



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

... In their rejection of universal grace in the preaching (the “well-meant offer”) and in their insistence that predestination controls preaching, promise, and covenant, the PRC are the true Calvinists. This, from those Reformed themselves who repudiate Calvin’s doctrine as erroneous.

See “The Ugly Bolsec” — p. 77

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In This Issue

For the PRC in Canada, observance of the annual day of thanksgiving is past (October 11). For the PRC in the United States, it is still future (November 25). In both cases, whether as reflection or anticipation, the meditation by Rev. Cornelius Hanko is timely, "A Fitting Thanksgiving." Indeed, it is appropriate at all seasons for all our readers in any nation.

Two other retired ministers in the PRC write in this issue of the *SB*. Rev. John Heys contributes his last article to the Old Testament rubric, "Day of Shadows." The fitting topic, "Our Dependence Upon God's Grace," expresses what has always been the dominant theme in the author's exposition of Old Testament history. In the future, Rev. Heys will help with the writing of the meditations.

Rev. George Lubbers continues his introduction to the study of I Timothy for the benefit both of the Bible study classes in the churches and of the personal study by our readers. Working with I Timothy 3, Lubbers treats of "The Spiritual Requirements of a Deacon in God's Church." These requirements "are not of a lower order than those for the teaching and ruling elders." Surely the welfare of the congregations demands that the biblical requirements for all the offices be strictly honored.

Two letters take objection to the article by "Church and State" writer, James Lanting, in the September 1, 1993 *SB*, "Michigan Home Schoolers Lose Teacher Certification Battle." Lanting replies to these objections. Intriguing and, so far as I know, noted nowhere else is the fact that the recent decision of the Michigan Supreme Court in *People v. DeJonge* "allowed for a religious exemption for parents 'whose religious convictions prohibit the use of certified instructors.'" See our "Letters" column under "A Victory for Christian Education?"

"Covenant Reformed Fellowship: Our Ancient Heritage" is an informational article on the mission of the PRC in Northern Ireland. Jonathan McAuley, member of the mission fellowship, gives a fascinating account of the history of Christianity in Ireland and places the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in this history. Ulsterman McAuley calls the PRC to view their mission in Northern Ireland as nothing less than this: "to lift up the 'Ancient Standard' of gospel truth among the people of this island."

Thanksgiving, exposition of the Bible, the offices in the church, Christian education, missions ... and more.

— DJE



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A Fitting Thanksgiving

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Psalm 116:12, 13.

The psalmist speaks of Jehovah and of "all his benefits toward me."

He calls to mind the numerous gifts that God bestows upon him. He spreads them out, as it were, before himself to pay special attention to each one, but also to realize how many benefits he has received.

Shall we do that a moment? That is, shall we try to call to mind as many as possible of God's bountiful blessings that He so freely bestows upon us?

To mention a few: God gives us our daily bread, our clothing, our shelter, our homes and families. How readily we take these things for granted, and yet how much they really mean to us!

We have our place in God's church, among our fellow believers and friends. We enjoy the faithful preaching of the "sincere milk of the Word," the sacraments, and the communion of saints. We have our own spiritual blessings, rooted in God's eternal love, according to which He chose us unto Himself as His children and heirs of salvation. Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, laid down His life to redeem us from our sins and merit for us eternal life with Him in glory. He is gone into the heavens

to bless us with every spiritual blessing for time and eternity. He bestows on us our new life, and gives us faith, conversion, and forgiveness of our sins. He justifies and sanctifies us through His Word and by His indwelling Spirit.

We have all these benefits, and many more. For God is our Father whose almighty Hand sustains us every moment. He gives us our life and breath and being. And He also directs us by His all-wise providence in the way that we should go. He knows far better than we what is good for us and what is necessary to prepare us to glory. Therefore He chastises us in love, and He leads us through dark and difficult ways, but He never leaves nor forsakes us. His faithfulness is renewed every morning and His grace sustains us all the day long.

Innumerable benefits, untold kindnesses. The figure in the text is that of a mother who with great concern hovers over her child. God withholds no good thing from those who fear Him.

* * * * *

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" A perplexing question!

No, the question creates no problem when I raise it in sinful pride. My pride often prevents me from accepting gifts, even from friends. I prefer to maintain a strictly formal relationship, so that when someone does me a favor I immediately feel obliged to return one. A gift requires a return gift of equal value. I must keep the balance sheet clear.

Thus, if I live properly, pay my obligations to the church, and go out

of my way to perform a few deeds of kindness, I have also rendered unto the Lord His due.

That Pharisaic attitude is condemned throughout Scripture as an abomination to my God. He abhors all vain oblations.

This is also contrary to the intent of this entire Psalm. Consider for a moment the fact that this Psalm is strongly Messianic. It describes to us the sufferings of Christ, even unto the torments of hell, and the glory that followed. And as to our personal experience, it speaks of our only comfort in life and death for body and soul, as it refers to knowing our misery, how we are delivered from that misery, and how we must show true gratitude to God for that deliverance.

It is particularly from the aspect of thanksgiving that the Psalmist cries out: "What shall I render unto the Lord?"

He is Jehovah, the I AM, the self-sufficient God of infinite perfections.

Can you or I add to infinity? Can I add a drop of water to a bucket that is already filled to the brim? Can I increase the light of the sun by holding a lit candle aloft? Can a beggar add significantly to the riches of a millionaire by giving him a penny? Can you or I add to Him who is the overflowing Fountain of life?

"The earth and the fulness with which it is stored, the world and its dwellers belong to the Lord; for He on the seas its foundations has laid, and firm on the waters its pillars has stayed." God is our Creator, our Provider, the God of our salvation, from whom all blessings flow.

To put it differently: "What shall I render unto the Lord?"

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

I am a mere speck of dust, less than a drop of the bucket and less than a particle of dust in the balance. I must confess: "All that I am I owe to Thee." Even all my possessions are but entrusted to me as a steward over them. At best I am an unprofitable servant whose duty it is to surrender my all to God. How could I ever begin to repay Him for all His benefits?

Add to that my daily transgressions of God's holy law, my debt of sin that I could never pay even if I were to possess all the gold and silver of the world. I cannot atone. No animal can atone for me. No angel can stand in my place in judgment. But what is impossible for me, or for any other creature, my God Himself accomplished for me by the death of His only begotten Son on the cross.

I am saved by grace, all human merit excluded. What, then, shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

"I will take the cup of salvation!" A proper thanks.

A cup in the Scriptures always expresses a certain full amount. Sometimes Scripture speaks of the cup of wrath, which is the full measure of the wrath of God against the ungodly, yes, against you and me as we are by nature. It was this cup of wrath, the full measure of all the just wrath of God against all the sins of all those given to Him of the Father, that caused Jesus to cry out in bitter agony in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

As we so well know, it was impossible for us to be saved unless He drank that cup of wrath in unspeakable anguish of hellish torments. Willingly He took our sin and guilt upon Himself, whereby He not only saved us from sin, death, and hell, but merited for us eternal life. In one

word, Christ is all my salvation!

Salvation is the sum total of all God's benefits! How shall I ever begin to express all that this implies?

Think of our God in as far as we can grasp a little of His infinite and glorious perfections. He is the Holy One, who dwells in eternity, far beyond all that is creature, and yet is so very near us. His presence surrounds us, His eye sees us, His ear hears us, His almighty hand upholds us and directs every step we take. He is Righteousness, Truth, Grace, Love. He is, in one word, the eternal I AM, Jehovah who changes not, the ever blessed, adorable GOD!

He lives His own perfect, glorious life of intimate covenant fellowship as triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

He is eternally complete and blessed in Himself. He has no need of men's hands to be worshiped by them, yet He has sovereignly willed to reveal Himself in His Son Jesus Christ by taking us into His covenant, into His heart, and into His life to dwell with Him forever.

Jesus, God's only begotten and dearly beloved Son, who is the exact image of God's person and the brightness of His glory, was made like unto us, that we may be made like unto Him. He is our Head, we are members of His body, being chosen in Him from all eternity. We were one with Him when He lay in the manger, and as He suffered on earth. When He died we died in Him; when He arose we arose in Him. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6).

And now by His Spirit in our hearts we are conformed unto Him in true knowledge, righteousness, and

holiness. Christ is glorified with the glory prepared for Him before the foundation of the world.' We are glorified in Him, and He is glorified in us as members of His body, joint heirs of salvation.

We are made partakers of the divine nature, sons and daughters to dwell in God's house, to be adorned with His grace, in order to live in intimate covenant fellowship with our God and to tell His praises forever.

As I take the cup of salvation, the full measure of that blessedness, I lift it up in praise to His matchless Name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

* * * * *

Doing so, I will "call upon the name of the Lord!"

I will continually approach the Fountain of living water as an empty vessel to receive out of His fullness grace for grace, one gift of grace upon another unto all eternity!

There is a weatherworn tombstone of an early Dutch immigrant inscribed with the words: HIS LIFE WAS CHRIST. HIS DESIRE WAS CHRIST. Whoever he was, he must have realized that Christ was the reason for his life, the source of his life, the strength of his life, the goal and purpose of his life. Likely his life was devoted to the service of his Lord, and his chief desire was to be with Christ in his glory.

He must have confessed with the apostle Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

That implies a life of prayer, continually drawing from the Word of life in the Scriptures.

As Paul expresses it, "We all, with open face beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

We lift up our hearts, our hands, and our voices, and we ask for more, more of Christ's riches of salvation, more of His fellowship, more of His blessings, more of Himself.

A child can never please his mother more than when he comes to her with his every need in complete confidence that he will never be re-

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fused. We come to God with all our needs, in utter dependence upon Him and in childlike trust that He withholds no good thing from us. We do that in the confidence that all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

We do that in foretaste of the Day

when we shall no more see in a glass darkly, but shall see Him face to face, and know as we are known.

Then we shall behold the beauty of the Lord, eat of the hidden Manna and drink from the Rock, which is Christ. We shall grow in the riches of

His grace to praise His Name ever more fully, world without end.

Eternity will not be long enough to know, fully appreciate, and tell the praises of all the majesty and glory of our God. I will call upon His NAME forever and ever. Amen. □

Editorial

The "Ugly" Bolsec

Calvin College professor Philip C. Holtrop has just given us a historical and theological study of the controversy between John Calvin and Jerome Bolsec over predestination. The study is contained in two volumes entitled, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination from 1551-1555* (Lewistown, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993). The cost of the two volumes, that run to more than 1,000 pages, is \$199.90.

The issue was Calvin's teaching of God's eternal, double predestination, election and reprobation. Bolsec rejected predestination as an eternal decree. Although he raised his objection specifically against reprobation, Bolsec likewise opposed election as an eternal decree. Election for Bolsec was an act of God in time. According to Bolsec, God gives grace to all humans so that all are able to believe in Christ. To those who avail themselves of this universal, or common, grace by believing in Christ, God gives special grace which results in their election. Those who harden themselves against the overtures of God in His common grace are rejected by God. This temporal rejection is reprobation (vol. 1, pp. 72-74).

Calvin and the ministers of Geneva condemned Bolsec's doctrine as the denial that faith depends upon election and as the affirmation of free

will. Thus Bolsec denied the Reformation's gospel of salvation by sovereign grace. Calvin saw Bolsec's basic error to be that "he boasts that grace is offered equally to all, and that its efficacy depends on the free choice of each" (vol. 2, p. 602).

Holtrop lays out the doctrinal issues in the controversy in volume 1, pp. 47-164, and throughout volume 2.

A valuable feature of the work is its inclusion of the correspondence between Bolsec and the ministers of Geneva and of the advice submitted by the Reformed theologians in other parts of Switzerland, notably Bullinger. Bullinger was a weak reed to Calvin, refusing to support him in the controversy because of his own serious weakness regarding predestination.

Volume 2 is a detailed account of the proceedings at Bolsec's lengthy trial before the Genevan magistrates on charges of heresy and disturbance. The outcome of the trial was that the magistrates condemned the heretic and banished him from Geneva for life.

The author does not adopt the role of objective historian in this study. Holtrop commits himself to a defense of Bolsec and to the exposure of an "ugly" Calvin. He carries his defense of Bolsec to such an extreme that he excuses the slanderous "biography"

of Calvin that Bolsec later wrote in order to destroy the Reformer and his work.

Holtrop insists that Calvin's opposition to Bolsec was mainly political and personal. Calvin was determined to maintain his rule in Geneva in troublous times. In the spirit of William Bouwsma's *John Calvin, A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, Holtrop accounts for Calvin's resistance to Bolsec's public attack on predestination by appeal to Calvin's "neurotic tendencies."

This judgment is purely subjective. In this way, every defense of the faith can be discredited. Why should not Calvin and the Genevan ministers be taken seriously in their confession that they regarded eternal election as "the foundation of the faith" and, therefore, in their claim that they opposed Bolsec for attacking the foundation?

Regardless of Calvin's psychology and alleged hidden agenda (and Holtrop does not *prove* from the sources that Calvin was determined to kill Bolsec), the one important question about the Bolsec controversy is this: Is Calvin's doctrine of predestination *true*, indeed, *the truth*?

Holtrop denies that it is. He sides with Bolsec doctrinally. Not only is there no eternal decree of reprobation, but also biblical election is an act

of God in time, an act that is "wrapped up" with the sinner's activity of believing. Holtrop does not make clear whether election *follows upon* the sinner's believing or is inexplicably *simultaneous with* the sinner's believing. In either case, election is not an eternal decree that ordains unto faith and upon which faith depends.

Holtrop's refrain, in this connection, that biblical election is "in Christ" does nothing to prove that election is in time. Certainly election is "in Christ." This is taught in Ephesians 1:4: "According as he hath chosen us in him...." But this election in Christ was decreed "before the foundation of the world," that is, in eternity. God chose His people in Christ in eternity. The issue is not whether election is in eternity or in Christ, but whether election in Christ is an eternal decree or a temporal act.

Bolsec and Holtrop maintain that election is an act of God in time.

Nor is Holtrop's analysis correct when he presents the conflict between Calvin and Bolsec as a somewhat abstract difference of conception concerning the relation of eternity and time. Calvin was concerned to confess the salvation of the sinner as the gracious act of God that has its source and foundation, not in the faith of the sinner but in the sovereign, free decree of election. This does not make God a tyrant, but rather reveals Him as glorious in His grace.

To defend Bolsec by pointing to his willingness to ascribe the "initiative" in salvation to God does not succeed. For according to Bolsec, God makes this "initiative" toward all humans. God's grace is universal and ineffectual. The ultimate explanation, then, why some are saved by universal grace must be the will of the sinner himself. This glorifies man.

In the face of a strong sentiment in scholarly circles, and despite his own early suspicions, that Beza, Dordt, and Westminster radically changed Calvin's theology, Holtrop acknowledges that Beza, Dordt, and Westminster were true to Calvin's own theology. Beza only systematized and further developed Calvin's

predestinarian theology: "Reformed scholasticism rooted in Calvin, and was consolidated in Geneva largely through the efforts of Theodore Beza" (vol. 2, p. 830). Holtrop, however, opposes this "scholastic" theology both in Calvin himself and in the succeeding tradition, including Dordt (see vol. 2, pp. 867-876).

Of special interest to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America is Holtrop's frank admission that the Bolsec controversy was replayed in the common grace controversy in the Christian Reformed Church in the early 1900s. The theology of Jerome Bolsec reappeared in the Christian Reformed doctrine of a common grace of God in the "well-meant offer of the gospel." The Protestant Reformed doctrine of particular grace in the preaching continues the tradition of Calvin, Beza, Dordt, and Westminster.

If anyone ever started his research with a bias toward Calvin, it was I. But now I recognize that some predestinarian communities — like the Protestant Reformed Church, which split from the Christian Reformed in 1924 — have more basis in Calvin than I had previously envisioned. That does not make their thinking more palatable to mine — but it does qualify my fidelity to John Calvin (vol. 1, p. 10).

With reference to the distinction between "common grace" and "special grace," Holtrop writes:

This distinction was given official status in the Dutch-American wing of Reformed theology at the Christian Reformed synod of 1924. While the "common grace" majority there were not "Bolsecians" — at least not consciously — we cannot deny that main motives in the Bolsec controversy were playing in the Christian Reformed community,

and that the minority in 1924 — headed by Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof — sounded remarkably like the Genevan pastors in 1551. Hoeksema and Danhof were expelled from the CRC and began the Protestant Reformed Church (vol 2, p. 474).

A few pages later, Holtrop expands on his assertion that Bolsec's doctrine of universal grace is found in the Christian Reformed teaching of common grace in the preaching of the gospel:

Again — perhaps more than in any other denomination — the issues of the universality or particularity of God's love and grace are hotly debated in the Christian Reformed Church, even after the decisions of 1924.... Already in 1928 H. Kuiper wrote a thesis entitled *Calvin on Common Grace*; C. Van Til wrote his *Common Grace* in 1947; A. C. DeJong wrote a thesis (under Berkouwer) on *The Well-meant Gospel Offer* (1954).... In 1962-63, H. Dekker of Calvin Theological Seminary wrote a series of explosive articles in the *RJ* under the general heading "God So Loved — All Men!".... Others chimed in — notably H. Stob ... and A. C. DeJong.... Opposing views were expressed in the *Torch and Trumpet* — a right-wing Reformed scholastic journal ... as well as in the equally scholastic Protestant Reformed *Standard Bearer*. These issues were never resolved — any more than they were in the Bolsec controversy.... In all these documents, there were astounding parallels to the Bolsec conflict — but again, the

name of Jerome was never mentioned. The writings of Daane, Boer, and Punt represent the latest phase of this debate (vol. 2, p. 482).

It is indicative of the sorry state of the Reformed churches today that Holtrop is undoubtedly right when

Although belatedly and by obscure footnote, the Protestant Reformed Churches are now openly recognized as representing and continuing the doctrine of Calvin, Beza, Dordt, and Westminster.

he observes that, although Calvin and Beza's theology of predestination won out in the Bolsec controversy,

most Reformed thinking on predestination today is more in line with the positions of ... Bolsec, at that time. Except for pockets in the Reformed world, Genevan decretalism has not survived in the twentieth century (vol. 2, p. 671).

Ostensibly, it is the person of Calvin that is under attack in the circles of Reformed scholarship today. In reality, the assault — now open and massive — is directed against the doctrine of God's eternal, sovereign predestination. With the overthrow of predestination, the entire confessional system of Reformed truth ascribing the salvation of the sinner to the sovereign, particular, effectual grace of God in Jesus Christ collapses.

The few in the Reformed community who might still care are fairly warned by Holtrop's study that the Reformed theological leadership is writing "Finished" to the creedal Re-

formed faith. Thus is it ever. When bleeding truth is asked, "What are these wounds?," he answers, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Although belatedly and by obscure footnote, the Protestant Reformed Churches are now openly recognized as representing and continuing the doctrine of Calvin, Beza, Dordt, and Westminster. In their rejection of universal grace in the preaching (the "well-meant offer") and in their insistence that predestination controls preaching, promise, and covenant, the PRC are the true Calvinists. This, from those Reformed themselves who repudiate Calvin's doctrine as erroneous.

Regardless how we are viewed, we raise our voice, not so much in defense of Calvin's person (his honor, after all, is secure with God in whom he believed) as in defense of Calvin's doctrine of predestination. However "ugly" Calvin now may be made out to be (and the last word is the justifying Word of God clothing him with the robe of Christ's righteousness),

Calvin's doctrine of predestination is beautiful. It is the doctrine of Holy Scripture in Romans 9, John 10, John 17, and innumerable other places. It is the doctrine that ascribes all the glory of salvation to the electing God alone and that makes it impossible to ascribe any glory to any other. This, this above all, is beautiful. Truth is beautiful. Beautiful also is the one who brings the truth.

As for Jerome Bolsec, even though he published a false and slanderous "biography" of Calvin with the deliberate purpose of defamation, and even though he fell away again to the Roman Catholic Church, it is not so much his person we detest as it is his doctrine. The doctrine that denies the very source and foundation of grace and that affirms that man cooperates with God in salvation is ugly.

Therefore, we assent to the judgment upon heretic Bolsec by the Reformed Church of Christ in Geneva in 1551.

Ugly Bolsec. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Resource for Edification

I wish to thank each and every individual who contributes in the writing, editing, and publishing of the *Standard Bearer*. My only regret is that it comes to my home but once a month during the summer months — lean times for me!

Because the *Standard Bearer* has been such a testimony for the truth and such an irreplaceable resource for spiritual edification in my own life, I am writing to subscribe for a dear brother and sister in the Lord, whom I pray will be equally blessed by the Lord by its use as I have been.

C. Douglas Robson, Jr.
Friendsville, TN

■ Pleased

I am writing to tell you how pleased I was to see your excellent

articles concerning homosexuality and the current state of drama. Both series put forth exactly how these areas should be viewed. You showed no fear in expressing precisely what these situations are about, and how totally ungodly they truly are.

I always look forward to your magazine. I read each one cover-to-cover immediately when it arrives, and re-read them all several times over. I can then hardly wait for the next issue to arrive!

Marge Beltrami
Portland, OR

■ A Victory for Christian Education?

The sovereignty of God! What a basic and comforting doctrine it is.

It was with a sense of comfort, consolation, and awe the Christians

all over this United States could see that sovereignty demonstrated locally. Who would be so bold as to deny that the reversal of the conviction of the home schoolers (I prefer the term parental schoolers), Mr. and Mrs. Mark DeJonge, who have been persecuted by the state for eight years, was not the result of the sovereignty and providence of God? This sentiment was expressed at the victory banquet by many individuals. Even the attorneys who handled the case admitted that they did not have much hope for the reversal and declared that it could be no other than the hand of providence that moved the four judges of the Michigan Supreme Court to reverse the conviction, however minimal that may appear to some individuals.

The *Standard Bearer* has always

echoed the Protestant Reformed Churches by emphasizing the sovereignty of God. Imagine, then, our consternation and bewilderment to read an article in the *Standard Bearer* of September 1, 1993, authored by Mr. James Lanting, in which this sovereignty was minimized, in fact, was not even mentioned. Highlighted in this article were words like "lose," "limited," "shallow victories," "accomplished little if anything," and "dubious precedential value." Concluding this article is the statement, "But since Mark DeJonge's unusual if not bizarre notions are shared by few if any home (parental) schoolers (indeed the appellate court noted that DeJonge's own wife and pastor did not share these beliefs), it appears that the DeJonge religious exemption can be claimed by few parents. Accordingly, as a parental religious freedom decision, the DeJonge case may be of limited significance." This statement is only an opinion of the author and has no basis whatsoever as far as providence is concerned. In fact, part of the statement is untrue, for DeJonge's wife and pastor did share the same belief. And as for few, if any, home schoolers sharing these "bizarre notions," Mr. Lanting has not given any foundation for his "bizarre" statement in a Christian public magazine.

In the second place (I quote Mr. Lanting), "Mark DeJonge had apparently testified at trial that it was his sincerely held religious belief that it was sinful for anyone other than parents to teach their children." Although this statement is modified somewhat later in the article the seed of untruth is planted in the quoted statement. It is specious and misleading and is uncharacteristic of such a prestigious periodical.

I suggest that Mr. Lanting personally interview Mr. and Mrs. DeJonge as to their beliefs and as to the statements that are not entirely true to which I have referred in this article.

I do not comprehend why some individuals are so violently opposed to home (parental) schooling. Examining the situation, I find more sup-

port for it in the Bible than I do for some Christian schools as they exist today.

In conclusion, permit me to state an opinion. The way events are shaping up on the political and social scene true Christians are going to face some hard times. Especially Reformed Christians should be united in facing persecution.

One last thought: the Christian community should be rejoicing at the outcome of the DeJonge case as their "perseverance of the saints" has not only resulted in their victory but a victory for Christian education in general, even if it was "minimal" in the eyes of Mr. Lanting.

Howard E. VanManen
Grand Rapids, MI

Since 1985, I have served as lead counsel in *People v. Bennett* and *People v. DeJonge*. Both cases involved home schoolers who were considered by the courts as having not complied with the teacher certification requirement which was imposed on all Michigan teachers.

In the September 1, 1993, edition of the *Standard Bearer*, author James Lanting improperly described the results of these cases. My purpose is to explain the actual significance of these decisions.

First of all, the decision in the *DeJonge* case was not a split court, but it was a clear-cut majority of four ruling that teacher certification was unconstitutional, since it was not essential to use a certified teacher in order for children to be educated, nor was it the least restrictive means of fulfilling the State's interest that children be educated. Four of the judges concurred on this reasoning, making it a definite and significant majority opinion.

Secondly, the teacher certification requirement was dealt a tremendous blow since close to 95% of all Michigan home schoolers are religious and share the same convictions as the DeJonges. For Mr. Lanting to claim that the DeJonges' religious beliefs making them opposed to the teacher certification requirement are "bizarre"

is totally inaccurate. We represent over 3,000 homeschool families (about 6,000 parents) in Michigan who share these same "bizarre" religious convictions.

Thirdly, this victory in the *DeJonge* and *Bennett* cases is not "shallow" as asserted by Mr. Lanting. Not only do these decisions exempt nearly 10,000 families throughout Michigan who share the same basic religious convictions as the DeJonges, but, as asserted by the Michigan Attorney General's office, it also exempts all Christian schools, including Reformed Christian schools, from the teacher certification requirement. Any Christian school who objects on religious grounds to being required to use certified teachers is exempt simply by making a statement that that is their belief. The Christian schools throughout Michigan have heralded the *DeJonge* case as the major victory they had been seeking in the early '80s and had lost.

As far as the *Bennett* case being a "shallow" victory, that is simply untrue. This case upheld the previously ignored statutory due process right for any private school, whether in the home or other building, to be entitled to a due process hearing before they can be determined not to be in compliance with the law. Since the State does not have the budget to hold thousands of due process hearings throughout the state, such hearings will not be held. In *Bennett*, the Supreme Court said that no home school or private school can be prosecuted, therefore, unless they have their statutory required due process hearing. Essentially this means for all private and home schools without religious convictions that they, too, will be allowed to operate without certified teachers since they cannot be prosecuted without a due process hearing.

In addition to benefiting home schools and Christian schools in Michigan, the *DeJonge* case is one of the most significant and articulate cases in protecting religious freedom that any court has ruled in the last 30 years. The opinion could have easily

been written by James Madison himself.

Our boasting should not be in ourselves but in the Lord, but let's at least give the Lord credit and recognize the bountiful victories and blessings that He has granted us in these cases.

Christopher J. Klicka, Esq.
Home School
Legal Defense Association
Paeonian Springs, VA

RESPONSE:

I am well aware, as I was before I wrote my September 1, 1993 article, that the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) has touted *Bennett* and *DeJonge* as monumental constitutional opinions. For example, in a recent newsletter, Attorney Klicka boasts that the *DeJonge* decision is "one of the most significant religious freedom cases in the last 20 years." ("Home School Court Report," July/August 1993, p. 5.) Now in his letter above, Klicka claims it is one of the most significant religious cases by any court "in the last 30 years." Apparently the significance of the *DeJonge* case is growing exponentially by the month. (The HSLDA is a not-for-profit corporation operated by five lawyers who solicit and collect in excess of \$3.5 million in annual dues from some 35,000 home school member families who receive their bi-monthly newsletter and legal assistance in return for \$100 annual dues.)

In my September 1 article, however, I tried to give a more objective appraisal of these two Michigan Supreme court decisions. *Bennett* was a clear defeat for the HSLDA. Rejecting their argument, the court held that parents do *not* have a Fourteenth Amendment fundamental right to direct their children's education free from state regulation. Consequently, the court held that the "state may reasonably regulate education, including the imposition of teacher certification and curricula requirements on home-school programs" (see quote in box opposite). By what stretch of the imagination is this a victory for Chris-

tian parents who seek to avoid state interference in their children's education?

Of course, the Bennetts' truancy convictions were overturned on the technical grounds that the state neglected to hold a "due process hearing" prior to prosecuting them. But what will now prevent the state from conducting such a half-day hearing, determining the Bennetts are not certified teachers, and then prosecuting them again?

Mr. Klicka, a Virginia attorney, speculates that since Michigan presumably does not have the money to hold such due process hearings, home schoolers and private schools who disobey the teacher certification law upheld in *Bennett* will happily escape prosecution.

But is Attorney Klicka advising his association members to disobey the law simply because the state can't budget the money to conduct the prerequisite hearings? Ignore the *Bennett* decision, says Klicka, because Michigan will not have the resources to prosecute everyone. But does this make *Bennett* a landmark constitutional law victory? I think not.

The same day the Michigan Supreme court upheld the teacher certification law in *Bennett*, the court in *DeJonge* also allowed for a religious exemption for parents "whose religious convictions prohibit the use of certified instructors."

Attorney Klicka rather glibly declares this automatically exempts every Christian school and parent from teacher certification laws. In contrast, I tried to argue in my article that this exemption is rather narrow and perhaps useless for most home schoolers.

Why? Because the exemption applies *only to parents whose religion forbids the use of certified teachers*. But how many Christians think it a sin to hire a certified teacher? The DeJonges apparently think so. Attorney Klicka argued in an appellate brief as follows:

It would be a violation of the DeJonges' religious beliefs to delegate the education of their children to their pastor, his wife, Michael McHugh, or anyone else. God requires *them* to teach their *own* children. To the DeJonges delegation of their children's education to anyone else would be a sin. *** The "sin of certification" is secondary to the "sin of delegation." *** Using or hiring a certified teacher is not an option for either parent because then they could not personally teach their children.

(Klicka Supplemental Brief,
Jan. 1991, p. 9)

It is *this* notion — that it is a sin to hire a Christian school teacher *in loco parentis* — that I find "unusual, if not bizarre." What the DeJonges necessarily believe, then, is that I, for ex-

"...we have not found and defendants have not presented *any* case that finds the existence of a Fourteenth Amendment fundamental right of parents to direct their children's secular education free of reasonable regulation. We conclude that parents *do not* have such a constitutional right requiring a strict scrutiny standard. On the contrary, the state may reasonably regulate education, including the imposition of teacher certification and curricula requirements on home-school programs, in order to advance the legitimate interest of compulsory education."

People v. Bennett, Michigan Supreme Court (May 25, 1993)

"We hold that the teacher certification requirement is an unconstitutional violation of the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment as applied to families whose religious convictions prohibit the use of certified instructors. Such families, therefore, are exempt from the dictates of the teacher certification requirement."

People v. DeJonge, Michigan Supreme Court (May 25, 1993)

ample, sin each day I send my five children to local Christian day schools in the Chicagoland area (for surely this biblical "sin of delegation" cannot apply exclusively to the DeJonges).

I'm not sure what "seed of untruth" Mr. VanManen accuses me of planting with respect to Mark DeJonge's views. I did interview the DeJonges a number of years ago. I have perused hundreds of pages of appellate briefs, appellate opinions, and news articles on the DeJonge case. In addition, I most recently interviewed their attorney, Mr. Klicka, by telephone regarding their beliefs and the supreme court opinion.

Regarding the apparent disparity between Mark's belief and that of his wife and pastor, the appellate court wrote:

Pastor Byker testified his church [Grand Valley Orthodox Christian Reformed Church] did not oppose certification and did allow delegation of the parents' education responsibility. Mr. McHugh did not say the [Christian Liberty] academy opposed certification, merely that it disfavored it.... Mrs. DeJonge concurred with both Byker and McHugh. But Mr. DeJonge's objections ap-

peared to go further, in that he believes it a sin to submit to state authority and a sin to employ certified teachers. Judging from his pastor's testimony, Mr. DeJonge's belief is personal rather than religious.

179 Mich. App. 225 at 235 (1989)

Interestingly enough, Attorney Klicka, himself an ardent home schooler and PCA member, informed me that he personally believes and promotes this "sin of delegation" notion, although he insists it is a sin only for those who consider it to be so. Klicka also insists that he has nothing against Christian day schools, except that the Holy Spirit has testified in his heart that it would be a sin to send his children to one at this time. Attorney Klicka also admitted upon my inquiry that he knew of no Reformed or evangelical scholar or authority that taught or even referenced this "sin of delegation," except for Klicka's own book (which he offered to send me for \$12.95).

Finally, Mr. VanManen is unfair in intimating I am among those "violently opposed" to all home schools. To make the record clear (although this perhaps goes beyond the scope of my article), I confess I readily under-

stand why in the past two decades thousands of parents across our country, with no Christian schools locally available, had to resort to home-schooling to avoid the immorality, secular humanism, and even violence of the public schools. This is the original *raison d'être* of the homeschool movement and would suffer no opposition from me.

What I am opposed to, however, is Klicka's and DeJonges' (yes, bizarre) belief that the Bible teaches us it is a sin to send our children to a sound Christian day school employing qualified teachers. (And to blunt this notion by insisting it is a sin for some Christians but not others is even more bewildering.) What I am also opposed to is the immodest and self-serving exaggeration of the *Bennett* and *DeJonge* decisions by the attorneys and staff who promote membership in the so-called Home School Legal Defense Association. Court victories for Christians call for "rejoicing," as VanManen and Klicka suggest. But the *Bennett* and *DeJonge* cases regrettably merit little such rejoicing.

— James Lanting

All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

■ The Exodus Continues

Two more secessions from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have recently occurred, bringing the number of independent congregations to 38, with 7800 total members. These figures do not include the Korean churches which have recently seceded and which are in the process of forming a new denomination. Both churches voted to secede on September 8. The Eastmanville CRC located in a rural area just west of Grand

Rapids, by a vote of 85 to 35, decided to cease affiliation with the CRC. The new church, which calls itself Eastmanville Reformed Bible Church, thus becomes the thirteenth independent congregation in the "Lake Michigan Regional Conference," which is composed of churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. The second seceding church, Cape Coral CRC, organized fifteen years ago by Dutch "sunbirds" vacationing in Florida, has 94 members and is so far the only independent church in the south.

The Rev. Derrick VanderMeulen, pastor of the Eastmanville church, served as a delegate to the CRC synod of 1993 and strongly protested the synodical decision to reopen the question of women in office. Vander

Meulen said that decision was a major factor in his congregation's deciding to leave the CRC. "The Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government says 'it is unsettling and divisive for the same issues to be raised in the church without weighty grounds,'" VanderMeulen noted. "We were unsettled because we contend that their grounds conflict with Scripture and do not prove that women may serve in the offices of minister and elder."

However, VanderMeulen emphasized that the decision to secede was not based only on women in office. "We brought this to the congregation as a symptom, not the only reason," said VanderMeulen. The official ground cited by the congregation for

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

its decision to leave the CRC was that the CRC "has departed from the authority and necessity of the Word of God *alone* as its standard for doctrine and life which has resulted in teachings, policies, and practices which are in contradiction to the clear teaching of God's Word." VanderMeulen stressed the importance of the word "alone" in the ground. "The CRC still opens the Bible and reads it, but it is no longer Scripture alone, it is Scripture plus something else they go by," he said.

The Florida church left the CRC for similar reasons. It cited as its grounds that the CRC "has departed from the authority and necessity of the Word of God *alone* as its standard for doctrine, faith, and life, which has resulted in teachings, policies, and practices among the Churches and Agencies of the Christian Reformed Denomination which are in contradiction to the clear teaching of the Word of God." The motion to secede was passed unanimously by the Council and by over 81 percent of the congregation. The new name of the Cape Coral church is "Trinity Reformed Church of Cape Coral (Independent)." Among the members of the new church is the retired minister, Rev. Edward Heerema, a son-in-law of the late CRC stalwart minister and professor, R. B. Kuiper. Said Heerema, "We're not leaving with rancor or hostility, we're just leaving because the church has left us." Pointing out that most of the church's members have deep roots in the CRC and were marked by an intense loyalty to the CRC, Heerema said, "they feel they're not leaving the Christian Reformed Church they knew, but a Christian Reformed Church that's very different from what they knew."

Reformed Believers Press Service

■ Significant Number of Koreans Leave CRC

Significant, we say, because the Rev. Leonard Hofman would have us think otherwise. Hofman, General Secretary of the CRC, is quoted in the September 27, 1993 issue of *The Ban-*

ner as claiming that only five or six of the "dozens of congregations" are leaving. Five Korean congregations, with a combined membership of 2,200, have left the CRC. On September 13 these five, together with an independent Presbyterian church, met at Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church (formerly West Bethel CRC) to form the Presbytery of Los Angeles of the Korean Reformed Presbyterian Church in America. The independent church, with its membership of 1,300, brings the total membership of the new Presbytery (equivalent to our classis) to 3,500.

And, this apparently is not the end. The Presbytery of Northern Los Angeles was formed on October 4. Valley Korean CRC (775 members) acted as the organizing church. According to Dr. John E. Kim of Los Angeles Korean Church, five other Korean churches currently still in the CRC are committed to joining this presbytery. One independent congregation, the 800-member Samsung Church, also joined at the October meeting. Two other presbyteries will be formed in the near future (I write this on October 14). The first will be the Presbytery of San Francisco, led by East Bay Korean CRC (414 members). The second will be a presbytery encompassing Korean churches outside of California. Rev. Seung Jai Kang, of the Korean CRC in Kalamazoo, MI, is responsible for this presbytery. Following the organization of the presbyteries, the denomination will hold its first General Synod on October 18 in Los Angeles.

As of this writing there are six congregations already out of the CRC, and these churches have a total membership of 2,973. This represents 54% of the 5,483 total membership of the Korean CRC churches in Southern California. That's a significant number, we think. And that number, if Dr. Kim's report is correct, will increase.

*The Banner
Christian Observer
Christian Renewal
Reformed Believers Press Service*

■ Respected Pastor Leaves CRC

Dr. Peter Y. DeJong, who taught Practical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1964 to 1970, has left the CRC. In early August, the council of First Sioux Center CRC published a notice in its bulletin that it had, with regret, "dismissed" DeJong's membership and that of his wife Joanne to the Lynwood CRC (Independent) in Illinois. Classis Dakota, at its September 21 meeting in Platte, South Dakota, granted Dr. DeJong honorable release from the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the CRC.

A son of the late Dr. Y. P. DeJong, who for many years served the large Grandville Ave. CRC in Grand Rapids, Dr. DeJong's spiritual roots lie deep in the CRC. In addition to teaching at Calvin Seminary, Dr. DeJong was pastor of several churches, among these were the large congregations of Alpine Ave., Oakdale Park, and Alger Park in Grand Rapids; First Pella and First Sioux Center in Iowa; and First Hamilton in Ontario. Dr. DeJong also taught some courses at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in the 1980s. He is the author of several books, among them the fine commentary on the Belgic Confession entitled, *The Church's Witness to the World*.

The fact that this gifted preacher/theologian should find it necessary at the age of 77 to leave the CRC ought to give God's people in the CRC serious pause. It would have been much easier for Dr. and Mrs. DeJong to have remained quietly in the CRC. Dr. DeJong's son, James, is president of Calvin Seminary, and his brother, Alexander C., is a retired CRC minister living in Illinois.

Reformed Believers Press Service

■ Westminster Professor Leaves CRC

The Rev. H. David Schuringa has declared his intention to leave the CRC. Dr. Schuringa teaches Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California. Schuringa is co-pastor of the Well-

spring Christian Fellowship (65 members), which has joined the Alliance of Reformed Churches, an alliance of mostly CRC seceders and a few conservative CRC congregations.

According to Schuringa, the Well-spring Fellowship "sings psalms, follows the historic order of worship, permits no choirs or special music, and preaches the Heidelberg Catechism in the second service."

Schuringa also says the new church "is seeking to recover the historic Reformed balance between doctrine and experience, to recover and nurture Biblical faith which touches the heart as well as the head." "The church has not found it necessary to compromise theological terminology or to 'soften' the gospel and Reformed distinctives in order to reach the lost," Schuringa declared. A majority of the

membership of Well-spring Fellowship is from unchurched or non-Reformed backgrounds. Dr. Schuringa, prior to his teaching at Westminster, pastored the Beverly Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, MI, a majority of which seceded from the CRC about a year ago under the leadership of its pastor, Rev. Arthur Besteman. □

Reformed Believers Press Service

Guest Article

Mr. W. Jonathan McAuley

Covenant Reformed Fellowship Our Ancient Heritage

The Covenant Reformed Fellowship here in Northern Ireland have been greatly blessed by our God over the past few years. We now enjoy regular live preaching of the gospel in our worship services, our children receive full catechism instruction, and we ourselves enjoy continuous study in our Father's precious Word. All this is so because the God who loves His people from before the foundation of the world has provided us with a missionary pastor through the Protestant Reformed Churches, in the person of Rev. Ron Hanko. Since our first coming in contact with the PRC we have learned much concerning the history both of that denomination and of the continental Reformed churches from which the denomination has come. This has caused us to thank our God that He has not turned His back on this island of Ireland, but has kept safe a remnant of His own people (Rom. 11:5).

Our island home also has its place in church history. It is our part in that history that we would like to share with our brothers and sisters in the United States who have done so much for us.

The point of beginning of our "church history" is not at all clear. We do know that Ireland first heard the gospel at a very early period in church history. Some eminent authorities have concluded that the Scoto-Irish church is the oldest of all the Protestant churches represented in modern Christendom. Although it is often held that the Waldenses were the most ancient among existing representatives of the faith in Ireland, it is also asserted by many acute and trustworthy investigators that our island had a representation of the church which is much older. Many in the world today believe the Irish to be a people who are behind other nations in both religious and material progress, a people who therefore owe all that they have, that is worth having, to the crumbs that fell from their neighbours' tables. In answer to that assertion we will say simply that many of the more important Celtic scholars

and writers assure us that our church history is in fact the oldest that is known.

We know from ancient writings that many ancient people were turned from the Druids "to the adoration of God" (*The Annals of the Four Masters*). We also know from other accounts of church history that an Irishman, Coelestius, was the companion of the controversial Pelagius. It seems evident, therefore, that at a very early period there was a strong Christian movement in Ireland, which resulted in the organization of a church. It is argued by Bishop Ussher that "this comparatively pure form of Christianity survived in the country, running as it were underground, like some of our Irish streams, even when Romish corruption was most rampant" (Ussher, *Discourse on the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish*). It would seem from historical record that, although we cannot be certain of the date of its beginning, we can be sure that 1,500 years ago a part of the church of Jesus Christ could be found in these same hills of County Antrim where we now live and worship. We can look back to a day when God sent

Mr. McAuley is a member of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.

another of His servants from across the sea to bring the gospel of His saving grace to the people of this island. We can picture in our minds a young man sitting among the heather seeking to protect himself from the wind and rain for which this group of islands is so well known.

Although he was only a youth, Patrick's heart had already felt bitter pangs of grief and disappointment. It must have caused great anguish for him as he remembered playing amidst the rolling hills of Britain, when, without warning, his world had crashed about him. A band of roving Irishmen, bent on plunder and pillage, had invaded the shores of his native land, and, laying hands on Patrick, carried him away captive to their island home. Ignorant of God's plan for his life, Patrick sat among the hills, tasked, like the "prodigal son," with feeding the swine. Day and night his thoughts, no doubt, would wander to his home across the sea.

The years of Patrick's life slip by, but, somewhere among those years, in the providence of God, he hears the command of the gospel. The Holy Spirit, who had worked regeneration in his heart, provided him with faith to believe and to obey that call. Eventually he escaped from his Irish captors and made his way back to his native home where he was united with his family. He found, however, that he could not be content. Memories haunted him all the while, and he was carried back in thought to the land of his captivity. He thought of the people who inhabited its shores, of their idolatrous practices under the Druid priests, of their pagan rites, and of the small number who represented Christ's church on earth, and his heart was drawn to them in love. The call of God came ringing down the corridor of his soul. Patrick de-

scribed his call thus: "I saw, indeed, in the bosom of the night, a man, coming as it were from Ireland, with innumerable letters containing the 'Voice of the Irish.' While I was reading aloud, I myself thought indeed in my mind that I heard the voice of those who were by the Western Sea. And they cried out thus, as if with one

voice, 'We intreat thee, holy youth, that thou come and henceforth walk among us.' I was deeply moved in heart and could read no further, and so I awoke." God caused Patrick to be obedient to that call, and, in A.D. 432, he returned to Erin's Isle. There he preached as a missionary pastor, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ for close to 30 years. Through his preaching and testimony God worked regeneration, conversion, and salvation in the hearts of many of our

ancient fathers.

In the years that followed, many of these converts took leave of their homeland to bear the good news of the gospel to many parts of Europe. Columba (or Columbkille) is one example of that missionary spirit. If Ireland is to be grateful to Scotland for Patrick, then surely Scotland must thank Ireland for Columba, "The Apostle of the Northern Picts." The converts from Ireland, heedless of the dangers that surrounded them, invaded the realms of darkness, and brought the light of gospel truth to many in the British Isles, as well as in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and France. The dawn of light and truth had in God's mercy broken over Ireland. These hills and valleys that we now live among echoed to the praise of our Mighty Triune God.

No historical account of Patrick and his times would be complete without stating the fact that Patrick was a great believer in the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. Patrick's

simple illustration of that doctrine, using the three-leaved "Shamrock," is famous among Christians the world over. Indeed the Shamrock is now known to be the "Badge of the Irish."

We have looked at the religious state of Ireland 1,500 years ago, but what a change has taken place in the intervening years. As we look at the island of Ireland today we see a land covered, for the most part, with a darkness of superstition as bad as anything to be found at the time of the Druids. Whence came this great darkness? What happened after the days of Patrick?

It seems that, from the time that God first placed Patrick upon the stage of Ireland's church history, up to A.D. 1171, the lamp of gospel truth burned to some degree within this Emerald Isle. There were, it seems, many Romish corruptions that crept into Irish Christianity; but there continued to be opposition to the extravagant claims of the Pope. At that time difficulties arose among the ruling High Kings of Ireland. Henry II, Roman Catholic King of England, looked across to Ireland. A mixture of hatred for the people and greed for dominion stirred in his wicked heart. Henry made application to Pope Adrian IV for leave to invade the island's shores and to subject its simple people to the authority of the Roman See. Adrian, like his predecessors, and as history in the rest of Europe shows, was more than anxious to extend his ecclesiastical authority. He granted Henry his request with the following reminder:

There is indeed no doubt but that Ireland, and all the islands on which the Sun of Righteousness hath shone, and which have received the doctrine of the Christian Faith, do belong to the jurisdiction of St. Peter and the Holy Roman Church, as your Excellency also doth acknowledge: and therefore we are the more solicitous to propagate the righteous plantation of faith in this land. For, then, our dear son in Christ, have signified to us your desire to enter into this island of Ireland, in order to reduce the people to obedience under the

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laws and to extirpate the plants of vice, and that you are willing to pay from each house a yearly pension of one penny to St. Peter. We, therefore, favourably assenting to your petition, do hold it good and acceptable that, for extending the borders of the Church, restraining the progress of vice, for the correction of manners, the planting of virtue, and the increase of religion, you enter this island, and execute therein whatever shall pertain to the honour of God and the welfare of the land. (Note: Adrian IV was the only Englishman to be a Pope. His real name was Nicholas Breakspear.)

In A.D. 1171 the armies of King Henry landed at Waterford on the southeastern shores of the island with the express purpose of conquering Ireland, not only for the English throne, but also and more importantly for the "Church of Rome." Rome later boasted in the words of Pope Honorious III, "The English entered Ireland by the mandate of the Apostolic See, and subjugated it to the obedience of the Roman Church." This subjugation was completed at the Synod of Cashel in 1172, when it was determined "that all things relating to the religion for the future in all parts of Ireland be regulated according to the Church of England" (then under the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome).

At that point the Irish church lost its national independence and became subservient to the church of Rome. That was indeed a tragic day for Ireland. Rev. A.E. Hughes, in his book, *Lift Up a Standard*, is right to declare, "No Englishman should read the story of the twelfth century without shame and humiliation." The landing of King Henry II upon Irish soil ushered in an era of English domination which remains at the root of the island's troubled recent history. This, according to one authority, was

the beginning of the real drama with which the fate of Ireland was to be identified. Only the ineradicable defiance of the Irish and a feeling of racial superiority on the part of the English can explain the hatreds and

misunderstandings of that period. The most civilized people on the earth did not feel called upon to observe its promises towards a people it did not consider to be its equal. Indeed, in order to satisfy its hatreds, it kept the Irish in a state of near slavery while expressing unbounded astonishment at their backwardness and defects.

Is it surprising that the Irish have no love for the English?

Now we see a sad contrast. In the early days of Ireland's Christianity, we see a land noted for holiness and learning, of saints and scholars and for missionary efforts in other lands. From the twelfth century on, Ireland became known only for its superstition, fables, ignorance, and barbarism. From 1171 until the Reformation the island remained in a very poor state. The English authority was limited to an area known as the "Pale," a small area around the City of Dublin. Rev. Hamilton, in his *History of Presbyterianism*, states that "the people were oppressed rather than governed, and they groaned besides under the exactions and the vices of the Romish bishops and priests, who now, under the fostering wing of England, rode roughshod over them."

The Reformation in England led also to the Irish Parliament throwing off the authority of the Pope and declaring the King as supreme head on earth of the Church of Ireland. This declaration, however, was in word only, and no real attempt was made to win the people over to Protestantism. This same Church of Ireland today stands on the fence between a liberal form of Protestantism and full unity with Rome. It is hardly any wonder that the Reformation made little progress when the preaching of the gospel and of true doctrine was neglected. There was however a rep-

resentative body of true Protestants in the island. Despite the persecutions under Mary in 1558, they survived until Protestantism was established once more in England.

Ireland was in a wretched state during most of the reign of Elizabeth. Civil war disturbed and desolated the kingdom, as one Irish King after another rebelled against the English throne. Before Elizabeth died, however, the rebellions had been put down and Ireland settled to some little peace. The year 1607 saw the beginnings of

Irish Presbyterianism, which up until recently has been the Reformed Church in this island, and the church where we in the CRF find our own history. The history of the time between 1607 and 1921 is a complicated one but it is one that teaches us a lesson. The lesson is this, that the use of force rather than the "preaching of the Word" not only failed to make Ireland Protestant, but has left Ireland in a state of trouble from which she may never recover.

Persecutions and troubles continued during the 17th and 18th cen-

turies, with bloody fighting and growing discontent. In A.D. 1800 the British government enacted an "Act of Union," bringing Ireland into the United Kingdom. During the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries Britain had sought to "plant" Ireland with "Protestant" settlers, mostly Presbyterians from Scotland and Methodists from England and Wales. It was the fact that these people needed protection that brought about the Act of Union. It should be noted that, during the years 1600 to 1921, Roman Catholics and dissenters (mostly Presbyterian and Methodist) suffered under England's rule. Finally, in the year 1921, Ireland was offered "home rule" (the right of self-government). In order, however, to effect a settlement between the Roman Catholic Irish

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she may never
recover.*

and the Anglo-Protestant Irish (who had no desire to sever their connection with the British throne), Ireland was "partitioned," and a dividing "border" erected between the predominantly Protestant area in the north, commonly known as Ulster, and the predominantly Roman Catholic region in the south, which gave itself the name "Republic of Ireland" or "Eire." This remains the state of the island today, with Ulster in a state of near civil war. The battle is between Republicans (those who seek full Irish unity) and Loyalists (those loyal to the British crown). Behind all this lies an ancient battle between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Ulster, or Northern Ireland, comprises today some one-sixth of the total area of the island, but contains over one-third of the total population

(one and a half million), 55% of whom identify themselves as Protestant. (This group includes almost everyone outside of Roman Catholics. Only a tiny minority are Christians.) The Republic of Ireland, on the other hand, comprises five-sixths of the total area of land, but contains only two-thirds of the total population (three million), 95% of whom adhere to the Roman Catholic faith.

Any missionary to Ireland must quickly learn this history in order to understand the people here. God has always had His own elect people in Ireland since the days of Patrick. Today Christ still has a part of His church in Ireland. It is our prayer that, despite the troubles here, God in His mercy will continue to gather His people from among this divided nation, just as He also calls His church from among all the other nations un-

der heaven.

As each individual member of the church of Christ cannot exist independent of the full body of the church, so the church in each land and nation depends on the parts in other lands and nations to support and keep it alive. The Protestant Reformed Churches of America have, by God's guidance, been called to lift up the "Ancient Standard" of gospel truth among the people of this island (Is. 62:10).

Our hope is that with this background, you will continue to pray for us. We covet those prayers. And, we promise that, with the help and in the will of our heavenly Father, we will do all we can to see that Standard held high in Ballymena, in Ulster, in Ireland, and in all the United Kingdom. □

Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

Our Dependence Upon God's Grace

Will the pouring of ice-cold water on your head warm you up and improve your physical lot? Can running up a hill bring you to someone who behind you is running down that hill? Can we break one of the ten commandments of God's holy law in order to keep one of the other commandments?

In the day of shadows — the Old Testament dispensation — we have presented to us in Genesis 34 the sin of adultery committed upon Jacob's daughter Dinah by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite. Also presented in this chapter is the sinful act of Simeon and Levi, the sons of Jacob. They slew Shechem and his father, Hamor. And we find these two sons of Jacob saying to their father, in regard to Shechem, "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"

They did accuse Shechem of breaking God's law. However, they also broke God's law. Shechem committed adultery; but they committed murder. And we even do well con-

sidering what Jacob said and did after this sin of murdering Shechem and Hamor.

In Genesis 34:30 we read that Jacob said to his sons, "Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house."

It is true that Abraham and his seed had not yet been given by God the two tables of the law, which contained the ten commandments. That Law of God upon two tables of stone came in the day when the Israelites

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were at Mount Sinai, on their way to the promised land. But these two sons of Jacob, namely Simeon and Levi, did know that adultery was a sin. They said that Shechem had committed a sin upon their sister. It was an act which they considered so evil that they went and killed Shechem and his father. In their eyes this dealing with their sister as an harlot called for them to kill him who committed that sin, and likewise to kill his father who defended him in that sin, and who tried to get Dinah married to Shechem.

Now, in the first place, we do not read that Dinah cried and ran to her father and brothers to let them know what Shechem had done. We do read that she "went out to see the daughters of that land." She did not go to entice the unbelieving young men of that land. And although she did not go looking for that sin, we do read — according to the Hebrew word — that Shechem "loved the damsel and spake kindly unto the heart of the damsel." We also read in verse 2 of our translation that he, namely Shechem, defiled her. The Hebrew word presented as defiled means that he humbled her. Likewise, the word defiled which we find in verse 5 means that he made her unclean. It can be presented thus: "And Jacob heard that he, Shechem, had made unclean his daughter Dinah."

What we also find in this recording of that sin is that Dinah in no way wept because of that sin, nor hated Shechem for treating her so sinfully. She did not plead with her father to keep Shechem from taking her as his wife. We have reason to believe that she eagerly looked forward to this desire of Shechem to receive her as his wife. We find not one word of complaining on her part about Shechem's sin, and about his father's desire that she become the wife of his son.

Strikingly enough we do find that Dinah's name means "Judged" or "Avenged." But that name was given to her when she was born, not later because of the sin committed upon her. And in Scripture there is no evidence that she was angry because of what Shechem did to her. It is claimed

by some that she was about 14 or 15 years old. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that through that sin of Shechem she brought forth a child.

An awesome truth presented here is a shadow of sin that is today committed by church members. There is no evidence that Dinah hated Shechem and called what he did to her a sin. There is also in this account no evidence of Simeon and Levi, her brothers, hating the fact of their murder committed by killing Shechem and his father. Nowhere, after the violation of the sixth and seventh Commandments, murder and adultery, do we find remorse for those sins which were committed.

Let us by all means take note also of Jacob's reaction to what Simeon and Levi did. He, too, had only "a small beginning of obedience." He did consider the murder which Simeon and Levi committed to be a sinful act. And in Hebrews 11:21 Jacob is presented as a believing child of God. We read there: "By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." But let us go back to what he said to Simeon and Levi after their murderous act. He said, "Ye have troubled me to make me stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." Jacob warned them that because he was few in number — having only twelve sons and one daughter — and could not protect himself and his children, they stood in danger of being executed by the Canaanites and Perizzites.

Jacob did not call the attention of his sons to their act of hatred toward God, manifested in their murder of Shechem and his father. He called attention to what effect their murder of Shechem and Hamor would have on himself. He presented himself with his sons and daughter as now in danger of being executed by the Canaanites and Perizzites. However, God's promise to him when he left

Canaan, and reiterated a relatively short time ago, was this: "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude" (Gen. 32:12).

It is God's grace, not Jacob's response to that sin of his sons, that ought to comfort and encourage us. In Genesis 35:1 we read that "God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." And let us go back to Genesis 28:13-19. Yes, God, the Almighty One, who defends His people and keeps *every* letter in *every* word of His promise to His elect, will send His Son to realize the kingdom of heaven for every elect child. In this passage in Genesis 28, God promised Jacob that He would keep him in all the places whither he would go, and bring him back to the land of Canaan, so that his seed "shall be as the dust of the earth," so that he would spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south. God promised to keep him in all the places where he went. This was the manifestation of God's grace to him. What Jacob now told his sons stood therefore in total opposition to what God had told him.

What a manifestation of God's grace is revealed when Jacob's sons and daughter, in spite of themselves and their grievous sins, did by God's almighty arm get the whole land as a picture of what we all will get when Christ returns.

Jacob was wrong, but God was right. Jacob tells his sons that they were in terrible danger, and that they have brought themselves to destruction by the Canaanites and Perizzites. But our God had promised that Jacob and his sons would inherit the land which He promised. He, Jacob (not Esau), would in his seed get that promised land.

Of what is all this a shadow?

By God's grace, here was a shadow of what He does for us today. Let us take hold of the awesome truth which our God gives us by presenting this event that took place in Jacob's life. Scripture from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22 constantly holds before

us the truth that

His saints shall not fail,
But over the earth
Their power shall prevail;
All kingdoms and nations
Shall yield to their sway.
To God give the glory
And praise Him for aye.

We find those words in stanza 4 of our *Psalter's* blessed truth in number 407, based on Psalm 149.

Our God's name is Jehovah, which means I AM, and teaches us that He does not change, and that He gives us *all* that He has promised. Although we deserve not one blessing, He is faithful to His promises, and has through His Son earned for us a blessedness that is much higher than that which the highest angels enjoy.

Let us look carefully at what happened in the day of shadows and is presented to us so often both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Look at this incident in Jacob's

life which deals with what Shechem did to his daughter, and also with what his sons did in response. Let us read what our God says to us through the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10. We are saved by grace, not by our works. Our act of faith is God's gift to us. It is not something we decide to do and are able to do by our minds and strength. Our God through Paul tells us to believe — and in His grace causes us to believe and sing — that we are not saved through our works. We do not accept Christ and let Him come into our hearts. Can a dead man ask for or take into himself what is round about him? And did not our God — listen to Him, not to earthly preachers — tell Adam that his first sin would cause him to die spiritually? And did he not die spiritually that day and try to hide from God, rather than run up to Him and confess his sin?

By all means take hold of that Word of God in Ephesians 2:8-10. By

grace we are saved. We do not save ourselves. By His grace God saves us by giving us faith, in the way of causing us to be born again. Take hold of the truth that, as God says here, it is *through* faith, not because a spiritually dead man can believe. God tells us we are saved "not of works." And we are warned that if we boast of a work which we do in our own power, we reveal that we are not God's workmanship, created in Christ unto, not because of, our own good works.

God does not depend upon us. We depend upon Him, and every bit of salvation is His gift to us. As we read in Acts 17:28, in God we live and move, and have our being. We live physically because God causes our hearts to beat for us. We live spiritually because He gives us a spiritual heart and causes it to beat. We have spiritual life as His gift to us, even as our physical life is His gift until He pleases to stop it for our souls to enter glory. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. George Lubbers

The Spiritual Requirements of a Deacon in God's Church

Lesson 9

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

I Timothy 3:8-10

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We ought to notice that the requirements for a deacon are not of a lower order than those for the teaching and ruling elders. All are called by God, all must be fit instruments to conduct themselves properly in the church of the living God (see I Tim. 2:20ff.).

The term "deacon" means a servant. It ought to be observed that the Greek term *diakonos* occurs some 30 times in the New Testament. In the KJV it is translated three times "deacon," twenty times "minister," and

seven times "servant." In Philippians 1:1: "... to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...." In our terminology the bishops are the teaching and ruling elders. We have this same division evidenced in I Timothy 3:2, 8. In Romans 15:8 Paul says of Jesus Christ that He was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

There is something touchingly beautiful about the English term "minister." The Latin word for minister

means a doer of little things. It is therefore to be willing to be the least. A minister is willing to be a servant of Christ. The teaching and the ruling elders both are ministers of Christ. Jesus claims this name for Himself while in the state of humiliation on earth. In Matthew 23:11 we read, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant (minister)." Yes, deacon, minister, servant! Read John 13:12-17. All the disciples of Jesus understood this spiritual lesson save Judas Iscariot. He was a thief.

Yes, "in like manner" all must have the spiritual-psychological qualification. And this qualification must be manifest in each officebearer in the house of God.

In the second place, a deacon is one who serves in God's temple. Constantly a deacon must take the shoes from off his feet as did Moses (Ex. 31-36). He must constantly be as one who has a "pure conscience."

The text suggests two things: 1) He must be holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and he must be one who so ministers (uses) the office of a deacon that he acquires (subjectively) great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2) He must more and more be able to say: I have served Christ. (Compare Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 13:5. See *Young's Concordance*, p. 198.) Such "having a pure conscience" means obedience to the law of God as fulfilled by Christ on the cross. It is in the blood of Christ, as the eternal Son of God, that we were "purged from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:13-15). We now may serve God with a free and good conscience, as those who shall be judged, not as those who are under the curse of the Law, but as Christians, who war against sin and Satan in this life, and who afterwards will reign with Christ eternally over all things. (Confer Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. XII, 31, 32.) Now it is true that a "deacon" must have a pure and undefiled conscience in his work of ministering to the saints (Acts 6:1-4), but this is true of every saint in Christ Jesus. (See Philippians 1:1; Matthew 5:13-16.)

However, let us notice the text in this matter of a deacon holding a good conscience. There are two great sins that beset the deacon in office, sins which would defile his conscience.

The first requisite is that he be a man who is "grave." He must be as walking in the very presence of God, of Christ, and of the holy angels. He must be "honorable." His entire walk and demeanor must command "respect." It is the respect that one has for an honest man who strives to keep his conscience good and pure. He has a quiet confidence in God, and will believe the best of the members of the militant church. Hence, he flees all and every sin for God's sake. He will speak the truth in love. He is not double-tongued. And when men examine his walk and life, they find him sound in faith and upright in walk. For he will be found to be the "husband of one wife" who herself is found to be "faithful in all things." She has the good reputation of being a "virtuous woman" (Prov. 30:19, 20). She is no weeping, clinging vine, but in every way supports her husband in the ruling of her children. She must be, in the highest sense of the term, a virtuous helpmeet. No man who aspires to the office of bishop is a fit candidate if his wife is like a dragon on the wheel. Hence she too, for the Lord's sake, is to be "grave," sober. She too must have her head on straight.

The question is often asked: Why did Paul speak of the proper qualifications of the wives of deacons, and not of the spiritual-psychological qualities of the wives of teaching and ruling elders? Pages and books have been written about this matter. It seems to me that this insertion concerning the wives of deacons and not of those of the bishops should not be too perplexing a matter for a believing student of the Bible. Please attend to the following:

In the first place the Holy Spirit's

waiting until He gives directions for the proper spiritual qualifications of the deacons does not imply that the spiritual Canon of faith is not also binding upon the wives of both ministers and elders. Both are under the royal law of liberty, even as both are under the end of the commandment,

which is love (charity) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned (I Tim. 1:5, 6).

In the second place, are not these wives to be the wife of one man, their own husbands, even as the church is to Christ (Eph. 5:32)? Are not all the women in God's church united with their own husband even as the church is to

Christ? Pray, how could a man rule his own house well if his wife were like the proverbial contentious woman (Prov. 21:9)? Is not also the minister's wife called by the Lord to be a crown to her husband, so to live that she brings honor to him in the ministry of the Word (I Tim. 2:11-13)? How would children who were lawless and riotous honor their father when their mother did not behave herself "faithful in everything"?

In verses 15, 16 we read, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy (confessedly) great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...."

There is a mystery of godliness which should be known and revered by every saint of God. Paul often speaks of "godliness" in the two letters to Timothy and in his epistle to Titus. (Cf. I Timothy 2, 3, 4, and 6.) In each case godliness is far more than, and also essentially different from, mere mores of men; it is exalted far above the morality of unbelievers who are at bottom legalists, who affirm that the house of the living God, the ground of truth, is man's affirmation

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of truth. The house of God is not merely a place where man dwells with God, a place where we invite God to join us. It is essentially different! It is God with us. It is expressed in the name of the virgin's son. The name of that son is Immanuel, God with us. His name is Jesus, for He will surely save His elect people from their sins. And when this Immanuel comes to dwell by His Spirit in our hearts, He makes His abode in us. Then we are the temple of the living God. We are His dwelling-place in the Spirit (Eph. 2:10-22). Such is the mystery of godliness. We are saved by grace through faith, and ingrafted in Christ. Then we are made godly. The Spirit of God works in our hearts both to will and to do. Such willingness to do is the mystery of God toward us and our godliness toward Him (Phil. 2:12-15).

Now this mystery of godliness is great. No one ever argues this point when he has tasted the love of God to him!

The great confession written in I Timothy 3:6 consists of six evangelical truths. The church confesses these as the pillar and ground of the truth. Let us notice the following:

1. God *manifest* in the flesh. This great mystery is revealed in all of the Scriptures. We will not refute the textual critics who deny that text which reads "God" and tenaciously maintain that we must read that the "mystery" was revealed in flesh. Both are true, but why quibble about this reading when we have John 1:1-14. There we read explicitly in verse 14: "And the Word (*Logos*) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

2. As He dwelt among us He was *God-with us*, "justified in the Spirit." He was the "wisdom" justified by wisdom's children (Matt. 11:19). He was such wisdom of God to usward. He was made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctifi-

cation and redemption, that, according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD." He was justified in the Spirit both in the wise and prudent as well as in the babes to whom the Spirit revealed Him.

3. Yes, He was seen of angels. He was seen of angels to whom the Word made flesh revealed Himself, both in His humiliation and in His glorification. He was seen by all the angels of God, who were sent by God's command: "Worship him, all ye angels" (Heb. 1:3-6; Luke 2:9-14).

4. He was "preached" among (to) the Gentiles. This too is a historical gospel-truth, promised of old to Abraham and fulfilled after Pentecost (Gal. 2:7, 8; Acts 10:34; Rom. 10:9-15).

5. He was "believed on in the world." (See Romans 15:8-12; Colossians 1:6, 23.)

6. He was "received up into glory." (See John 17:1-5, 19-24; Acts 1:2-12; Philipians 2:6-11.) □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

When Opinions Vary

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17

The other day I received a telephone call from a member of the Canadian Reformed Churches, a Mr. Roelof Janssen of *Inheritance Publications* in Neerlandia. His call had to do with other matters; but, once they were taken care of, he quickly informed me that he had read my ar-

ticles in the *Standard Bearer*, and didn't agree with them. In the conversation which followed he expressed deep regret that his church and ours had never succeeded in developing any kind of a working relationship through the years. It is a regret which I share. But at the same time I believe our conversation brought out some of the reasons why this is so; and these I would like to try to bring out. I hope that Mr. Janssen does not mind my trying to reconstruct an unrecorded conversation; and, if in any way I misrepresent him, I ask that he please let me know, and I will do what I can to set the record straight.

To begin with, it was rather soon into our conversation that Mr. Janssen brought out the frequently expressed accusation that it was the *Declaration of Principles* which caused the breakdown in the original relationship we had; and perhaps in a sense this was so. At least, it was certainly the occasion for that relationship being officially terminated. But that was simply on the surface. The fact was, as I tried to show in my articles, all efforts of rapprochement had pretty well ceased well before that. Before the *Declaration* was ever drafted there was already a Liberated minister, a Rev. Hettinga from the Netherlands, going about Canada seeking to line

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up people to organize into separate Liberated congregations, including some people who had already joined our churches. This, particularly within the mind frame of Liberated thinking, certainly had distinct and serious implications.

I sought to bring this out in our conversation by asking Mr. Janssen, as he was accusing us of "binding the consciences" of people, why it was that in my Lynden days, when I used to visit with a number of Liberated people and maintained a rather warm friendship with them, the one thing they seemed unwilling and unable to do was as much as to visit one of our worship services. As one of them put it, "I would love to go, if only it had a different name." It was as though someone somewhere had decided for them that attendance at our services was not to be allowed. Mr. Janssen explained that in their understanding of the Articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession, there can be only one true church in one place. Thus, if there is a true church in a community, any other which is not in a relationship with that church, or recognized by it, must be false, and must be treated as such.

That may be what they believe; but they have to understand what that means. They accuse us of "binding the consciences" of people. But when they impose judgments like the above on their own churches, then their accusation against us has a hollow ring. Even more — and apart from their interpretation of Articles 28, and 29, which I find pretty strained — once they have proclaimed us a "false church," how much room is left for open and free conversation? Conversing parties don't have to agree; but they do have to respect each other, or there is very little possibility of mutual profit. And when they make the judgments they have, without ever having tried to hear us out, their desire to talk again has also a rather hollow ring.

But let's take this matter of "binding." Is the *Declaration of Principles* that? Or, even more basically, are the doctrines expressed in it "binding"

for us? Of course they are. They must be, if we church politically are to be Reformed.

The term "binding," after all, comes directly from the Church Order of Dordrecht, Article 31:

If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod.

Clearly we are told that the decisions of ecclesiastical bodies are "settled and binding." But why, and what does this mean?

To begin with, it certainly does not mean that such ecclesiastical decisions have the kind of authority which is had by Scripture. Being inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16), and forming, as it does, the foundation upon which the church of God is built (Eph. 2:20), the Bible has an authority which is complete and final in itself. Luther's exclamation, "One must let the Word stand," was at the heart of the great Reformation, and it holds still. Without it one is neither Protestant nor Reformed. It is as the apostles said in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The authority of Scripture is direct and final in a way that ecclesiastical decisions never are.

And, for that matter, in a way that the creeds never are. The creeds have an authority, but it is not like that which the Scriptures possess, although it derives from it. The creeds contain the fruits of the work of the Spirit within the church as through the ages children of God have studied the Bible and from it elicited truths which God has made known to man. These were in due time formulated with the greatest of care, and set forth in confessions or creeds as expressions of the faith in which the churches are commonly agreed. And from that their authority derives. It is not final and infallible; one doesn't exegete the

creeds word for word in the way he does the Word of God. But in as much as they contain truths the Scriptures express — and the Scriptures are perspicuous to us — they hold a derivative authority among those who out of common commitment and faith hold to them. From them they are reminded and taught in the broad teachings of the Bible; by them the truths they hold are defended; and through them they are repeatedly returned to the Scriptures. The creeds are nothing in themselves; but in conjunction with the Scriptures they stand as servants, ambassadors of truth, by which the church is protected and built up. They have a real authority derived from the Word of God, and greater than that which ecclesiastical decisions ever possess.

Nevertheless, ecclesiastical decisions do have an authority too, a "binding" that is real.

In order to understand this, particularly as it obtains within the Protestant Reformed Churches, it is perhaps best to go back to a sermon which Rev. Hoeksema preached in 1940 concerning the counsel at Jerusalem, as stated in Acts 15:28, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us..." in which he said:

This gathering, which was held about the year A.D. 50, has sometimes been called the first synod. But this is hardly correct. For, first of all, we may remark that there can hardly have been room for a synodical gathering as long as the apostles still lived. They were directly guided by the Spirit. They had authority over all the churches. And the apostolic authority was final. As long as the apostles lived, therefore, there was neither need of, nor occasion for, a synod. Nor was the constituency of that gathering such that it could be called a synod. The latter is always a representative gathering. Its members are delegated and receive their commission from the churches that delegate them. But the meeting at Jerusalem was constituted of the apostles, and others of the church at Jerusalem, together with Paul and Barnabas, who had been sent by the church of Antioch and who repre-

sented more particularly the church among the Gentiles. Hence, we may more properly characterize this gathering as a convent under the direct guidance of the apostles....

This sermon was important, introducing as it did a significant juncture in our history as churches, the beginning of our first synod (and thus a sermon which ought to be republished and restudied regularly [SB vol. 40, pp. 412-417]). It set the course and put forth the principles by which our ecclesiastical functions have been governed ever since. On the principles expressed in it our first synod was organized; and in its own way it provides the presuppositions, the common "binding" principles, on which we committed ourselves to stand.

The sermon began with a warning — a warning against undue presumption on the part of ecclesiastical gatherings. They must understand that they are not something in themselves. Already their existence is not direct but derivative. They are not instituted as such in Scripture, but receive their authority from the only continuing body, the body of elders given to teach and rule the church through the use of God's Word. This responsibility belongs in the first place to the local church, but it also includes a need to seek and work for the well-being of the church of God generally. And assembling with others of the same calling is a natural and proper way in which this is to be done. This is their institution — not direct, but in derivation from what is set forth by the Word of God.

And so is the authority of their decisions. It too is not direct, an authority coming forth from the assemblies as such, but derivative, received from the Scriptures in which they work, as Article 30 of the Church Order expresses it: "ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner." What this clearly indicates is that only such matters are to be dealt with in these assemblies as are properly placed in the hands of the elders by the Word of

God, and they are to be dealt with only on the basis of the principles which the Scriptures provide. Thus their decisions have authority, an authority based not on the assembly itself, but on that of the Scriptures upon which their decisions are made. The authority is real, but not a direct authority such as the Scriptures possess, nor even that of the creeds which have been elicited through years of study by the broad body of the Reformed faith. It is an authority like that with which the Church Order delineates its own limitation in its closing article:

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented and diminished (Article 86).

The authority of the church order, and of the decisions made under it, is that of a "common consent." By reason of a common commitment to the faith, various parts of the church of God come together in these assemblies to assist, strengthen, and correct each other in the faith. There is nothing directly inspired about the manner in which they work; it is simply a matter of "common consent" under the word, by which also they agree to abide, to be bound — "unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order, as long as they are not changed by a general synod." And in case this latter be so, the Church Order itself provides the means by which such proof can be given, and correction made.

This, accordingly, is the nature of the authority, or the "binding," of the *Declaration of Principles* in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The fact is that in 1950 our synod was confronted with a problem, one that arose in a large part from the visit made by the Reverends Kok and DeJong to the Netherlands. Although they were in no position to speak for our churches, the committee of the

Liberated Church (which had been strangely silent for more than a year in making contact with our churches as mandated by their synod in 1948) took them into their confidence as though they did speak for our churches, with the result that, from what was said, Prof. Holwerda drew the conclusion that the Protestant Reformed Churches had no established covenant view, that this was simply a matter of individual opinion, and that many of our men were inclined to the Liberated view as well. This simply was not so.

In actuality the Protestant Reformed Churches had always held a distinct view of the covenant from their very origin as churches. In fact, it may well be argued that our covenant view was even more basic to our churches than was the rejection of Common Grace. It preceded it, having been presented already by Rev. Danhof in a lecture given in 1918; and thereafter all of our doctrinal positions — including our rejection of Common Grace — were developed in close harmony with, and on the basis of it. In no sense was it simply the presupposed regeneration view of Abraham Kuyper (as some to this day continue simplistically to claim), nor was it the secessionist view of a general covenantal promise (which strained certain basic principles of the Reformed faith), nor was it developed simply in opposition to these. It was in itself a positive approach to the covenant of grace which brought into harmony and held together all of the basic tenets of Reformed truth. For us it was important enough to warrant the acceptance of our ejection from our mother church.

Now apparently the Reverends DeJong and Kok did not understand this. Or, what is perhaps more likely, knowing the sensitivity of the Liberated theologians on covenant concepts, they thought it best to present it as though this were not so. After all, they could argue, no specific decision had ever been made adopting the Danhof/Hoeksema covenant view; and there were indeed some of our men who were ready to look at some-

thing else. But underneath they certainly knew better. After all, would anyone imagine that after 1944 one might go about the Liberated churches proclaiming the virtues of Kuyperian presupposed regeneration, and that this would be accepted? Or could one expect that after 1924 one would be allowed in the Protestant Reformed Churches to preach the doctrine of Common Grace, concerning which no specific decision had ever been taken either? History in the end has its lessons; and Kok and DeJong certainly knew that one would not be allowed openly to teach the Liberated view of the covenant in the Protestant Reformed Churches. But they said what they did; and, whatever it was, it led Prof. Holwerda to the conclusion that such a thing was quite possible, and that he could therefore advise those joining our churches to do just that. But it wasn't so; and now something had to be done about it.

Before the Holwerda letter we had tried to go slowly and carefully. To Dr. Schilder already, and through him to his colleagues in the Netherlands, we had tried to explain that there were things that had to be dealt with. But now they rushed ahead with a decision to seek sister-church relations without including any provisions to work out these doctrinal differences. Meanwhile also, when working with the actual immigrants in Canada, we put great effort into

explaining that we did have our concerns for particular grace, and that they could expect to hear things which might well jar with certain Liberated concepts. We wanted to be kind, and we didn't want to presume that these differences couldn't be worked out between us; but we also had to be honest as to what they would hear in our preaching.

And then came Prof. Holwerda's letter, telling them in effect that it wasn't so. That left us with a problem. Some understood full well the depth of our commitment to our covenant view, while others were saying, also now of our own men, that we had no such view at all, which wasn't true. This simply couldn't be allowed to go on. For good reason, therefore, and properly so, those who were in charge of the church-extension efforts of our churches brought the matter to synod. It was a simple matter of honesty to those with whom we were working, as well as to those who were developing mistaken ideas within our own churches. There was no desire or intent to thwart discussion; in fact, an honest and open discussion of the diverse covenant views was something we had wanted all along. Nor was it an effort on our part to force people to believe what they didn't want. The Liberated people with whom we worked were repeatedly assured that they might believe what

they thought right, as long as they understood what was to be preached and taught within our churches, and which could not be agitated against, thus causing division and schism within the church. After all, conviction doesn't come by imposition, only by study in the Word under the blessing of the Spirit — which was what our covenant view was all about. We were simply laying out in open view the principles which by "common consent" had been established and were accepted among us; and which anyone joining our churches could expect to hear taught and preached. This had always been understood and said, except that now necessity required that it be drawn up and duly adopted so that all might understand what by "common consent" had always been "binding" within every Protestant Reformed Church — just as in any ecclesiastical decision is in any Reformed church.

But, in the end, it was not this that caused the breakdown of relationships between the Liberated and the Protestant Reformed Churches. It went back much earlier, and much farther than that.

But this must wait. And, meanwhile, if there are any who feel that what I have said is not quite correct, we would appreciate hearing from you. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Denominational Activities

On the evening of September 21 the annual Fall League Meeting of the Mr. & Mrs. and Adult Bible Societies of West Michigan was held at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Rev. R. Van Overloop, pastor of the Bethel PRC in

Elk Grove Village, IL addressed those gathered there on the very informative and timely subject of "The Suffering of the Church in Connection with Aids."

The Reformed Free Publishing Association of our churches, publishers of this very magazine, met for their annual meeting on the evening of September 30 at the Hudsonville, MI PRC to hear Rev. G. VanBaren speak on the subject, "The Standard Burr." You might also be interested to know that your copy of this maga-

zine is one of about 2,500 that are sent out each month to a total of 21 different countries; that presently no *Standard Bearers* are being sent anywhere in South America; and that there are only five states in the United States to which no copies of the *SB* are being sent.

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI served as this year's host for the annual Eastern Men's and Ladies' League Meeting on September 28. Rev. W. Bruinsma spoke on the topic,

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

"The New Age Movement and Entertainment."

The Ladies' Society of the Hull, IA PRC hosted their area Fall League Meeting on October 15. Rev. Moore addressed the ladies on "The New International Version of the Bible."

This fall and winter, the Lord willing, Prof. D. Engelsma will teach a class in the study of the doctrine of the last things, or Eschatology. Plans originally called for classes to be held on alternate Wednesdays at the seminary; but, because of overwhelming response, classes after the first week were held in the larger Fellowship Room of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

Congregational Highlights

The Randolph, WI PRC celebrated their 50th anniversary almost two months ago. But let me say a couple of things about it yet in this issue. First, Randolph did an outstanding job on their 50th anniversary booklet entitled, *50 Years of God's Faithfulness*. It includes 35 pages of the history of Randolph PRC, with repeated reminders of God's blessing and faithfulness. And secondly, we note that their commemoration of God's faithfulness extended also to both worship services on Sunday, when their pastor, Rev. S. Key, preached on Isaiah 13:21 ("Formed for God's Praise") and Hebrews 2:1-4 ("Giving the More Earnest Heed").

While on the subject of anniversaries, congratulations should also be extended to the Byron Center, MI PRC, which marked ten years of existence on October 10. This event was commemorated by a sermon entitled, "God's Great Faithfulness," based on Lamentations 3:22-23. There also was a short program after the evening service.

Food for Thought:

Many Christians call God their Father, and act as orphans.

*The Standard Bearer,
April 1, 1963.*

A program was held on October 8 in Hull, IA PRC commemorating their pastor's (Rev. R. Moore's) 25 years in the ministry.

And we want to send our congratulations also to Rev. and Mrs. M. Dick, of the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada, who were blessed, on August 31, with the birth of their first daughter, Elisabeth Ann.

The Consistory of the Loveland, CO PRC planned a farewell program for Rev. and Mrs. R. Cammenga and their family on September 10th. Exactly two weeks later the congregation of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI (the Cammengas' new home), hosted a welcome reception for the family. A short program and refreshments were provided. At that welcome program Rev. Cammenga called his wife to the platform to introduce her, and to thank her publicly for all her work in packing and getting them moved. After presenting his wife a bouquet of flowers, Rev. Cammenga introduced each of his children — all ten! The first Sunday after Rev. Cammenga's installation at Southwest, he preached on "The Importance of Preaching" and "Pray For Me."

Rev. W. Bruinsma, with the approval of his consistory, has started another society at First PRC in Holland, MI. This society will be made

up of single, post-confession young people, as well as young married couples.

School Activities

One more anniversary should be noted for this issue — the 25th anniversary of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI. The day-long event was held on September 25. Activities included a golf outing, three-on-three basketball tournament, a homerun derby, and assorted activities for children. This was all tied together that evening by a short program. Rev. C. Terpstra, a Covenant graduate, was the featured speaker.

The PR School Society in Randolph, WI met in mid-September and authorized the Board to hire an architect (a necessary step in order to gain state approval for the remodeling project and building of classrooms) and to proceed with the project barring any unforeseen and unusual expenses.

Ministerial Calls

The congregation of Loveland, CO PRC extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma, presently serving in First PRC, Holland, MI to become their next pastor. With Rev. Bruinsma on the trio were the Revs. Dykstra and Gritters. □

Church Etiquette

We read the following item that should be of interest also in our churches which often suffer from a lack of proper church manners. We quote:

"This is the time of the year when much coughing is a disturbing factor in public worship. How strange that so few of us use our handkerchiefs to muffle our barks. We do not seem to realize that every time we emit a loud explosion those who sit near us lose the sound of the words spoken at that moment. They may be the key words in the sentence. In most cases the cough is not necessary; we cough because others do. The other day we

told our physician, who happens to be our neighbor and stepped into our home, that we had been coughing for several weeks and nothing we had tried for relief would stop it. He asked: 'What do you raise?' We answered: 'Nothing.' He replied, 'Then stop coughing. That membrane is irritated and every time you cough you make it worse.' We stopped then and there, with an occasional lapse, and the inclination to cough was practically gone in a day. This may not be applicable to all who cough in church but we are persuaded that it does apply to many." Any unnecessary noise in church and during services

should be avoided. Putting on our wraps during any part of the services or while singing the doxology should be taboo. If one is late for services such a one should not look around for a seat while the minister is reading Scripture. Wait quietly until the reading is finished. If you don't, you disturb others who are following the reading of the Word of God. If there is a disturbance such as the crying of a baby in church, don't look around to see whose baby it is and who or what is the cause of the disturbance. First you embarrass the mother of such a baby, secondly you are missing part of the service yourself, and thirdly you disturb the minister who likes to have the people looking at him and not looking in all directions of the auditorium. And above all don't sleep during the service, for then you might as well stay home and go to bed, seeing you get nothing out of the services and you are a constant source of irritation to others.

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincerest sympathy to its fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Al DeYoung and Mr. and Mrs. Phil Kraima, in the death of their father,

MR. TED ENGELSMA.

May our gracious heavenly Father comfort them by His most holy Word, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalm 145:18, 19).

Rog Key, President
Roderick Kreuzer, Vice-All

Joy and Peace in Believing

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in his wings:
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new:
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let th' unknown tomorrow
Bring with it what it may.

It can bring with it nothing
But he will bear us thro';
Who gives the lilies clothing
Will clothe his people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens
Will give his children bread.

Though vine, nor fig tree nei-
ther,
Their wonted fruit should
bear,
Tho' all the fields should wither,
Nor flocks, nor herds, be
there:
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my
voice;
For while in him confiding,
I cannot but rejoice.

William Cowper

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to members Mrs. Martha Velting, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Kamminga, and Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Kamminga in the passing to her heavenly home of their mother,

MRS. MARY KAMMINGA.

May they be comforted by the words of Philipians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Rev. D. Kuiper, President
Miss Audrey Reitsma, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The church family of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church expresses their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Duane Gunnink and family in the death of his mother,

HENRIETTA GUNNINK.

May they be comforted with the knowledge of the words of Psalm 116:15, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Ruth Elzinga, Secretary
Adult Bible Study Society