy in the Word of God. The office of all believers was denied; and the beautiful principle of Ephesians 4:15 was thereby lost: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ." □

Of all the labors of the Domestic Mission Committee during the past year, the work connected with the Northern Ireland field was easily the most time-consuming ... and in many respects the most satisfying.

On reflection, we can say that our relationship with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship had always been good. Those of our pastors who spent several weeks in their fellowship (mostly through classical appointments) would invariably return with glowing reports. "The group is solidly united and zealous for the Reformed Faith." "It appears that they are busy bearing witness to the truth in their communities." "Many of the members of the group have an attractive nature and ability to encourage others from outside to join the worship services." And besides, there was the gracious hospitality. "We were quite overwhelmed," wrote one, "by all that they did for us to make our stay enjoyable."

Before this year, however, our enthusiasm was always tempered by a recognition of the fact that sending different ministers to Northern Ireland for short periods of time was hardly adequate to meet the needs of the CRF. The CRF knew that (though they deeply appreciated the provision made for them); the ministers who visited them knew that; the calling church knew that; the Mission Committee knew that. So keenly, in fact, did the calling church feel that lack, that the Consistory decided at last to "loan" their own pastor to work in Northern Ireland for up to one year. Not a light decision, for the largest congregation in the denomination! But Hudsonville believed that the field of labor required more than

it had been given to that point. So fully was Hudsonville persuaded of the necessity of more intense labor, that they declared in a letter accompanying their "call letter" that, "if we cannot do that, it would be time to withdraw from this work." Filling the pulpit by way of classical appointments they characterized as a "stop-gap measure."

Hudsonville's sense of the urgency of calling a missionary was not diminished at all by their decision to send Rev. VanBaren for up to a year. For it was on the day before their pastor left for Northern Ireland that the congregation voted to extend a call to Rev. Ronald Hanko. And, in order to communicate to him something of the excitement of the work, they called to his attention the "unanimous conviction" on the part of those who had before been to Northern Ireland that "much work is possible there, interest is high in the core group, and continuing outside interest is evident. There is also the possibility of continuing contact and interesting work in Great Britain."

At the time of this writing, Rev.

VanBaren has just returned to Hudsonville. Six months he was gone. Less than the twelve months which had been allowed for ... but nevertheless a long time for a congregation to be without a pastor, especially when his absence is right through the "busy" season. From that point of view one might be inclined to wonder whether the timing here was unfortunate, since a call for full-time labor in the field was accepted before Rev. VanBaren was six weeks in Ballymena. It might appear therefore that, if only Hudsonville had known that their 15th call (the one to Rev. Hanko) would be accepted, they could have been spared the sending of their own pastor, and the Mission Committee could have been spared the expense. The truth is however that it would be difficult to exaggerate the timeliness of Rev. VanBaren's presence in Northern Ireland during those few months. Rev. VanBaren, whose record of stewardship in the work of the church is unassailable, recognized that at once. In a letter to the Mission Committee and his Consistory dated December 5, he noted that he was "struck by the



Young ones arrive for catechism at the manse.

Mr. Doezeema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

fact that God has opened the way in many particulars so that a missionary can serve here"; and among the particulars was this: "We also are here, I believe, at an opportune time to help make the necessary arrangements for the reception of the missionary."

It did not take long for the Mission Committee to learn that Rev. VanBaren was in earnest about his role in the work at that point. For, at its meeting of December 17, the committee had from Rev. VanBaren no fewer than seven letters, written in quick succession during the preceding couple of weeks, and each one reflecting new developments and progress in the work. (Electronic mail, incidentally, made it possible for the Mission Committee to be kept apprised of developments *as they occurred*. How different from the way we were accustomed to having to treat Rev. Bruinsma's reports, when he was missionary in Jamaica! Month-old news, at that time, was thought quite current.)

Figuring prominently in Rev. VanBaren's letters was of course the matter of finding a house suitable for a missionary family of ten. Given all the options to be explored, and all of the related legal and financial problems that had to be resolved, this was surely a daunting task. In fact, a quick

glance at Rev. VanBaren's reports in December and January might lead one to believe that this project was consuming all of his time and energy. Hardly, however, was that the case. In addition to the work involved in preaching, teaching catechism classes, and leading Bible Study groups, Rev. VanBaren was actively engaged with the CRF in their outreach. Under his leadership more extensive advertising was being done, both in the newspaper and through direct mailing. The latter involved the preparation of a bi-weekly "bulletin" (addressing various doctrinal issues), to be sent to about 250 addresses — bringing response at an amazing rate of 20%!

The heart of Rev. VanBaren's preparatory work was therefore first of all spiritual. His assistance in the acquisition of a house and an automobile for the missionary was an added bonus. But a very important one. Practical questions there were — as to what and where and how much. In addition, there were legal and technical problems to be worked through, with the help of Attorney James Lanting, of our South Holland congregation. And then there was the matter of decorating and furnishing the house — in both of which Mrs. VanBaren figured importantly in the decision-making, and the CRF in the

funding. Everything, in fact, worked so smoothly that Rev. VanBaren was moved to write, "We can thank God that the way for Rev. R. Hanco has opened up so appropriately. I am simply amazed. Here is a beautiful home, nicely situated, with no one in it for whom we must wait to move — and a reasonable sum is agreed upon for purchase." (The attractiveness of the price, by the way, was enhanced greatly by a more favorable exchange rate, the effect of which was that the purchase of it in January required 25% fewer U.S. dollars than would have been the case several months earlier.)

When it came time to set a date for the VanBarens' departure from the field, both the Mission Committee and Hudsonville Consistory were of a mind to urge them to stay in Northern Ireland for several weeks after the arrival of the Hankos, to help them in the transition from the work of a minister-pastor in Texas, to that of a missionary-pastor in Northern Ireland. We are confident that the Hankos have found ample reason by this time for gratitude that, in the providence of God, Hudsonville sent their pastor to the field at just the time that they did. Rev. Hanco testified of that in his first report to Hudsonville Consistory and the Mission Committee: "I cannot describe how much his (Rev. VanBaren's) preparations and work have meant for me in getting started with the work here. I want to thank the Consistory especially for sending him and for allowing him and Mrs. VanBaren to stay a few extra weeks to help us. Just in getting settled they have been invaluable."

Hudsonville's "loan" of its pastor, incidentally, while perhaps the *highest* evidence of their commitment to the work in Northern Ireland, is not the *only* evidence of it. The Mission Committee acknowledges with gratitude the fact that, in one meeting, the congregation approved the Consistory's recommendation that they buy (that is, with their own funds) a computer for Rev. Hanco, an automobile for the missionary's family, and up to \$5,000 in furnishings for the



Rev. and Mrs. VanBaren receive gifts of appreciation from the CRF

manse in Northern Ireland. In many respects, Hudsonville has served the denomination well in their role as calling church for this field.

Hudsonville concluded its annual report to the Mission Committee with this observation: "This has been an exciting time. We believe we see the clear evidence of God's blessings upon the labors. We do not, and must not, expect great numbers. But we believe it will soon be possible, with patient labor, to establish a church in Ballymena. The Fellowship is considering several options concerning a building for a permanent worship site. They express also their appreciation to our churches for the help which has been provided for them in their need."

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There are in our denomination two mission fields. In reviewing the labors of the Domestic Mission Committee for the year, one cannot help but notice how many parallels there are between the two. Often, it seems, the similarities are lost sight of, because of the presence also of stark contrasts. The testimony of our ministers who have spent time in the respective fields is that in both of them there are people of God who earnestly, fervently *desire* our help. In both instances the people with whom we are laboring would be quick to say that they know of nowhere else to go. They can therefore also be said to *need* our help — the one just more desperately than the other. In both fields the Mission Committee and the respective calling churches have for two years been employing "stopgap measures" — in the one case, pulpit supply by classical appointment, and, in the other, one-month conferences twice a year. And we might add that in both instances the calling church saw clearly the necessity of doing *more*. The one, you will recall, wrote that "intensive work must be done there — and if we cannot do that, it would be time to withdraw." The other, in its annual report to Synod through the Mission Committee writes, "There is no adequate substitute for a missionary on the island."



Rev. Joostens instructing young people in Jamaica

And it is striking that during this past year both calling churches, recognizing the urgency of a need in the field assigned to them, sent their own minister to meet that need. Last, and decidedly least, both fields used in 1992 approximately the same percentage of the synodical budget.

Then there are some differences — as in knowledge of the Reformed faith, strength (and even makeup) of families, financial ability to support the work, culture, race. Not to be forgotten, certainly, is the difference in duration of effort — two years' worth of stopgap measures ... vs. *thirty*.

First Church (G.R.), calling church for Jamaica, is to be commended for its perseverance. They have over the years pressed to do the best they could with resources that were always recognized as being inadequate for the needs of the field. For the past three years they have conducted periodic one-month educational conferences, which, as they see it, have served well for the instruction of the leaders, for promoting a spirit of unity among the churches, and for inspiring in several young men a desire to study for the ministry.

Especially after the conferences of last summer, however, it became apparent that this endeavor, though successful for the leaders, was leaving unattended some important needs of the members. In fact, a number of

problems in the life of the churches came to light in that July/August conference — problems serious enough to warrant a different, and somewhat extended, effort early in 1993 in Jamaica. It was at that point that First Church decided that it was necessary to send to the island two veterans of the Jamaican scene — even if one of them had to be their own pastor. Rev. Joostens therefore, accompanied first by Clare Prince (a member of the Mission Committee), and later by Dan Pastoor (long-time member of First's Jamaica Committee), spent six weeks in Jamaica in January and February, during which time they worked extensively both with the leaders and with the other members of the churches.

First Church's report of that effort suggests that, though problems undoubtedly remain, there is also reason for encouragement. Noteworthy among the problems are especially these, that the churches are unequally served by the few pastors available, and that the best-prepared pastors must spend so many hours in the "tent-making" aspect of their ministry (to support their families) that they are unable to serve adequately their own congregations, let alone the denomination. The encouraging part is that the people remain committed to us and are as eager as ever to learn; another church has expressed interest in joining the denomination; and

three able young men want to be trained for the ministry.

Needless to say, all of this points to the necessity of our having a missionary on the island. Foremost among the disappointments experienced by the calling church throughout the years has been, surely, their inability to provide consistently for that need. In analyzing the declines they have received in answer to their calls after the return of Rev. Bruinsma, First Church has concluded that it is the "daunting complications" associated with bringing a family to the island that have made it practically impossible for the majority of our ministers to give serious consideration to the call. Shortly after synod last year, therefore, First Church decided to postpone calling until they could present to Synod '93 a plan which would provide a more flexible work schedule for the missionary, thus conceivably minimizing these "complications." Their intention is to renew at once the calling process, after Synod 1993, and to continue it for the duration of what will be the fourth year in the four-year timetable approved by Synod 1990.

First Church, in their report to Synod, refers to the field in these terms: "viable," "vast," "perplexing." An accurate assessment, it seems to us. Perhaps, in fact, it is the viability and the vastness which together make for the perplexity.

Over the years we have witnessed the defection of a good number of the churches which were originally the objects of our labor on the island. The same holds for the leaders in them — that is, we have lost a good number of them, too. One can easily become discouraged by that, and even conclude that what was once considered to be an "open door" to our churches may no longer be such. But if we focus rather on those who have remained with us, because they were of us, and if by "open door" and "viability" we mean that we have an opportunity still to work with a people who need and want our leadership and instruction, then it seems to us that there can be no doubt but that the

door is open and the field is viable.

But then there's the matter of that "vastness." It happens that two members of our committee, Rev. Bruinsma and Mr. Clare Prince, have extensive firsthand knowledge of that aspect of the work in Jamaica. If, indeed, there was one thing of which Rev. Bruinsma was fully persuaded by his five years on the island, it was this, that a lone missionary cannot do justice to the needs of this field. Not just the *number of scattered churches*, but this *kind of mission labor*, demands more. It was in order to make provision for this need that, while Rev. Bruinsma was still on the island, Synod approved the calling of a second missionary; and later approved our recommendation that, should a second missionary not be available, an elder or ex-elder be sent as a co-laborer with the missionary. In our opinion, those decisions reflected a growing awareness of and appreciation for the "vastness" of the labors which are an inescapable part of missions in a third-world country.

As we suggested, however, it is that combination of an apparent "viability" and a certain "vastness" which makes for what First Church calls a "perplexing situation." There's work aplenty to be done; but can *we*, at this time, *do* it?

The twice-a-year, one-month conferences, approved by Synod 1990, have one more year to go. We see 1993-1994 therefore as being decisive for the work in Jamaica. The Mission Committee is becoming increasingly convinced that First Church's assessment is correct, that "there is no adequate substitute for a missionary on the island." That we were once given in Jamaica an "open door" seems clear on the face of it. That there remains there a legitimate work in a viable field seems equally clear. If the Lord should give us a missionary in the next year, then we must conclude that the door remains open for us, and we ought to press on with renewed enthusiasm for the work, and with gratitude to God for seeing fit to use us in the labor in this little corner of Christ's Kingdom. But if, on the other hand,

the means for a meaningful work are withheld, then the Mission Committee and the calling church must decide before Synod 1994 whether the "door" in fact remains open for *us*.

Sometimes, from a distance, the magnitude and seriousness of such decisions are not fully appreciated. We earnestly covet your prayers, congregational and personal, as we face them.

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To Synod 1992 the Mission Committee reported that it was just beginning to investigate potential for a mission field in Boise, Idaho. For a time thereafter it did seem as if the work which South Holland had so well begun could develop into a denominational labor in that place. The Mission Committee believed that it was building with the Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship a relationship which bode well for an outreach in the Boise area. The Fellowship, however, as the members of it came to know us better through the various ministers who preached in their pulpit, concluded finally that, though they agree with the PRC substantially in doctrinal matters, they disagree with us in some matters of life and practice, and that these disagreements are significant enough to constitute barriers to formal affiliation. So, for the present at least, we will turn our attention elsewhere.

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Sometimes, perhaps even often times, the work of missions can be discouraging. There is, however, no doubt in our minds but that we have inherited in the Reformed faith a great treasure — a treasure not meant to be hoarded but shared. And we are thankful for the privilege we have in the Mission Committee to be busy in that work. We have, as it seems to us, so much to learn about missiology; for our experience in it is so limited. We make every effort therefore to learn from our "successes" and our "failures," confident that the Lord will bless faithfulness to the command of Christ to His church, that the glorious gospel of grace be preached to the ends of the earth. □

The Power of the Preaching

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(In the previous article we pointed out that in the preaching, God Himself speaks, and that the Word which He speaks is a twofold power — a power that brings salvation to the elect, and a power by which the reprobate wicked are hardened. Further, we began to note that that power is not dependent on the eloquence of the preacher; for the natural man is in himself spiritually incapable of receiving the preaching, no matter how persuasive. We concluded that article by affirming that "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." In what follows, we conclude our treatment of this subject.)

In the Canons, Head III/IV, Article 10, we read, "But that others who are called by the gospel, obey the call, and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, ... but it must be wholly ascribed to God." It is not by an exercise of free will. The natural man has no free will.

The power of the preaching is not external but internal. It is not in the sound that goes out, but in the bare power of God Himself. The Holy Spirit uses the external preaching as a means of working by His sovereign power in the innermost being of the hearer. The power of the preaching is

that internal, powerful Word of the Spirit which you cannot hear with the physical ear and which has no physical sound.

In I Corinthians 2:4 we read, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" I Thessalonians 1:5 says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost...."

With respect to God's chosen people, for whom the preaching is the power of God unto salvation, the power of the preaching is the inner power of God's grace. The preaching of the gospel, with that inner Word of the Spirit, is the chief means whereby God gives His grace to His chosen people. The word which is spoken by the Spirit is the word, "Grace."

*The power of the preaching
is not ... in the sound that goes out,
but in the bare power of God
Himself.*

Salvation does not come about because man accepts an offer made by God. God's people are saved because in the preaching of the gospel God's grace works in their hearts and lives. They come out of darkness into God's marvelous light, out of death into life, because in the preaching the light of God's grace shines upon them and gives to them life.

On the other hand, with respect to the reprobate wicked for whom the preaching is the power of God unto

damnation, the inner Word of God is the hardening power of God. In the preaching God does not give grace to the reprobate wicked. He withholds His grace so that they are left in their sinful, unbelieving, and rebellious condition.

In Mark 4:11, 12 we read, "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." When Christ preached to the reprobate wicked, He spoke no inner word of grace to them. Even though they heard what He said and could see the points He made, they did not see and understand spiritually, and therefore they were not converted.

However, for the reprobate wicked the preaching is more than a lack of grace. If it were only a lack of grace, it would not be a power. The preaching is a savor of death unto death to those that perish because it is the hardening power of God.

Consider the hardening of Pharaoh. God commissioned Moses to go to Pharaoh and preach to him. He preached that Pharaoh was to let Israel go. However, God hardened Pharaoh's heart through Moses' preaching. The more Moses preached to him, and the more that preaching was authenticated by the miracles, the harder Pharaoh's heart became.

We read of that in Exodus 4:21: "And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see

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that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

Thus it is with all of the reprobate wicked. The inner Word of the Spirit in the preaching hardens them more and more. The more they hear the preaching, the more they manifest their hatred and rebellion against God.

What is the purpose of the power of the preaching? What are God's intentions with the preaching?

Closely connected with these questions is a further question. Why has God made this powerful preaching such an important part of the calling of the church?

Jesus has commanded His church in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The church is to preach the gospel to the world. She is not to distinguish between rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, righteous and wicked. The gospel is to be preached to all the different kinds of people in the world. That is so important, that the church is to devote a great part of her resources and time to this one task. That is the chief task of the church. Why?

Is the purpose of the preaching to get that gospel out to all the people of the world so that everyone will have a chance to be saved? Is it to get that vital information out so that all men

will have a basis for making a decision for or against Christ? Is the purpose of the preaching and its power to demonstrate to the world that God loves everyone and wants all to be saved? Many would answer, "Yes." They make it very urgent. If we care about our fellowman, we will get the Word out.

In the light of all that we have said, the only correct answer to these questions is "No." These are not God's purpose, and they should not be the church's either.

Since the power of the preaching is a twofold power, the power of God unto salvation and damnation, how can the preaching possibly indicate a purpose in God to give everyone in the world a chance to be saved? Since in the preaching God gives grace only to His chosen people but hardens the reprobate wicked in their sins, how can the preaching be an indication of God's love of all?

In the light of all that we have said about the power of the preaching, it ought to be obvious that the purpose of the preaching is the purpose of predestination. The power of the preaching indicates that God is a predestinating God. He is a God who loves His people and them only, and out of that love has chosen them to eternal salvation. But He is also a God who hates the reprobate wicked, and out of that hatred has appointed them

to eternal damnation.

God says in Romans 9:13, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." In Psalm 5:5 we read of God, "...thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

The apostle says in Romans 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." God, in the preaching, shows mercy or hardens according to His eternal will of predestination. The purpose of the preaching is the accomplishment of God's will of election and reprobation.

That the purpose of the preaching is predestination very powerfully demonstrates to us that salvation is all of God. Since the power of the preaching is the determining factor in salvation, salvation cannot be of man and his will or works. Thus we read in Romans 9:16, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

It also demonstrates that the purpose of the powerful preaching is the glory of God, for there is nothing in which man can boast. Oh, the true preaching of God's Word does not seem like much to the world. Many people think of it as foolishness. But that is precisely what gives all the glory to God. He uses weak means in order that He might manifest His power and in that way receive all the glory. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. George Lubbers

The Proper Spiritual Conduct of Christian Women (2)

Lesson 6

Let a (the) woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity (love) and holiness with sobriety.

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I Timothy 2:11-15

Some introductory observations:

It is my firm conviction that this Scriptural injunction from the sanctified apostolic pen of Paul calls for rather careful consideration by us all. Right now these words of Paul are called in question by those who hold that such instruction is outmoded. Paul's words here are said to be relevant for the times of the apostles, but are no longer foundational for our "enlightened" twentieth century. These contentious voices could not be more wrong!

We are writing exegesis. If there is to be good, solid refutation of this pernicious error, the sword which will slay this error must needs be the spiritual weapon of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:13-19; II Cor. 10:3-5). We had better, one and all, heed the exhortation of Scripture in II Timothy 2:24-26. For this battle is not against flesh and blood. It is against Satan and all the hosts of hell itself. We will then do as Jesus did in the hour of temptation. He who was able to cast out demons can also effectually bring out of the snare of the devil those who are captive by Satan's will. Does not the Bible say that the servant of the Lord must be gentle unto all, apt to teach, forbearing?

The calling of the hour is ever anew that we speak truthfully in love (Eph. 4:16).

As far as the text itself is concerned, let us keep in mind that Paul is continuing to hold before the church of God in every age how saints should behave in the house of God, the church of the *living God*. This matter is very urgent. It deals with the mystery of godliness itself. This is a matter which requires vigilance every hour!

The "silence" enjoined

We should read at this point what the Holy Spirit teaches us in I Corinthians 14:23-36 on this matter of the required silence of women. In this text we read (we quote in part), "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but

they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

Notice that this is not a matter in which Paul merely appeals to his apostolic knowledge as he does in I Corinthians 7:25. Paul backs up his axiomatic statement concerning the "silence" for the Corinthian women by appealing to the "law." This "law" has the sanction of God in *all* the churches! It is the rule for good behavior for women who insist that they also should speak with tongues. God is then, now, and forever a God of order in His house, the church of the living God (I Tim. 3:15, 16).

We must notice that the mouth of believing, saintly women professing godliness is not muzzled by the Holy Spirit in the church. The women as well as the men are enjoined in Ephesians 5:19-21 to sing. Read this passage in your own Bibles. We must add that in Galatians 3:26 it is said to both men and women, "For ye are all (as many as were baptized into Jesus Christ) the children of God." Both believing men and believing women have received the Spirit of adoption who cries in both, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:1-5). Are not believing men and women "heirs together of the grace of life"? But notice the glorious roles of each. These separate roles are a picture of the created ordinance revealed to us already in Genesis 2:24. Jesus speaks of this as having been "from the beginning" (Matt. 19:3-9), and Paul says that both husband and wife are truly a "great mystery" (Eph. 5:32). Very briefly, the unity and the difference is expressed in the words, "Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Paul uses the Greek term for silence in our text here in I Timothy 2:11, 12. It is *eesuchia*. However, in I Corinthians 14:34 the Greek verb *sigatoosan* is used. We will attempt to understand the difference between these terms. It appears that here in I Timothy 2:11 the word indicates "to refrain from speaking"—being freely subject to the will of God. They are silent not by a restraining order, but

with a glad and blessed quietness of heart, at peace with the "law" of God for His house. The silence here must not be a grumbling overtone. When the Christian citizen submits to the laws of the land, he does so with a heart which honors these commands in the fear of God. He must do this with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. Such is the very evident implication of the adverbial phrase "in all subjection."

The creation ordinance

Paul writes, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

Paul has reference here to the creation account of Genesis 2:18-25. This sentence (v. 13) gives the rock-bottom biblical reason why women must be silent in the churches, and why men are to pray, lifting up holy hands without doubtings (v. 8). That God "formed" man "first" from the dust of the ground is not a trite saying. The adverb "first" does not merely refer to temporal order. It is clear from the adverb *protos* that Adam was created with an eminence over the "woman." Both were created in the image of God: true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But Adam was created "foremost." The "woman" was taken out of the man; she was bone of Adam's bone and flesh of his flesh (Gen. 2:23). She was not called, at that time (before the Fall), "Eve." She is ever called "woman." Why? Because she "was bone of Adam's bones, and flesh of his flesh" (cf. I Cor. 11:7, 8).

The "help meet for man" was consistently called "woman" in the Genesis account until after the Fall. Fact is, only after the "Great Promise" spoken in Genesis 3:13-20 did Adam call "the woman which thou gavest to be with me" the Christian surname "Eve." This name means "the mother of all living." The term *all living* refers to the spiritual seed of the redeemed woman. This woman, with her husband, is now clothed with the skins of the sacrificed animal slain upon the altar. This means that neither Adam nor Eve were left in the shameful nakedness of guilt; they stand together

as under the "blood." We will need to consider this presently.

It is quite evident that the creation ordinance that is implied in Adam's being created "first" has still a foundational meaning for the life of the church, both in the Old and the New Testament. In both dispensations the rule is that God gathers the church in the line of generations, the holy seed of the woman, Eve, the mother of the living. That the woman, who tempted her husband in the transgression, was named "mother" is part and parcel of the great mystery of godliness. Out of "Eve" are all the generations which the Son of God gathers out of the whole human race until the end of the history of the world, which is the history of the gathering of the children of God's eternal kingdom.

We should notice that in this brief section here in I Timothy 2:13-15 we see the threefold course of sacred history: the *creation* of man; the *fall* of man in the one transgression of Adam; the *redemption* of the elect church by the blood of Calvary.

And we should consider that the biblical injunction that "women" are to be silent, in the preaching, finds its cause and ground in the historical fact that Adam was formed "first" and then Eve. Thus we confess that the foundations stand. God does forget the sins of all His people; however, He does not forget how it was in "the beginning." Should God forget that Adam was created "first" the pillars of justice would be destroyed. God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

God remembers the role of "Eve" in the temptation of Adam

Paul maintains the court-record of the "woman" in the Fall. It was more than four thousand years after the Fall that the Holy Spirit wrote I Timothy 3:1-3. The verses 14 and 15 should be carefully studied by children of God. This is quite emphatically the case in our day when winds of the error of feminism charm the weak with the lie of Satan, the great opponent of God. He still says, "Ye

shall not surely die!" But the truth is that "the woman," who is flesh of Adam's flesh and bone of his bones, "died" as punishment for her transgressing the will of Jehovah God.

We should notice the wording of our text here. We read, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman *being deceived* was in the transgression" (v. 4).

It is quite evident from these words that "the woman," who should have been Adam's helpmeet, by proud, willful disobedience became the willing accomplice of Satan and of all the forces of hell. She spearheaded the attack upon Adam. God is just. He also has a book of remembrance. Take careful notice that in God's book of remembrance, at this point, Adam was not deceived by the serpent directly. He was still in his created rectitude. But she who was to be surnamed "Eve" was really *apate theisa*. This is so final for her that there remained no way of receding. Under the sovereign, almighty verdict, "dying thou shalt surely die," the woman "became" in (was in) transgression. There are two tenses used here in the Greek which we must analyze. The first is the translation of the KJV translated, "but the woman deceived." This is the translation of what is called "point action." The form is what is called "participial." It was as she was undergoing Satan's lying word that she "became" in temptation. She is swept along into a permanent, irrevocable state and condition.

The enormity of this "dying" of the "woman" must be thoroughly grasped. The description we have in Genesis 3:6.

All the "woman" can do now is go to the very limit. This spiritual process of temptation we are taught in James 1:14, 15: "...but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Let us not err in this matter of the enormity and the horrible sinfulness of the "woman" — Adam's helpmeet!

She could not, "being in the temptation," halt in her evil course. She must go on to the bitter end. With "satanic" woman's guile she takes of the fruit, eats it, and gives also to Adam and he did eat ... and died as the father of the human race. Such was the enormity of the temptation. God is not (cannot be) tempted of evil. He is purest truthfulness and holiness. Not one of the words of Genesis 2:16, 17 falls to the earth! Let us, one and all, tremble in holy awe!

(To be continued.)

Some Questions and Suggestions

1. The text of God's Word concerning the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" is very brief and terse. It is no long list of don'ts and do's. How could "the woman" first and Adam second forget it? Or are we dealing with the mystery of iniquity, the deceitfulness of sin?

2. Where was the old serpent when God spoke in Genesis 2:16, 17? Does the devil also attend church services? Did he, the serpent, misunderstand the terms of the text? Or did he understand, but plan the strategy of his attack with great guile? See II Corinthians 11:3.

3. Why did Adam not oppose the "woman" when she took from the fruit of the tree (Gen. 3:6)? What horrible "history" is being made in the garden of Eden! Why does not Romans 5:12-21 even allude to the fall of Eve? Would sin have entered into the world had Adam not also been tempted by Satan through Eve?

4. What insight into the mind and heart of Eve is indicated by her altering of the command? Did she not add the phrase, "neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die"?

5. Did the "woman" die in Adam just as the whole human race did? Did the original sin of Adam, and the death which entered into the human race come upon Eve through Adam's transgression and Fall?

6. Was there an element of truth in the defense of both Adam and the woman as recorded in Genesis 3:12,

13? Is the "old serpent" more guilty than Adam? Why could the devil not be reinstated in his "first estate"?

7. What is the exact point of comparison between the "woman" who would usurp authority over the man,

and Eve's insubordination to Adam in the Fall of the latter and of the fall of the whole human race? □

Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

Renewing the Battle (3)

Drama, Television, and Movies

Lead, Toxicity,

Lead and lead compounds can be highly toxic when eaten or inhaled. Although lead is absorbed very slowly into the body, its rate of excretion is even slower. Thus, with constant exposure, lead accumulates gradually into the body. Lead can cause lesions in the central nervous system and apparently can damage the cells making up the blood-brain barrier that protects the brain from many harmful chemicals (see BRAIN). Symptoms of lead poisoning include loss of appetite, weakness, anemia, vomiting, and convulsions, sometimes leading to permanent brain damage or death. Levels of environmental lead considered nontoxic may also be involved in increased hypertension in a significant number of persons, according to studies released in the mid-1980s. As a result, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control have been revising downward the levels of environmental lead that it would consider safe (The Online Edition of Grolier's Academic American Encyclopedia, (c) 1993).

One historian has a new theory for the cause of the Roman empire's downfall: the ingestion of lead from drinking wine out of the expensive lead vessels of the day. Whether he's right or wrong, his conjecture can be an interesting "parable" for our purpose: the ruinous spiritual effects of being entertained by most television, drama, and movies, can be compared to the physical devastation caused by lead-poisoning.

Suppose the respected *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that a toxic poison has let off from Burger King's drinking cups for the last five years. I trust that we would be terrified. Probably we would be angry at the maker of the cups for exposing us to such danger. Certainly we would stop patronizing Burger

King. In a similar way, I trust that God's people, who hear of the ruinous effects of ingesting spiritual poison from a certain source, will be horrified, a little bit angry, and certainly stop patronizing the business.

As with lead, Christians ought to be revising downward the levels of television viewing they consider safe. For more and more reports are coming in regarding the ruinous effects of television viewing, even of programs that are considered innocent.

What are the effects of watching corruption on television and movies?

READING. My own experience has been that when I encourage a member of the church or an interested visitor to study a certain question regarding doctrine or life, very often I am met with the hesitant response, "But I don't really read." It's not that he doesn't know how to read words. He doesn't know how to sit with a book for more than a few

minutes without dying of boredom or losing his train of thought.

The reason, most often? He never learned to read or like to read because he nursed from the breasts of television. And television is an enemy of reading. Hundreds of Christians and non-Christians are trumpeting the dangers of television and movies. Taking time for television means taking time away from reading.

THINKING. Television is an enemy of good, critical thinking. A teacher from Waterloo Schools in Ohio said in a Knight-Ridder newspaper column, "The [television] screen does it all — thinking for themselves has gone out the window."¹ More studies than you could ever wade through document this.

Educators and sociologists are

1 Phil Phillips, *Saturday Morning Mind Control*, Oliver Nelson: Nashville, 1993.

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alarmed at the effects of television viewing, without necessarily being alarmed at the perverse contents. A teacher at Teacher's College of Columbia University said about children who were nurtured on television, "I don't think they know when to listen." They don't know when to listen.

Educators are concerned about attention span, lack of tolerance, persistence, patience. A child's fluency with words and creativity are directly related (adversely) to television watching. Children who watch much television have fewer hobbies, play less well, and lack the skills and creativity needed for problem solving.

MAJOR CONCERN. Although significant, these are not our major concerns. *Our concern is the devastating effect of being entertained by sin and educated by the world.* "...loss of appetite, weakness, anemia, vomiting, and convulsions, sometimes leading to permanent brain damage or death..." (Grolier's). "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth his own death" (Proverbs 11:19).

The effect is the sinful behavior that is promoted in the lives of those who entertain themselves with sin. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said over a hundred years ago, "Theatre-going, if it becomes general among professing Christians, will soon prove the death of piety."² Michael Medved, Jewish television critic for PBS, said in an interview, "I don't think I can review movies much longer. It is an assault—an assault on the senses and an assault on the spirit."³

VIEW OF LIFE. Movies and television are an assault on our biblical views of life. Television and movies are educational, which is obvious.

They teach you what's funny (the laugh-track tells you when you should laugh). They teach sinful pride, selfishness (a characteristic of most stars). They teach what's important in life (being rich, famous, and powerful). They mold your opinions about what's beautiful (not you), what's ugly (99% of the population), what's important (pleasure, entertainment), what's necessary to own. Love of pleasure rules. Christians don't want to have their own or their children's opinions formed by this medium.

VIOLENCE. "More than fifty studies have been conducted ... and all have reached the same conclusion: the amount of violence a child sees is correlated significantly with the amount of aggression a child displays."⁴ Already in 1968 the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence said of violence on television, "...it is a matter of grave concern." The "Journal of the American Medical Association" said that there should be "a major, organized cry of protest from the medical profession in relation to what, in political terms, I consider a national scandal." And the citizens of our country wonder why in the 1990s there is such violence. Some know. In the local press in April, the editorial writer said, "With such a teacher, children become more violent and more physically aggressive themselves.... Leonard Eron has spent 36 years researching TV violence. Tracking children through to adulthood, he found those who watched more violent TV were convicted of more serious crimes, were more aggressive when drinking and were most inclined to be violent when handling their own children. ...young males... often view the violent men on television as examples of effectiveness, strength and action."⁵

When we and our children view the world's sins, we become desensitized to sin, callous towards unholy-

ness, until an ungodly life isn't horrifying to us. The great blessing of the Holy Spirit is the work of a sanctified conscience. The great curse of sin on television is the searing of the conscience.

MATERIALISM. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." One prayer we learn from the Lord who saved us is "Give me neither poverty nor riches...lest I be full and deny thee and say, 'who is the Lord?'" The prayer we learn from television's advertising is, "Lord, I want it all; I want all the modern clothes, the new car, the brand-name foods and drinks, the best vacations.... I want everything."

Rev. John R. Sittema, a Christian Reformed pastor from Dallas, Texas, wrote in the April, 1993, *Outlook* about materialism. First in his section on "overcoming materialism" was, "If only we learned our perspective on wealth and poverty from God instead of TV. ...commercials are perhaps the most deadly item on the screen, sowing seeds of discontent and greed, and particularly aim at the younger 'consumers'."⁶

FAMILY LIFE. Most television programs and movies are an assault on family life. Where is the calm, unhurried conversation around the Word, with quiet meditation? Where is the time spent reading together? Is there any ability to pray together as a family in the evening before the youngest go to bed? Does a family have the right to pray, asking God's blessing, or even the will to pray, after they have filled their heart from the television or the rented video? Oh, how we need to pray! Some families don't take the time calmly to speak together, but think they spend time in fellowship because they have been in front of the television together. Sad.

MARRIAGES. But I cannot think of any worse effect that television could have than the ruin of marriages.

2 *Sword and Trowel*, September, 1879, quoted in *Banner of Truth*, December, 1971, page 31.

3 *Christianity Today*, March 8, 1993, page 25.

4 Philips, page 53

5 *The Grand Rapids Press*, April 13, 1993, page A10.

6 Page 17.

From the viewpoint of time alone, television is a threat to marriages. Sports, news programs, documentaries, interviews, etc., can consume the evening so that husband and wife rarely speak. It is no wonder that, more and more, "communication" is high on the list of "difficulties" in marriages.

But Scripture teaches that there is one thing that strikes at the heart of marriage. It alone is ground for divorce. Fornication. Adultery. If there is one word that describes television and movies today, it is "pornographic," which simply means, "the writing about fornication."

I so fear (and shudder thinking about it) that the next generation (that's you) will have so many marriage problems that pastors and elders will not know where to turn. Pastors see it already. Why? Because little boys and little girls have learned that the sex and the sexual enjoyment on television is the way it ought to be. Now you are young men and young women

who know nothing else. And soon you will find that you do not enjoy your wife, your husband. Burned in the image of your mind are the scenes from televisions and videos.

Or, in marriage, one or the other commits the sin by being entertained by it (the wife in the daytime soaps and talk-shows, the husband usually in the evening shows). Fatal blows are struck at their marriage.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...." And against your marriages.

A LOSS OF HOLINESS. To sum up, the effect of most television programs and movies is simply a loss of holiness. Spurgeon was right. If theatre-going (read: "movie watching") becomes general among professing Christians, it will soon prove the death of piety (read: "holiness").

No wonder. The Spirit of Christ is a Holy Spirit, whose interest is our holiness. But when a Christian ig-

nores that, entertaining himself with unholy filth, smearing the world's dung over his home and soul, it is no wonder the Spirit is grieved, withdrawing Himself in His power and comforting presence. Unholiness stinks.

But the fight goes to the last ditch. Quentin Schultze (who shows his bias in favor of TV in the introduction of his book, "Redeeming Television") dismisses almost all the reports of the sociologists who see a connection between television and bad behavior. And do some among us say, "We have watched television a lot, and this did not happen to our family"? Thank God that He overruled your folly. So far.

But "be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption..." (Galatians 6:7,8). You will too. □

Book Reviews

Prophets of Psychoheresy II, Critiquing Dr. James C. Dobson; by Martin & Deidre Bobgan; Eastgate Publishers, 1990. 310 pp., (no price, paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

The authors, a husband and wife team, both of whom hold advanced and earned degrees from prestigious universities, have written other books on the same general theme as this one. Their chief purpose in writing these books is to attempt to persuade the church that it has sold out to psychology and replaced Scripture with psychological notions and jargon. The authors are alarmed by the fact that, within the church and the home, human behavior is more and more explained in terms of psychology, and the answers to life's problems are sought in psychology, while the noble and correct heritage of the church in

the past has been to explain human problems biblically and to seek solutions to these problems from the Word of God.

I share in the concern of these authors, and their purpose in writing these books ought to be applauded by every Reformed person.

While their stated concern in all their books is a drift from biblical thinking to psychological thinking, in this volume the authors are particularly interested in analyzing the views of Dr. James C. Dobson. It took some courage, I suspect, to write a book critical of James Dobson, for his teachings and views are held by many to be the last word in all the problems of family life and child-rearing.

The authors, after having given abundant proof that thinking has shifted from biblical themes to psychological ideas, point out (with many quotations and references) that Dr.

Dobson is more a psychologist than a theologian; that even in his psychology he is eclectic while he borrows psychological ideas from secular and atheistic psychologists; but that he gives his psychological ideas a veneer of religion by using the Bible in a superficial way to bolster his views.

While maintaining that Dr. Dobson perverts Scriptural teaching itself by changing Scripture's emphasis from a God-centered theology to a man-centered theology (p. 88) and by changing the gospel from a God-glorifying gospel to a man-oriented gospel (p. 145), the authors also insist that the Bible is used, not to learn its fundamental teachings concerning man and salvation, but to give some religious tone to what is basically worldly psychology.

Specifically, the authors challenge such key concepts and catch-phrases in Dobson's teachings as uncondi-

tional love, ego-satisfaction, self-acceptance, and left-brain or right-brain dominance as ideas that are, at best, not found in Scripture, and are at worst, anti-biblical.

But it is especially against Dobson's doctrine of self-esteem that the authors argue. They point out that Dobson finds the source of life's problems in "unmet needs," and the

solution to them in proper self-esteem. The authors correctly insist that this idea of self-esteem, so common in our day and proclaimed from so many pulpits, is a secular notion, really nothing but self-centeredness, and in flat contradiction to the biblical directives to deny ourselves, consider others better than ourselves, and seek our salvation outside ourselves in the

cross of Jesus Christ.

Although not written from a Reformed perspective, the book is a mighty trumpet-blast against a pervasive weakness in modern religion and ought to be read and carefully studied by all those who faithfully listen to Dobson's "Focus on the Family" and accept his teachings as the truth of the gospel. □

Report of Classis West

Classis West met in special session on Wednesday, April 14, 1993, in Randolph, WI. This special meeting of Classis was called by the previous meeting of Classis and was for the purpose of examining the Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani with a view to his installation as the pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX. Rev. R. VanOverloop served as the president of this meeting of Classis. Classis had little other business and completed its work by late afternoon.

Rev. Mahtani has labored since 1986 in the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, a small denomination with which the PRC of America have sister-church relationships.

Rev. Mahtani had been raised as a Hindu in Singapore. He was converted as a teenager. He felt an inter-

nal call to serve the Lord and His church, receiving some training to that end from Rev. Arie den Hartog, a missionary pastor of the PRC of America who was laboring in Singapore. Rev. Mahtani's denomination sent him to the Protestant Reformed Theological School in Grandville, MI for three years. During that time Rev. Mahtani and his wife, Esther, visited many of the churches within the PR denomination. Upon the completion of his three years of seminary training in 1986 he returned to Singapore and shortly afterward was ordained into the ministry of God's Word.

This spring he received and accepted the call to become the pastor of Trinity PRC in Houston. This necessitated his being examined by Classis,

which had to take place before his application with the United States Immigration Department could be completed.

The exam consisted of a specimen of his preaching, followed by a three-hour oral exam. The Classis, with the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies from Classis East of the PRC, approved his examination, grateful to God, not only for another laborer in God's harvest, but also for one who showed himself so faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed faith.

In other business Classis learned that the classical appointments of pulpit supply for the Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship in Boise, ID were no longer required.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Young Adult Activities

I thank Rev. C. Terpstra for providing our readers with the following report on the third annual Young Adults Retreat sponsored by Loveland, CO PRC.

It was held from Monday to Wednesday, March 29-31. The location was again the beautiful Covenant



Young Adults Retreat in Colorado

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

Heights Conference Center nestled in the majestic Colorado Rockies above Estes Park. A great group of about 30 young adults from a wide spectrum of our churches (Loveland, Redlands, Lynden, Doon, Hull, Pella, Peace, South Holland, Bethel, Faith) joined together for Christian fellowship, spiritual growth, and enjoyable recreation.

The theme of this year's retreat was, "What Is It To Be Reformed?" and two speeches were given in the beautiful little chapel of the conference center. Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of Loveland PRC, gave the first address on Monday evening, "What is it to be Reformed in Faith?" On Tuesday evening Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of South Holland PRC, South Holland, IL, gave the second address, "What is it to be Reformed in Life?" The messages were well received and were also attended by members of Loveland church who came up for both nights.

It may also be noted that again this year the pastors were careful to explain for the young adults what *kind* of messages they were delivering. Rev. Cammenga described his as a "lermon," i.e., part lecture and part sermon. Rev. Terpstra described his as a "leech," i.e., part lecture and part speech.

In addition to the messages, there was also a discussion time on Tuesday morning on the subject of Christian witnessing.

The retreat was also filled with healthy fun and recreational activities. On Monday afternoon the group went bowling in Estes Park. On Tuesday some went horseback riding in the mountains while others went snowshoeing in Rocky Mountain National Park. Numerous volleyball matches were held in the recreation center, and in the evenings tables were set up in the lodge for board and card games.

Everyone in attendance had a great time. The sleeping quarters were warm and comfortable; the food was tasty and abundant. Old relationships were renewed and some new ones were formed (perhaps even

a couple of romances!). It is hoped that those who attended this year will come back and that some new ones will attend next year!

Congregational Activities

Rev. Mahtani, who recently accepted the call to serve as the pastor of Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, arrived in California on April 1, and he preached for Hope PRC in Redlands, CA the following Sunday. He was scheduled to preach for Randolph, WI PRC a week later.

His examination by Classis West of the PRC was held on April 14 in Randolph. After that examination Pastor Mahtani planned to travel to Houston, arriving there, the Lord willing, on the 15th. He was scheduled to preach for Trinity on April 18 and 25. He planned to return then to Singapore, to await immigration proceedings for himself and his family.



Rev. Mahtani at Classical Exam

Work on the remodeling of Trinity's parsonage continues, with help coming from as far away as Michigan. New kitchen cabinets were made and finished in Michigan and transported to Texas by way of an enclosed snowmobile trailer.

Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of First PRC in Holland, MI, was the featured speaker at a lecture sponsored by Randolph, WI PRC on April 14. Rev. Bruinsma spoke on the subject, "The New Age Movement in the Light of Scripture."

Rev. and Mrs. VanBaren, of Hud-

sonville, MI PRC, returned home in the early morning hours of April 15, after spending six months working with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Larne, Northern Ireland. In their absence, the congregation of Hudsonville did some remodeling and redecorating in the parsonage. When the VanBarens finally arrived, at about 1:30 A.M. on the 15th, they might have noticed all the new carpet, new tile, new countertops, and new paint and wallpaper. But, after a long flight back from England, who could blame them if they didn't?

School Activities

The Association for PR Secondary Education in the South Holland, IL area held their annual society meeting in late March. One item which made this meeting anything but routine was a proposal from their Building Committee to purchase land for a future building site.

Young People's Activities

The young people of the west Michigan area were invited to gather for a mass meeting hosted by the Young People's Society of Faith PRC, Jenison, MI on Sunday, April 18 to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Ministerial Calls

Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL, declined the call to serve as pastor of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Southwest has now made a new trio consisting of the Revs. Cammenga, Dykstra, and T. Miersma. □

Food for Thought

"The unfashionable truth is that no discipline is so necessary for real godliness as facing up to one's own sinfulness in depth."

— J.I. Packer

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of First Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids) expresses its Christian sympathy to our sister member, Miss Reka Sietstra, in the loss of her sister,

MRS. TILLIE VANDER BAAN.

May the words of Psalm 28:6, 7 be to her a comfort. "Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The LORD is my strength and my shield: my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

Miss Jean Dykstra, President
Mrs. Lena Baar, Secretary

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1992 appointed Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI 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 Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 7, at 7:30 P.M. 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 PR Church
Henry Boer, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to our member, Miss Audrey Reitsma, in the passing to her heavenly home of her mother,

MRS. AGATHA REITSMA.

May she find comfort in the words of Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Richard Kamminga, Vice-Secretary

NOTICE!!!

The faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary is pleased to announce that as of June 1, 1993

Seminarians Allen J. Brummel
and

Douglas J. Kuiper

have been licensed to "speak a word of edification" in the churches (Article 20, *The Church Order*). We thank God for giving these men to the seminary and churches and pray that their experience in our pulpits will further prepare them for the ministry of the Word.

Consistories are reminded that all requests for pulpit supply from the seminary (professors and students) must be directed to the rector.
Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rector

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to our member, Mrs. Christine Batts, in the loss of her sister,

MRS. MARGARET PIKAART.

May our gracious God comfort her by His Word: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Richard Kamminga, Vice-Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 24, 1993, our beloved parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

**ADRIAN and JOHANNA
ALPHENAAR,**

will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

We thank our heavenly Father for both of them, for their Christian upbringing and their godly example. May God continue to be with them.

"For the Lord is good; his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- Arthur and Laura Alphenaar
Lynn and Bruce
- Henry and Muriel Kiel
Thomas and Kathleen Verbeek
Kristine, Steven, Mark, Katie
Jeffrey and Barbara Steenholdt
Amy, Mindy, Joseph
Thomas and Marcia Kiel
Matthew, Timothy, Jennie
Sandra Kiel
Daniel and Debra Kiel
Bradley, Bryan, Justin
- Kenneth and Joyce Alphenaar
Michael and Sallie Stripp
Bethany, Sarah
Mary Alphenaar
Jeff and Nancy Westendorp
Michael, Aaron

Kalamazoo, Michigan