



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

It is not sin to be angry, but when we are angry it is hard not to sin. Anger is a tender virtue, and through our ineptitude it is easily corrupted and made dangerous. He who would be angry without sin must not be angry at anything except sin.

John Trapp

See "Be Ye Angry and Sin Not" — p. 326

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In This Issue ...

The menu this time is varied.

There is biblical exposition: Rev. C. Hanko's meditation on
Hebrews 11:6, Rev. G. VanBaren's study of the locusts from the
bottomless pit in Revelation 9:1-12, Rev. denHartog's treatment
of anger in the Christian life in light of Ephesians 4:26, Rev. G.
Lubbers' exegesis of I Timothy 4:12, 13 (the calling of a young
pastor), and Prof. H.C. Hoeksema's work with Genesis 1.

There is theology: Rev. B. Woudenberg's examination of the
logical nature of biblical truth and Prof. Hoeksema's develop-
ment of the doctrine of creation.

There is the exploration of Reformed church government:
Rev. R. Cammenga's explanation of the questions of Article 41
of the Church Order of Dordt and the editorial on the congrega-
tional meeting.

There is instruction about origins (the first three days of
creation) and about the end (the locusts out of the abyss).

There is controversy: with feminism, with the notion that
truth is illogical, with evolution, with the approval of homo-
sexuality.

In addition, there are book reviews, church news, and a
letter taking issue with the recommendation of the King James
version of the Bible.

Something for every taste.

Rather, many things for the varied tastes of the Reformed
believer.

—DJE

Coming to God

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

"Lord, teach us to pray." This was the request of one of Jesus' disciples while He was still with them. In response Jesus taught them the well known model prayer (Luke 11:1-4).

How often that same desire arises in our hearts. Prayer is one of the most blessed privileges we have. Yet, at the same time, it is most difficult for us to pray as we ought.

Even with the model prayer as our guide we still struggle with our imperfections and weaknesses. No matter how long we live, in this life our prayers remain very imperfect.

Enoch was a man of prayer. We know that because the Scriptures tell us that "he walked with God."

He was also a man of strong faith. He lived close to God, in deep dependence upon Him. It was Enoch's prayer-life that pleased God.

It is in connection with Enoch's walk which pleased God that we read: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him."

Prayer is a "coming to God."

That implies that prayer is *asking*. As needy, dependent creatures we make all our needs known in prayer and supplication. We come to the overflowing Fountain of life as empty vessels to be filled out of His fullness

with grace for grace.

Prayer is more than that. Prayer is *thanksgiving*. Our Heidelberg Catechism mentions prayer as the highest expression of gratitude. We say with the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Prayer is also *seeking*. Our text speaks of that, and God encourages us: "Seek ye my face." Not as if God is ever far from us, but we are often far from Him. Isaiah declares: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Jesus adds: "Ask and it shall be given: seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

What a blessed assurance! God is ready to receive us twenty-four hours a day and every day. We need no appointment long in advance. We need not write a letter, or use a telephone, or seek an advocate. Our Advocate is before the throne, and by His Spirit in our hearts we have a direct line of communication to the throne of grace.

Prayer includes *worship, praise, adoration*. We come into God's presence, we stand before His face, we bow at His footstool to pour out our souls to Him as we can to no other. God knows us, knows our inmost heart, our deepest thought, our every need better than we ourselves.

But prayer is more than that. It is intimate covenant fellowship, com-

munion of life with the living God. As David says, "I have set the Lord always before me." It gives us a small foretaste of our eternal joy, as we sigh, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee."

Thus our life becomes a prayer, a praying without ceasing.

Yes, that is prayer! Yet, foremost, prayer is *telling the praises of God's Name* as our highest good!

Enoch's coming to God was a walk with Him.

* * * * *

Our text teaches us that he who comes to God "must believe that he is."

Do not fail to notice how personal this is. Praying with the congregation on Sunday is important. Family prayers are essential to a Christian home. And time for private prayers and meditation is essential to a true spiritual walk before the face of God.

We must believe. For without faith it is impossible to please God, or even to call upon or trust in Him.

The prayer of the unbeliever is an abomination to God. God turns away His face in disgust. Unbelievers are carnal, selfish enemies of God, who at best make and worship an image of God. Their prayer is a

sham, a pretense that God abhors.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It is the living bond that unites our heart to the heart of God through

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

the Spirit of Christ in us, the bond of intimate covenant fellowship with the Most High.

Prayer is the cry of faith that arises from the heart of God's child. As the baby naturally seeks its mother's breast, finds comfort and refuge in mother's arms, and turns to her with all its needs, so the child of God seeks God's face in utter dependence upon Him, and finds full satisfaction in all his needs.

We must believe that God is.

Faith is the knowledge of God, whereby we say in deepest conviction, "My God." We have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light as His sons and daughters, restored in the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to know, to love, and to serve Him in sincere adoration. We say in deepest conviction, "Whom have I, Lord, but thee, on earth or in heaven?"

Our sinful inclination is to make for ourselves an image of God and to bow in worship before that image. We have our own idea of what God is or should be. We make a god that is dependent on us, or who sits enthroned on high to serve us. Depending on our own strength and ingenuity, we can get along most of the time without Him. Only in times of deep distress, when all else fails us, we turn to him expecting that he is waiting and eager to help us.

But that is not the God of the Scriptures. Let it be said with awe and reverence: God is GOD. He is the fullness of all His divine perfections, the ever-glorious, blessed, adorable God! He is the triune, living God, who lives His own blessed life in intimate covenant fellowship within His own Being, and has no need of men's hands to be worshiped by them. God does not exist for us, but we exist for Him. He does not need us, but we cannot live without Him. He gives us life, breath, and being, that to Him may be the praise and glory forever and ever.

God does not treat us like automata, mere receptacles of His grace and blessings, but deals with us as rational, moral creatures, even as His elect, redeemed, justified, and sanctified children in Christ Jesus.

He unites us to Himself by a bond of living faith, and brings us into intimate fellowship with Him through that amazing wonder and gift of prayer.

As guilty sinners before His face, who increase our guilt every

moment of our existence, we have no right to pray; we deserve to be banished from His presence. We plead, not on our own worthiness or righteousness, but on the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are but sinful creatures of the dust, mere specks in comparison with the Most High, unfit to pray as we ought, yet we have boldness to call upon His name on the merit of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in the confidence that He is at all times our Advocate before the face of God.

We have access to the mercy seat of Almighty God, who is also our merciful Father. We come in the confidence that, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

What a blessed privilege for us to live in intimate communion with our God in prayer! What would we do without it?!

It compares to Enoch's walk with God.

* * * * *

Our text also teaches us that he who comes to God must believe that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

This implies that our prayers must not be, as they often are, a mere formality. Sincere prayer arises from the heart.

Our prayers must be sincere in the sense that we truly desire whatever we ask for. James warns us in his epistle that we must "ask in faith,

nothing wavering," for he who wavers is like a staggering drunkard. That man receives nothing from the Lord.

When we ask for the forgiveness of a certain sin we must also be truly sorry for that sin and must put it away. When we pray for spiritual growth, this must be accompanied by a striving to walk in newness of life before our God.

Diligent, persistent praying does not mean that we may try to impose our whims upon God by our many pleadings. God surely knows far better than we what is good for us. Submission to God's will must characterize all that we ask.

Persistent prayer must arise out of the need and anguish of the soul. In his wrestling with the Angel of Jehovah, Jacob clung to Him with weeping and supplication, imploring His blessing. Jesus, in Gethsemane, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to God. Paul prayed repeatedly for deliverance from his thorn before he found peace. We also must often storm the throne of grace before we are heard. God rewards those who diligently seek Him.

True, sometimes God is already answering our prayer while we call upon Him. Even as God's Spirit creates the need in our hearts, God is already prepared to fill that need. But there are other times when God deems it necessary to withhold His answer. Then our prayers become a matter of praying, seeking, and knocking. But never do we seek His face in vain, for He always seeks our eternal good.

We must always pray in the confidence that our heavenly Father withholds no good thing from those who fear Him. Only then can we confidently end our prayers with an "Amen," it shall surely be as we have asked.

For to our God belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.

There was progress in Enoch's walk with God. Every step brought him closer to heaven, until one day God took him home.

Lord, teach us to pray! □

*Prayer is
the cry of faith
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of God's child.*

The Nose of the Camel (3)

Last year the synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("Liberated" — hereafter GKN-Lib) decided that women may participate in the congregational meeting as voting members. They may enter into all the debate that takes place at this meeting. They may vote on all matters that come before this meeting. Most importantly, they may vote for pastors, elders, and deacons.

By this decision, the GKN-Lib let the nose of the camel of feminism into their church tents. In time, this decision, unanimously taken, will be followed by decisions approving female deacons, elders, and ministers. These decisions will necessarily involve rejection of the biblical teaching that the husband is authoritative head of wife and family.

The GKN-Lib deny that their decision approving female participation in the congregational meeting is the nose of the feminist camel in the tent. They were at pains to deny this in the very decision by which they approved women voting at the congregational meeting. The conclusion of their decision attempted to put to rest any fear that this decision represents a concession to worldly feminism:

Allowing women to vote is not an expression of un-scriptural individualism or of democratising in the church, and must therefore not be regarded as a concession to a drive towards a false spirit of emancipation;

Since voting must not be regarded as a form of governing, the granting of

voting rights to the sisters should not be considered a first step on the road toward the opening up of the office of minister or elder to the women.

About the sincerity of the Dutch Reformed synod, one need have no doubt. Nevertheless, the members of the GKN-Lib and the Reformed churches in fellowship with the GKN-Lib should not be misled by these reassurances. Allowing women to vote at the congregational meeting of the Reformed church is a "concession to a drive towards a false spirit of emancipation." The granting of voting rights to the sisters at the congregational meeting *should be considered* a "first step on the road toward the opening up of the office of minister or elder to the women."

The reassurances by the synod of the GKN-Lib are not at all reassuring. For, first, this synod showed itself strangely unaware of the tremendous pressure that the feminist movement is presently exerting upon Christ's church and surprisingly indifferent to the mortal threat that this ungodly movement poses to the church. In a time when feminism, with the drive for acceptance of homosexuality, is the issue in Western society and when church after church, including Reformed churches, are falling to this movement, the GKN-Lib abruptly overturn their own and the Reformed tradition by permitting women to vote at the congregational meeting. As they do so, they express that the threat of feminism is of little concern to them: "(The church should not) with-

hold the voting rights (of women at the congregational meeting) out of fear for the spirit of the times." Indeed, they find it in themselves to speak a good word on behalf of the modern feminist movement: "The spirit of the times does not necessarily always have a negative impact, even the present manner of electing has been influenced by it."

There is no sharp denunciation of the feminist spirit of the times. There is no urgent warning that the Reformed churches stand in mortal peril of being influenced by this antichristian movement.

Instead, "the spirit of the times," that is, the *feminist* spirit of the times, "does not necessarily always have a negative impact."

Such lack of appreciation for the power and danger of modern feminism does not engender confidence in the synod's reassurances that its decision allowing women to vote at the congregational meeting does not represent a concession to the spirit of the age nor open up the way to women officebearers.

Radically different was the attitude of Abraham Kuyper toward the same movement. Writing some 80 years ago, when the feminist movement was not nearly as powerful as it is today, Kuyper warned the Reformed believers in the Netherlands against feminism in these words:

The spirit of the age is such an almost irresistible force. Also from our own circles, one who is not very solidly grounded is easily swept along with

it (*De Eerepositie der Vrouw*, Kok, 1914, p. 5).

A second reason for finding the reassurances by the GKN-Lib unconvincing is the history of other Reformed churches. Other Reformed churches have traveled the same path that is now being followed by the GKN-Lib. One, well-known to the GKN-Lib, is the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC).

In 1957, the CRC approved women voting at the congregational meeting. In this decision, the CRC, like the GKN-Lib, expressly denied that "participation in such meetings would also involve the right to hold office" ("Acts of Synod," p. 311). But the opening up of all the offices in the church to women did follow in the CRC. At every step of the way, appeal was made to the decision of 1957 permitting women to vote at the congregational meeting.

In support of its recommendation to the 1978 synod that the CRC permit consistories "to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon," the advisory committee reminded synod of the decision of 1957 permitting women to participate in the congregational meeting ("Acts of Synod," pp. 103, 104).

The decision by the CRC in 1990 permitting "churches to use their discretion in utilizing the gifts of women members in all the offices of the church" included a reference to the decision of 1957 "allowing women to vote at congregational meetings" in its grounds ("Acts of Synod," p. 654).

This is the lesson of history. A Reformed church begins with a decision approving female voting at the congregational meeting. The decision passes at synod and is accepted by the people on the basis of a firm declaration that the decision has nothing to do with, and will not lead to, women in office. Nevertheless, in a few years decisions follow that open up all the offices to women. A ground for these decisions is the church's original approval of women voting at the congregational meeting.

Women voting at the congrega-

tional meeting is the nose of the camel of feminism in the church tent. The rest of the camel is looming just outside the tent. The opening to the beast has been made. Before long, the entire camel will be in the tent.

The reason lies in the nature of camels and of congregational meetings.

It is the nature of camels to follow their nose.

It is the nature of congregational meetings that they rule the church. They do not rule over the consistory. They do not rule apart from the consistory. But they do rule with the consistory.

This is invariably denied by the Reformed church that is determined to have women at the congregational meeting as it is making the decision. In its decision, the synod of the GKN-Lib emphasized that the congregational meeting does not govern and that the congregation's voting for officebearers is not an exercise of authority.

It may readily be admitted that a Reformed synod can make a good case for this view of the congregational meeting and, therefore, for the participation of women. The meeting of the congregation is a peculiar gathering in the Reformed system of church government. Article 29 of the Church Order of Dordt does not mention it as one of the (authoritative) ecclesiastical assemblies. It lives in the Reformed mind that the congregational meeting functions under the supervision of the consistory. The decisions made at the meeting are confirmed by a subsequent decision of the consistory.

The congregational meeting is a "soft spot" in Reformed church polity. This is why the camel of feminism thrusts its nose in at precisely this spot. This is the one place where Reformed church government is vulnerable

to the intrusion of the world's agenda, that the headship of the husband be destroyed. Were the camel of femi-

nism at the beginning to poke its nose directly into the consistory room, the Reformed church would bump that nose out without further ado. But women at the congregational meeting has possibilities. After all, the congregational meeting does not rule the church, not in the Reformed system.

In fact, however, this unusual meeting does exercise authority and does govern the church. It shares authority with the consistory, and it cooperates with the consistory in ruling the church.

That the congregational meeting governs is evident to all on the very face of it. Voting is governing. Voting for the governors of the church is an especially powerful form of governing.

The Reformed creeds, forms, and church order make plain that the congregational meeting exercises authority, that its decisions are binding, and that its function is government. Question 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism says of the minister and elders that they were "appointed by the church." Article 31 of the Belgic Confession teaches that the officebearers are "chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the church." The Reformed "Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons" regards the election of these officebearers at the meeting of the congregation as the lawful call by God's church. Article 22 of the Church Order of Dordt refers to the voting by the congregation as the "election" of the elders and requires the consistory to install the men who are chosen at the congregational meeting.

Denial that the congregational meeting shares in the government of the church by the consistory, in the interests of having women vote, is demeaning to the congregational meeting and ought to be offensive to the congregation of

Reformed believers.

Permitting women to vote at the congregational meeting is the nose of

*Only timing,
not principle,
restrains
the entire camel.*

the camel because this voting is a form of rule in the church. If the women are authorized by Christ to rule at the congregational meeting, they cannot be forbidden to rule in the offices. Only timing, not principle, restrains the entire camel.

The Protestant Reformed Churches have somewhat strengthened the "soft spot" of the congregational meeting against the camel's nose. To Article 4 of the Church Order of Dordt, concerning the lawful calling of ministers, they have added this decision: "The nomina-

tion (of ministers) shall be submitted to the approbation of the congregation.... From the nomination the *male members* assembled on a congregational meeting ... shall elect by secret ballot." □

— DJE

Letters

Another Opinion on the KJV

From time to time, the King James version of the Bible is praised in the *Standard Bearer*. Whenever this is done, I pay special attention because the topic is of interest to me. I wonder whether you will give a hearing to a person with another opinion.

As far as New Zealand is concerned, the language of the A.V. is different even from more formal speech, and if what one hears over the radio waves from your country is any guide, it is not much like American, either.

The language of the A.V. is outdated, and because of that inaccurate. Can what is inaccurate be called the Word of God? Consider, we live now, not three hundred years ago.

Moreover, the language of the A.V. falls under the heading of "jargon." The *Readers Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary* defines jargon to be, amongst other things:

mode of speech full of unfamiliar terms or peculiar to a class or profession.

The *Oxford Learners*:

the special words used by members of a special profession or by students of a particular subject.

With regard to this matter, I do not object to the use of a rich vocabulary *per se*, but more particularly to the use of a language which is no longer in formal common use. It creates a kind of barrier which, in my opinion, should not be there. Such a barrier is neither necessary nor desirable. Is it essential that, as a general principle, truth is stated in outdated language?

Imagine the difficulties missionaries would face if they had to translate the Bible in a language which the tribe no longer spoke.

Is the problem the absence of a superior alternative? If so, would it not be the Protestant Reformed Churches' duty to do the job themselves?

Another thing. A preacher may say something like: "Now about this word here in the A.V., that is not properly translated." (This has been done in the *SB*) I wonder why this is not recognized for what it is: the questioning of the whole of the text of the A.V. Do that once, just once, and a precedent has been set, and the skids have been put underneath the whole book.

As I see it, a church which objects to the modern translations which are now available has only two options:

- Do the job itself to its own satisfaction.
- Use a straight word for word translation only.

Arie van Zoest
Owaka, New Zealand

RESPONSE:

We give hearings to people with other opinions.

To correct a translation in some passage from the Hebrew or Greek original is not to disparage, much less to reject, the entire translation.

If the KJV's language has become outdated, the church must make this judgment, and the church should either approve another translation or make a new one. □

— Ed.

Questions of Article 41

Furthermore, the president [of classis] shall, among other things, put the following questions to the delegates of each church:

1. Are the consistory meetings held in your church?
2. Is church discipline exercised?
3. Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?
4. Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?

Church Order, Article 41

Introduction

The questions of Article 41 asked of the delegates from each consistory by the president of the classis have a very important place on the agenda of every meeting of the classes. At each meeting, these questions must be asked and satisfactorily answered. No meeting of classis may be adjourned until the questions of Article 41 have been treated.¹

In putting these questions to the delegates at classis, the president is acting on behalf of the classis. It is really the classis that is putting these questions before the various consistories. In this way the churches exercise mutual supervision over each other, one of the fundamental reasons for belonging to a federation of churches. And in this way they carry out the obligations that arise out of the principle of corporate responsibility.

The response to these questions is never to be the response of the individual delegate who answers. It must not be his personal response, the expression of his own personal opinion. But he is to respond as the representative of his consistory. For this reason, consistories ought to discuss the questions of Article 41 when appointing delegates to the upcoming meeting of classis. Along with the adoption of the classical credentials and a discussion of the contents of the agenda, the consistory ought to instruct its delegates in the answers that are to be given to the questions of Article 41. Especially if the delegates are to request the "judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of (their) church," must this be done by official decision of the consistory. Such a request ought to be included in the "Instructions" on the classical credentials.

Concern for the Labors of Officebearers

All of the questions of Article 41 concern the work of the officebearers. The mutual supervision of the churches over each other is especially mutual supervision of the officebearers. This is vital for the life of each church and for the church federation. If the churches are to be kept in the true doctrine and in godliness of life, the officebearers must faithfully carry out their responsibilities. The purpose of the questions of Article 41 is to place each consistory before the question, "Are you doing the work to which Christ has called you?" Besides mutual supervision, the questions of Article 41 call consistories to self-examination.

There is concern for the office of elder: "Is church discipline exercised?" and, "Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?" There is concern for the office of deacon: "Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?" There is concern for the office of the ministry. This belongs to the question, "Is church discipline exercised?" An important aspect of church discipline is the faithful preaching of the Word.

Earlier versions of Article 41 addressed the office of the ministry more directly. All of the earlier versions called for the preaching of a specimen sermon by the ministers of the classis in rotation. This sermon was not for purposes of meditation at the beginning of the meeting of the classis. Instead the sermon was to be evaluated and "criticized" by the other delegates to classis. In this way preaching skills would be honed. The stipulation of the Synod of Dordt, 1578, is typical: "Each minister in turn shall deliver a short sermon, concerning which the others shall judge and admonish him concerning what needs improvement." This provision of Article 41 was dropped by the revision of the *Church Order of Dordt* by the Christian Reformed Church in 1914. And although there were rea-

¹ The interested reader is referred to two excellent articles dealing with the questions of Article 41 in the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 68, pp. 326 and 344, by Rev. Russell Dykstra. These articles are the substance of an address given by Rev. Dykstra at an Officebearers' Conference in Classis West.

sons why it was eliminated, chief of which being that by this time ministers were receiving a thorough seminary education, nevertheless direct concern with the preaching in the churches has to some extent been lost to Article 41. It might be worthwhile that a question be added to the four that we have at present under Article 41 that deals with the preaching.

In the course of time, the questions asked under Article 41 have undergone some change. In the past, delegates were asked whether the consistory was honoring the decisions of the major assemblies, whether it was doing its utmost to keep the church free of heresy, whether consistory members were in full agreement with the doctrines of the Reformed faith, and whether the work of missions was being promoted. This points out that it might be possible to expand the list of questions that make up the questions of Article 41 in our *Church Order*.

The president of classis is given a certain amount of flexibility in asking the questions of Article 41. The article states, "... the president shall, *among other things*, put the following questions to the delegates of each church...." Leeway is given to the president to add to the questions, or at least follow up the questions of Article 41 with related questions. In my own experience, I have never seen a president of classis do this. But Article 41 allows for it.

The Questions

The first of the questions under Article 41 is, "Are the consistory meetings held in your church?" The point of the question is whether the consistory meetings are held *regularly* in each church, at least once a month. Are these meetings publicly announced so that members of the congregation may appear before the consistory if they desire? And, not only are the consistory meetings formally held, but are they conducted according to the stipulations of the *Church Order*, so that the meetings are characterized by decency and good order? Do the officers of the

consistory, especially the president and the clerk, faithfully carry out their duties?

The second question is, "Is church discipline exercised?" Vital for the spiritual life of the church is the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. Do the elders supervise the confession and walk of the members of the church? If there are those who err in doctrine or life, are they dealt with? Does the preaching equip the elders for their disciplinary work and support the discipline of the elders in the congregation?

And, "Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?" Here the work of the deacons comes especially under consideration. There are really two questions here, and they could better be divided and asked separately. It is possible that the poor are cared for, but that the cause of Christian education is neglected. Do the deacons search out the poor? Do they "care for" the poor, not only by giving them financial relief, but also by bringing them the comfort, and sometimes the rebuke, of God's Word?

Are the Christian schools cared for means that the consistory must promote Christian education. It must point parents to their calling to send their children to the Christian schools, Protestant Reformed Christian schools where this is possible. The elders must do this. The minister must do this in the preaching. And the deacons must do this by assisting parents who need financial help in order to send their children to the Christian schools.

Do You Need the Judgment and Help of the Classis for the Proper Government of Your Church?

This question is of a different nature than the other three questions. It provides a consistory with the opportunity to seek the assistance of the classis in its government of the church. It must be underscored that such a request must be made officially by a consistory to the classis, not the request merely of an individual delegate at classis.

There has been difference of opinion from time to time whether a consistory must first make a concrete decision before it seeks the help of classis. It ought to be plain that this is not the requirement of Article 41 and ought not to be a requirement imposed upon consistories by a classis. For one thing, this ignores long-standing precedent in the Reformed churches, especially of the Netherlands, according to which consistories brought many questions and pleas for help to classes and synods. For another thing, if a consistory is forced to make its own decision before coming to classis, it does not any longer need the help of the classis. The situation is often that a consistory cannot even make a decision because of divided opinions within the consistory. Or it may be that a consistory does not want to make a decision all on its own because the issue has significant ramifications for the churches as a whole. Before making such a far-reaching decision, a consistory wisely consults with the sister churches of the classis.

This is not to say that a consistory may bring all sorts of hypothetical questions to the classis. Consistories must be dealing with concrete situations. And classes must be sure, too, that there is evidence that a consistory does really need the help of the classis. A consistory must demonstrate a real working with the problem. No consistory ought to be permitted to shirk its rightful responsibilities and have the classis do its work.

The question also arises whether the assistance of the classis ought to be in the form of a definite and binding decision of the classis. It may indeed be the case that this is necessary and desirable. A consistory may even request such a decision on the matter it brings before the classis under this question of Article 41. Yet there are times when it is sufficient that a general discussion be held on the floor, all the delegates contributing, so that in a less formal way the "mind of the classis" is made known. Usually this is the procedure that has been followed in our churches, and

usually this is sufficient to assist the consistory that has requested classis' assistance. A distinction between a formal decision and the general consensus of the classis is pointed to in the language of the fourth question: "Do you need the *judgment* (formal decision) and *help* (general advice) of the classis...."

When the Questions of Article 41 Ought to be Asked

In our churches the questions of Article 41 are asked at the very end of the meeting of classis, nearly the last item on the agenda. This is poor procedure. By doing this we expose ourselves to the temptation that the significance of these questions is slighted and the asking and answering of them becomes a mere formality.

In the early history of the Dutch Reformed churches, the questions of Article 41 were asked at the begin-

ning of the meetings of the classes. They were the very first thing on the agenda after the constituting of the classis. The provision of the Synod of Embden, 1571, is typical:

After the president shall be chosen, by the general vote of the ministers and after he has offered prayer, he shall ask each one individually whether they hold consistory meetings in their churches. Whether church discipline is maintained. Whether they have any struggle with any heretics. Whether they have any doubt concerning any articles of doctrine. Whether the poor and the schools are cared for. Whether they need the advice and help of the other ministers for ruling the churches, and other such things.

The Synod of 1942 of the Christian Reformed Church expressed its agreement with this practice:

... that an inquiry on the part of the classis into the spiritual state of its several congregations constitutes the central and principal task of classis, and therefore should take precedence. Hence Article 41 should not be taken up at the end of classical meetings but at the outset. (*Acts of Synod 1942*, p. 110.)

Our classes ought to return to the practice of asking the questions of Article 41 at the beginning of their meetings. Then, too, if matters of concern are raised in connection with these questions, the classes are in a better position to deal with them. Perhaps a committee can be appointed to do some investigating or to bring advice to classis. This would better assure that the questions of Article 41 continue to occupy the important place they were intended to occupy on the agenda of our classical meetings. □

Come, Lord Jesus

Rev. Gise VanBaren

Locusts from the Bottomless Pit

We read in Revelation 9:1-12 of the locusts that come out of the bottomless pit. A horrible, terrifying picture is presented. Read the passage carefully. For those who would seek an extensive treatment of the passage, I would urge them to read *Behold, He Cometh*, chapter 21, written by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

These locusts come forth because of the blowing of the fifth trumpet. Recall that Revelation presents first seven seals. Seven trumpets come

forth from the seventh seal. Then follow seven vials or bowls out of the seventh trumpet. The seals represent the "normal" number of disasters (one-fourth of the earth is affected) that fall on the earth. The trumpets mark an increase to one-third. The vials represent the total destruction that comes at the end of the age.

The time in which we live reminds one greatly of that period when these locusts prevail over the earth. Are we not living even now in that period of the sounding of the trumpets? Do we not observe in many areas an increase of death, destruction, and devastation?

The locusts are, obviously, not

literal locusts. The description of them in Revelation does not allow for such interpretation. Yet the resemblance is there. As locusts devour and destroy, so do these locusts. As locusts afflict an area for about five months, so do those in Revelation.

Verse 1 speaks of the "star" which fell from heaven with the key of the bottomless pit. This star cannot be a literal star. That "star" is Satan, for he is presented here as an intellectual being. He takes the key to the bottomless pit and opens it.

From that bottomless pit comes forth a horde of locusts that cover the earth. These "locusts" could not come forth at any time, but only when the

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pit is opened. These would be part of the host of fallen angels who are not allowed to carry out their terrible devastation until God gives to the "star" the key to open the pit. This is a band or army of Satan that particularly troubles mankind, but are held in the pit until the time appointed for their release. Only now in this end-time is Satan given permission to open the pit.

The portrayal of these locusts suggests also what takes place in the last days. There are two parts to these locusts: the front and back. The front is extremely appealing: "Like horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were crowns like gold, and their faces were the faces of men. They had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions." The back part of the locusts, however, portrays a different and dreadful aspect: "They had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months." That explains the statement in verses 5 and 6, "And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

The activity of these locusts is limited to those who have not the seal of God in their foreheads (v. 4). Children of God are not affected; but the measure of wickedness in the world is being filled — with the related consequences. But man, extolling the beauty of the heads of these locusts, insists on denying a connection between the heads and the tails.

What is the meaning of the heads of these locusts? These are "like unto horses prepared unto battle." They go forth prepared to influence and seduce mankind. From a human viewpoint, these appear to succeed. These demons are making use of books, magazines, television, movies, radio, songs, advertising, and "peer pressures," to influence and affect the thoughts of mankind.

Note that these locusts have crowns like gold on their heads, faces as men, hair as women, and teeth as lions. There is that which is very attractive in this. Power or rule is portrayed by crowns like gold. There are pictured intelligence and wisdom in the faces as men. One sees beauty and loveliness in the "hair as women." These are the demons who play upon the sinful desires and lusts of men. These appeal to the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Paul speaks of these in Romans 1:23-24, "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image make like to corruptible man.... Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves...." And again he writes in verse 32, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

Have you observed what is taking place today? Though the sinfulness of mankind has been evident through the ages since Adam's fall, that corruption is rapidly increasing in our day. The "locusts" are over-running the earth — yet not many pay any attention.

Allow me to point out just a few things. Man has placed great emphasis on material possessions. He has gone to great lengths to accumulate more. He has used his newly found ability to control much of the creation. With pesticides and herbicides and fertilizers he will increase his crops. He takes advantage of the energy sources of this earth to keep him warm and provide the power for transportation of every sort.

Man also makes use of his intelligence (the "man's face" of the locust) to produce ever more spectacular inventions. He seeks to manipulate

genes. He makes amazing computers. He speaks of the "information highway" which will interconnect every home with every other home. One can point to many other of his great inventions as well.

The locusts have "hair as the hair of women." In speaking of the "hair of women," Scripture points to that which portrays what is sexually attractive to men. The "locusts" have especially encouraged this aspect of the depraved nature of man. The pervasiveness of lust, of sexual perversions, of "alternate life-styles" is evident today. Many deplore the rapes, the pornography, the child abuse, and other corruptions of our society. Still, under the name of "freedom of expression" vast amounts of filth flow out of the printing presses, radio, television, videos, and books. It is what many find appealing and attractive.

Homosexuality has been defended and even promoted. Those who oppose this are called bigots. Those who oppose are even being charged with violation of the laws of the land. This life-style is even presented as beautiful and meaningful.

But also there comes the sting of the tail (like unto scorpions) of these locusts. Though many refuse to recognize this too, still the sting is apparent throughout the world. There is on the part of many a discouragement and disillusionment. There are those who would even take their own lives — but have not the courage to do so.

This "sting" is perhaps most obvious in the spread of AIDS disease. This disease, most often associated with homosexuality and drug usage, is pandemic. Millions have been spent to find cures. Anger is shown when this disease is in any way called a punishment of God. The cause and effect are so obvious that none can deny it. Man seeks to find ways of preventing the disease — while continuing in the sin.

*The unbeliever
fills the measure
of iniquity —
and already
in this life
suffers the
consequences.*

The sting, however, remains. Other "stings" are evident with different pervading sexual sins as well: adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage, etc.

The past generation has seen a vast increase in the sum-total of man's knowledge. Inventions proliferate. Man has been able to increase productivity both in farming and manufacturing. It is the "face of a man" as seen in the locusts. But now the tail also is being increasingly seen. The by-products of man's inventiveness have been the cause of pollution and diseases of various sorts. The whole

of the environment is affected. Forests have been devastated. Seas have been polluted. The fish of the seas have been decimated. Belatedly man attempts to remedy some of his past excesses. The sting, however, remains.

Many other instances of this same thing can be observed by those with eyes to see. It also becomes clear how that this affects "only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." Although there are instances where children of God are affected by these locusts as well, clearly it is the deliberate and willful sinfulness of mankind that is followed by the sting

of the tail of the locust. The unbeliever fills the measure of iniquity — and already in this life suffers the consequences. Man's response is not confession and repentance. Scripture's testimony concerning man is, "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (Rev. 9:21).

For the Christian it is a time to look up, for redemption draws nigh. We live in amazing times. We see the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Word of God. Then we know that the return of our Lord is at hand. □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

But What About Logic?

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

Being too logical, strangely, has become an all too common criticism in these days since Karl Barth first expressed his fascination with paradoxical "yes" and "no" disjunctives. And so it is that Dr. J. DeJong, editor of the *Clarion*, in his recent debates with Prof. Engelsma, faulted him for his "logical scheme of thought." One can only wonder, is he suggesting it would be preferable to be illogical? Or would he appreciate being identified as that? Or is he suggesting some

third possibility in-between? And, if so, what would that be?

But the matter is worthy of our consideration; for the fact is that logic is a perfectly biblical concept — even if it is not always recognized as such.

Commonly, of course, logic is thought of as having originated with the Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle. There is reason for that. Aristotle in his day did do a great deal to analyze the principles of logic and lay them out in a form which could be, and was, used by scholars after him. For well over a thousand years the *Logic of Aristotle* was the standard by which the validity of arguments was tested. But that does not mean that logic began with him. The fact is that all the basic principles of logic are found implicit in the Bible itself.

Etymologically the word "logic" derives from the Greek word *logos*, which is a perfectly biblical term. It is translated "word," but in its full meaning it is far more profound than that.

It has within itself the idea of reasoning or thought, as J.H. Thayer in his Greek lexicon says, "as respect to the MIND: reason, the mental faculty of thinking, meditating, reasoning, calculating." And so it was that the apostle John took up this term and used it at the heart of the powerful opening verse of his Gospel account, John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word (*logos*), and the Word (*logos*) was with God, and the Word (*logos*) was God," of which Thayer again goes on to comment, "In John, (*logos*) denotes the essential Word of God, Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical." The very idea of reasoning and logic is to be found implicit within this very biblical term.

Now, at this point, it might be argued that this was because the language was Greek, and by it Greek

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thought was being taken in and integrated into biblical thought — until, that is, one discovers the real source of John's idea, not in Greek philosophy, but deep within the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. Very clearly, what John was saying had its roots in what Solomon had said long before the Greek philosophers ever began to write: "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.... Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.... The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.... When he prepared the heavens, I was there ... when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8:12-30). Here was clearly the thought which John picked up and echoed again in his striking refrain. John too, with his use of the word *logos*, was pointing to what Solomon had designated by the use of the Hebrew word for wisdom, *chokma*, and upon it had built the whole of his book of wisdom, the Proverbs of Solomon. It was a wisdom which had been given him by a special bestowal of God, and which was pronounced superior to that of every other man (I Kings 3:12).

At the heart of his work, Solomon expresses a most profound and basic truth; he personifies *wisdom*, and identifies it with the one who was "possessed" by Jehovah, "from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was...." And out of this wisdom, or according to it, the creation was made. This wisdom — this word or logic, if you will — Solomon speaks of as having been there at the creation of the world, 8:29-30: "When he gave to the sea his decree ... when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him ... and I was daily his delight, rejoicing alway before him." Wisdom gave to the creation its divine delight; for with that term we have Solomon's beautiful and prophetic vision of the Son of God. This

John saw, and on the basis of it went on to identify "the Word" as being "God," the one by whom "all things were made" (John 1:3). John saw Solomon's vision realized in Jesus Christ (John 1:14), as though through the communications of logical thought the divine life is realized.

But there is more. For out of this there proceeds what is perhaps the basic principles of what we now call logic.

To begin with, there is the matter of origin. Where does truth and proper thinking start?

At this point the Greeks tried to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, with what they called "inductive logic," a method of seeking to extract from the examination of nature a series of basic truths out of which they could begin their process of deductive reasoning. But, as brilliantly as it was done, it only led into a futile circle of reasoning which never rises above itself; that is, it works to an extent with matters of nature, but it is never able to ascend into the matters of the spirit and of God.

Solomon, however, saw something better, as he went on to note in Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." He recognized that the beginning of knowledge, and of reasoning, must be found in receiving the Word of God, from which it then applies itself to life; and so his book constitutes, from there on, a series of observations concerning this application in the lives of those who do and are blessed, and who failing to do so are found fools. Noting this, John went on to say that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Truth and beauty come to us from God through the Son, who is the source of all that we know of God: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18; see also Matt. 11:27). The point is clear, God is the source from

which truth must come, and it can be found only through the Scriptures, the revelation given by and about his Son. This is where true logic must start.

And that principle leads on to another, the fact that truth so received never contradicts itself.

In the traditional study of logic this was recognized and expressed as "the principle of the undivided middle." The point is that every meaningful expression of thought must begin with an opening general proposition, to which then is added a more particular idea or middle proposition, and leading in turn to a conclusion which was not understood at the start. But, in order for such a process of thought to be valid or logical, the middle term must not divide. That is to say — and that is what logic is all about — when speaking, one must take care that what he says does not lead to more than one conclusion, and particularly not to conclusions which are contradictory to each other.

This principle, although not technically expressed, is clearly set forth in the Bible, only in what is essentially a far deeper and more profound sense. The Bible leaves no room for contradiction. Once God has spoken, He does not change, compromise, or in any way say the opposite. God does not contradict Himself. This was implicit already in the way He introduced himself to Moses — before one word of Scripture was ever written. He said, Exodus 3:14: "I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." It means that whatever God has determined to be, He will be; and whatever He has determined to say or do, He will always say and do. God does not change, as Moses went on to say at a later time, in Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" When God says a thing, it is true; He never says one thing and means, or goes on to say, another. If one were to put it in logical terms,

God never divides his middle term.

In fact, when it finally comes down to it, this is what language is all about. Language, after all, is not something made by man, in spite of what modern evolutionary thinking may suppose; it was given to man at his creation by God, the means by which God might communicate with man, and man with God. What language by its very nature provides is a means for distinguishing the various thoughts which are held within the mind, and relating them to each other in a logical stream of thought which can be taken up and replicated in the mind of another, drawing the two together in a meaningful communication of life. And the complexities of language, which can become quite exacting, are but so many logical functions by which ideas and their relationships can be clearly distinguished and used and accurately replicated so as not to divide the thought and create confusion or misunderstanding in

the minds of others. Every language does it in its own way, but each is a logical structure that arises innately from a nature given man by God. God has enabled him to speak, and to do it accurately with logic.

And in that also is found the key to the understanding or interpretation of the Scriptures. That is important; for, as we all know, if one takes individual passages of the Bible by themselves, they can be made to say almost anything. And that is done. All kinds of heresies live in the claim that they were taken from the Bible, leaving so many with that almost cynical question, how can anyone know what the Bible actually says?

But to this there is an answer, a simple basic rule laid down by the Bible itself and used through the ages by the true students of God's Word. Each passage of Scripture must be interpreted in harmony with all the rest. This is what the Bereans did,

Acts 17:11: "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." And so we find all through the New Testament, that nothing is left to stand by itself. Repeatedly, what is taught is brought out in light of what had been taught before. Although himself inspired, each author confirmed what he said with those Scriptures which had been given before. There was always that basic presupposition, as Jesus said in John 10:35, "The scripture cannot be broken." It cannot contradict itself. And so, one can know what the Bible says in a particular place, when with sincerity and faith he understands it in logical harmony with the rest.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," (II Tim. 2:15). Such study is logic, God's gift by which truth may be known. □

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

Be Ye Angry and Sin Not (1)

Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

Ephesians 4:26

It is not sin to be angry, but when we are angry it is hard not to sin. Anger is a tender virtue, and through our ineptitude it is easily corrupted and made dangerous. He who would be angry without sin must not be angry at anything except sin.*

There is such a thing as holy anger. That this is true is clear from the fact, first of all, that the Scriptures

often speak of the anger and wrath of God.

The modernist suggests that any idea of wrath in God must be excluded. Such ideas of God belong to primitive concepts of God. We must create in our mind rather a God who is never angry but who is a God only of benevolence and kindness, mildness and gentleness.

Such thinking about God, however, is idolatry and not based on God's revelation of Himself in the Bible. The unchangeable God revealed in the Bible is a God of dreadful wrath and perfectly holy anger. He is angry with the wicked every day. He reveals His wrath from heaven continually against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Our God is a consuming fire to all workers of iniquity. The wrath or anger of God is the reaction of His perfect holiness against all sin and wickedness. A God who is not a God of infinite and perfect wrath against all evil is no God at all. The true and living God is a God of jealous anger. In His jealousy He defends the honor and glory of His own name and maintains the truth and righteousness of His cause.

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* The quotations in this paper are taken from an article by the Puritan preacher John Trapp, which was reprinted in the *Sword and Trowel* magazine, volume 4, 1993, published by the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, England.

We as God's people must reflect the same love for God. Any blasphemy against God by wicked men, any dishonoring of His name, any transgression of His holy Word, any denial of His glorious truth ought to arouse in the child of God a holy anger, a zeal for the honor and glory of the name of God. A lack of such holy zeal reflects a sinful carelessness and complacency regarding God and His Word. Would to God that more of such holy anger and zeal were evident in God's people today. Moses was filled with this holy anger when he saw Israel worshipping the golden calf. This zeal was found in Phinehas when he destroyed the brazen fornicator in Israel. This holy anger was seen in Elijah when he killed the 450 prophets of Baal.

Perfect and holy anger was revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ on several occasions in His ministry. It is a mistake to imagine that Jesus while He was on earth never became angry. We read that Jesus was grieved by the hardness of heart of the wicked leaders of the Jews. "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts he said..." (Mark 3:5). The supreme manifestation of the holy anger of the Lord was seen at the time of the cleansing of the temple. In love for the house of the Lord which the wicked rulers of the Jews had made a "den of thieves and robbers" Jesus braided a whip together and ran through the temple, throwing over the tables of the money changers and driving out the buyers and sellers. The psalmist many years before had prophesied of this when he wrote, "the zeal of thine house has eaten me up" (Ps. 69:9).

Almost all of man's anger however is evil. It comes from man's depraved lust. It is directed against God. It is devilish. Wicked man has the audacity to be angry with God. Wicked man is angry with God because of the circumstances of his life. He refuses to realize that the circumstances of his life are often the direct judgment of God upon his wicked life. The sovereign God rules all the

circumstances of the life of man. It is the calling of man to realize and acknowledge this. But even though the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon his evil way, man does not turn from it. All the days of his life he lives in enmity against God.

More and more, as the end of the world approaches, we witness the dreadful depravity of the anger of modern man. Our society often glorifies it through the mass media. Wicked men are encouraged to vent their anger. They claim to be justified in their anger because of the bad rap that society has given them. They may therefore lash out against society in anger, by destroying the property of their fellow man, and by committing the most atrocious crimes, such as assault, mutilation, murder, and rape. The songs (gangster rap music) of this world reveal the wicked anger of modern-day youth. Millions of recordings are sold of this most devilish music, and it is more and more being accepted as a legitimate form of free expression.

How much of modern-day psychology encourages the venting of pent-up rage in almost any form one wants. This is supposed to have therapeutic value. By doing this you gain inner peace and feel good about yourself. If you are angry with someone because of what he has done to you in the past, maybe even many years ago, you are encouraged to get it out of your system. "Let it all hang out," the common expression was a few years ago. Vent your anger. Say what you want. Express your venomous and devilish anger. Never mind what radical and unholy, wicked things you say. Never mind the hatred, strife, and division you cause by your deeds and words of hate and anger. You are perfectly justified! Your neighbor has done you evil and you have the right to lash out against him. By doing this you will resolve your anger and get a handle on your life.

We must see how terribly wicked all this reasoning is in the sight of God.

The ugliness of the depraved nature of man is revealed when he be-

comes angry.

First, what an ugly thing is anger, detaching a person from self-control, and disfiguring his appearance with glaring eyes, furious expression, and distorted features — even to the flaring of the nostrils! The Hebrews call anger *aph* (the nostrils — the breath — the face), because the nostrils flare, then the colour changes, the tongue stammers, the teeth gnash, the hands clap, the feet stamp, the pulse beats, the heart pants, and the whole person swells like a toad and flushes in the face.

Our chief purpose, however, is not in an abstract way to speak about the wicked anger of the world. Our purpose is to help us examine our own anger in the light of God's Word and to deal with it by His grace and Holy Spirit according to the principles of the Word of God. Scripture has very much to say about the sin of anger. It gives us many admonitions as to how we are to deal with it.

In the first place we must understand that most of our anger is deeply sinful. It comes forth from the darkest depths of our depraved nature. It is driven by a devilish spirit in us. Certainly all anger against God is terribly sinful. We need to realize how much of our anger is really against God. When we are angry with the circumstances of our life, especially with the trials and hardships of our life, we are really angry with God, who sovereignly directs the circumstances of our life. We need to examine our hearts in this regard and repent from this great sin before God.

The solution to all such anger is acknowledging the sovereignty of God in our life and believing by faith that all things which God sends us in our life are according to His perfect wisdom and for our good. We need to bring our sinful anger against God in repentance to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only this that will give us peace with God. We must pray for grace to bear joyfully the cross which the Lord sends us. For the present time the Lord calls us to

endure patiently the trials of our life, believing that God directs them for the greatest good of our final salvation. Never must we, even for one moment, allow in our hearts any inclination of anger against God to continue, but we must speedily confess it as great sin and turn from it with utmost urgency.

Nor ought we ever to be angry with our ungodly neighbor because of envy. Of this the psalmist warns in

Psalm 37. "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.... Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Ps. 37:1, 8). We fall into this sin sometimes. We are envious of their prosperity and are tempted to go along with their evil life-style. But the Lord says in this Psalm that the wicked shall soon be cut off. They shall be utterly destroyed out of the earth. On

the other hand, the Lord has blessed His people with true and enduring riches. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Ps. 37:16). There is no reason for us to be angry with the wicked. Rather, we ought to be thankful to God for what He has given us in Christ Jesus and understand that the riches of salvation cannot be compared with all the riches of this world.

... to be continued □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. George Lubbers

The Behavior Required of Timothy as an Evangelist

Lesson 14

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity (love), in spirit, in faith, in purity.

I Timothy 4:12, 13

To be sure, Timothy is placed here under a very weighty injunction, as a God-appointed officebearer in the church of the living God. As were the Nazarites in the Old Testament, so must Timothy be a good example of all godliness. He must not fail in this pursuit of godliness as did Samson, but he must be a shining light as were such worthies as Samuel and John the Baptist. And, as the Nazaritic vow of Samuel and John the Baptist was for life, so it must be with Timothy.

Timothy was an outstanding young man. He was a real "find." Notice that Luke writes in Acts 16:1, "And behold a certain young man was

there, named Timothy." He was, then and there, set aside to be a lifelong officer in the church, which office proved to be the exalted office of an Evangelist, the highest in rank under that of the apostles of Jesus Christ. For the latter see Acts 1:15-26. Paul boasts of this exalted office in Galatians 1:1; I Corinthians 15:9-11.

The office of an Evangelist follows in dignity and magnitude after that of the apostleship. See Ephesians 4:11ff. As Paul received his instruction from the exalted Christ face to face, so Timothy received this knowledge of the gospel from the lips of Paul (I Tim. 4:6; II Tim. 4:10-17).

* * * * *

O, Timothy, let no man despise thy youth as a God-determined and God-given officebearer in the house of God, in the church of the living God. My son Timothy, remember this: you were not elected by the vote of the people to this office of evangelist; on the contrary, you were made an evangelist in all churches by God Himself! God made you a minister in His church by the laying on of hands in the pres-

ence of all the presbytery (I Tim. 4:14). No man can, may, or shall annul this great sovereign work of God. And now Paul most solemnly bids Timothy that he stand unmoved in his office. Let no man despise him in his office because of his age, his youthfulness.

That Timothy was prepared for this office in a very providential way was God's work in Jesus Christ. He is to be Christ's soldier, and must keep the deposit which had been entrusted to his care. Such a keeping of the trust means a life wholly consecrated to Jesus Christ. (The Greek verb *pulassaein* means to guard, to watch.) He is to have the great and precious pearl of the gospel in sacred custody.

Timothy is not to allow the critics to fabricate a fabulous Achilles' heel; Timothy must clothe himself in the firm and unmovable assurance that his calling of an evangelist is not of men but of God. Hence, let no man despise thy youth.

* * * * *

"But be thou an example of the believers."

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Timothy is not merely to be this as a believer in the midst of all the body of Christ, the saints in the church of the living God. He must be an example of the very "godliness" which is the sanctified life, which is really Christ in us. Meanwhile, we should not overlook the very fine nuance of the Greek. Timothy is to be an example, not to the believers, but of the believers. Also in his office the man of God works out his salvation with fear and trembling, whereas it is God who energizes us both to will and to do after His good-pleasure (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Timothy is here exhorted to work out his salvation as officebearer in the following Christian virtues.

First, he is exhorted in both "word" and "walk." This is a very beautiful twofold description. The term "word" refers to what comes forth from the heart. Timothy's speech must be a sanctified offering on the altar of God. How mindful the psalmist is of this in Psalm 19:13, 14. Must not the words which we use as children of God, as well as the officebearers in the church of the living God, be ever, as it were, seasoned with salt? (See Matt. 5:13-16; Mark 9:49; Luke 14:35; Col. 4:6; James 3:12.) Notice too that the Old Testament speaker of the "Covenant of Salt" (Lev. 2:13; Num. 18:19; II Chron. 13:5). It must be with sanctified lips that the sacrifice of praise be brought (Heb. 13:15).

Next, we consider the term and concept "walk." This word is always used to designate the spiritual deportment of a man. It is never used to designate mere human discourse. It is a word which is ever used to designate the moral and spiritual behavior either of an individual in the church or of the church as a whole. When Paul refers to his walk of life prior to the great grace when Christ dwelt in him, he calls it his former conversation in Jewry. (See the following passages: Gal. 1:13; Eph. 4:22. For the conversation according to the new man in Christ, see Heb. 13:7; James 3:13; I Pet. 1:15; 2:12.)

Timothy must also be an example

in that he walks in "love" (charity). Closely connected with such love is that we walk in faith. It has been stated by one able commentator that "love" is the horizontal relationship with our neighbors, while faith is the vertical relationship with God. We walk in our new relationship of faith in the living God and thus walk in true faith in the loving of our neighbor.

Perhaps we could look at the implication of these terms a bit more in depth. Paul, speaking of our hope of righteousness and of the liberty which is ours in Christ, writes a very brief statement in Galatians 5:5, 6: "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

Such is the deep biblical principle of the holy calling to walk in all purity as a servant in the house of God. Whereas the question is not one of being youthful rather than elderly, Timothy is to walk as a veritable spiritual example of the brotherhood of Christ in the world. In such purity of a good conscience he can stand in his office in the boldness of his holy calling. And the mouths of the critics are stopped.

In a backward glance at this spiritual anthology we see the wisdom of God in choosing Timothy for this great and spiritually delicate task of being a good minister of Jesus Christ. Thus he will work the work of God, and the sure foundation will stand, having this seal, "the Lord knoweth them that are his; and, let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."

And the church, the temple of the living God, is truly a holy catholic church. She shall be a people who are spiritual Nazarites. The term used here by the Holy Spirit is worthy of special notice. F. Hauch, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. I, page 123, writes: "In the few O.T. and apocryphal passages the reference (of the term *agneia*) is to 'cultic purity.' " It refers to the special vows and the life-time dedicated state

of the Nazarites in the old dispensation (Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist). In II Chronicles 30:19 the word refers to the holiness required of those who labored in the sanctuary of Jehovah.

Here in I Timothy 4:12 the term refers to the holy personal walk required of Timothy as a useful vessel in the great house of God. (See II Tim. 2:20-26.) Let all who labor in God's spiritual temple take this exhortation to heart!

Paul writes, "Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (v. 13).

Let us notice the following.

It should be evident after a bit of careful reflection that Paul is referring not to personal reading of doctrine, but to the reading of the words of the covenant by Timothy in the public gathering in the worship service — be it in a synagogue, a house, or elsewhere, on the Day of the Lord or in a midweek gathering. This is suggested by the implication of the term "reading" both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The term for reading in the Hebrew language is a verb, *chara*, which means to call, to call clearly. This is translated in the Septuagint Greek by the term *epignooskoo*, to know well, to know accurately. Such reading is quite different from what is known as "sight-reading." There was always the element of a comparative study of the Scriptures. We see this in Luke 4:17-22. Already at Mount Sinai Moses read the word of the Decalogue to all Israel (see Ex. 20:1-24:17; Heb. 9:11-22). That which was read in the gatherings of the congregation was always the words of the Covenant of God. These were very accurate words, the very oracles of God entrusted to Israel (Rom. 3:1, 2). These words were fulfilled in the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ. (See Heb. 9:23-28.) Now these words were entrusted to Timothy in the laying on of hands by Christ Himself. (See I Tim. 1:11, as well as I Tim. 6:20, 21.)

Of course, this did not eliminate the need for private study by Timothy (I Tim. 4:15). Surely he needed to

be well-prepared to fulfill his mandate from Paul as written in II Timothy 2:1, 2, etc.

Therefore, we may safely say that the reading here was the accurate, knowledgeable, Spirit-led reading of a man who from his childhood had known the *theopneutic* Scriptures (II Tim. 3:15). A man who had attained, a qualified reader who increased in knowledge, was acknowledged by all who heard him "read." It was no mere reading of "words" but an unfolding of the mystery of godliness which was great (I Tim. 3:16). It was a reading which must, even today, be emulated by qualified preachers of the Word.

Always the burning question on the lips of Jesus to the readers of whom Paul speaks in Acts 13 was, "How readest thou?" (Take a little time and study Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; 24:15!)

Some Questions and Suggestions:

Does it not follow from the rich significance of the reading of the words of the covenant both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament that every Scripture is full of exhortation and doctrine? Is it possible to teach the Bible without at once also exhorting the hearers unto salvation? Believe these covenant words from the heart, whether you be Jew or Greek and be saved. (Read Romans 10:1-21.)

What does it mean that Timothy saves himself and his hearers if and when he diligently gives heed to himself and to the doctrine? Is it possible for elect sinners to become partakers subjectively without having heard Christ in the preaching? (Read Romans 10:13-15.) Is private reading really sufficient for the individual elect sinner, or are we all in need of God-ordained preachers? Did Philip simply read to the Ethiopian eunuch, or did the eunuch need the official read-

ing and preaching of the word? (See Acts 8:35.) Do we not read that "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture (Isaiah 53:7), and preached unto him Jesus"?

May we from this biblical perspective not conclude that the preaching of Timothy was divinely indispensable for the salvation both of Timothy and of his hearers? Is it not a mortal danger to deny the need of the means of grace, particularly the official preaching in the church? Must a minister carefully preach the Word, if he is to say, "By this Word that I have preached unto you thou shalt be saved"?

May we say that only if the entire sermon swears by the Name of God will the minister dare to say: "Amen" —i.e., God will more surely save both you and me, congregation, than what I can assure you with my weak affirmation as a mere man? Amen. Yes, Amen. (See Isaiah 65:16; II Corinthians 1:20, 21.) □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 3

The First Three Days of Creation (cont.)

God's Creation of the Firmament (Gen. 1:6-8)

It has been a favorite device of some to hold up the biblical record of creation to ridicule and scorn as something that can be attributed to Babylonian myth for its origin, but that cannot possibly serve as a record of real works of God whereby He brought into existence a real universe

as it is actually described in the Genesis record.

This attempt runs somewhat as follows.

First of all, they find in the record of Genesis a very primitive and scientifically impossible conception of things. The earth is supposedly presented as a plane. It is flat and — if they really want to emphasize the ridiculousness of the biblical presentation — they point out that the Bible speaks of it as four-cornered. This earth is held up by pillars, and it is surrounded by a great ocean. Above this earth the firmament is supposed

to be like a solid dome, stretched over the earth like a gigantic curtain, with various movable lights located above it, traveling above a stationary earth. Supposedly, when it rained, God opened windows in that firmament, and the waters which were above that curtain came down upon the earth.

Secondly, they boast that modern man with all his scientific enlightenment knows much better. He knows that what looks like a solid firmament, the blue sky, is nothing but a thin, transparent atmosphere, with the vast reaches of space beyond it. He knows that the earth is not flat, but

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that it is a ball, or sphere. He knows that the sun and the moon and the stars are also so many spheres, and that many of them are far larger than our little planet earth. He knows that the sun does not move above the earth, rise and set over it, but that actually the earth moves about the sun. And while he will admit that there are many things which he cannot yet explain and that remain to be investigated, he will insist, especially in this space age, that the inventive genius and scientific prowess of man is on the verge of great discoveries which will lead to a solution of many of the remaining mysteries of the universe and which will certainly contribute greatly to the advance of civilization and knowledge.

But that creation story? Why, that is absurd! It cannot possibly be believed — at least, not if we are to take it literally. It is a piece of curious mythology devised by primitive peoples, based on optical illusion — which we can probably understand in the light of the fact that men had no telescopes and none of the instruments of modern science, nor any of the modern means of investigation and of probing the secrets of the universe, but which we cannot possibly believe.

This is but one of the ways in which the Bible is denied. There have been refinements of such attempts. But the ridiculing of the biblical record, the literal creation record, has only been refined in the process; and the darts cast have only been made the sharper.

In regard to this attempt, let us note, in the first place, that the difference with respect to the Genesis record is not one of scientific knowledge, but one of spiritual attitude. It is unbelief which exalts itself and boasts with pride and haughty delight that it knows so much more about the nature and the origin of the universe in this day of advanced science than did those primitive peoples of long ago. Faith views this narrative not as an invention of Moses or as a myth which he learned from Babylonian sources, but as the inspired record which God

gave to Moses concerning His own work of creation. And if only we study this narrative in that spiritual attitude of faith, believing its verbal inspiration, then we will find it to be full of a merciful attempt on the part of the infinitely great Creator to get into our little minds a little of the almighty and great work which He performed. But then our attitude will be that of humility and of readiness to listen, rather than to criticize.

In the second place, it can be understood that unbelief casts its cruel and sarcastic barbs of ridicule at the Bible and at those who in faith insist that what the Bible says is true. But it is indeed a sad thing that those who call themselves Christians can sometimes join in the same mocking attempt to reduce the truth of creation to an absurdity in order to justify one or another departure from the literal presentation of Holy Scripture, all in the name of Christian faith. There is a goodly amount of such haughty and conceited ridicule today that is conducted under the banner of the Christian church. And to those who engage in it, as well as to any church which listens to such philosophy, there is but one word to say: "Repent! for you are making common cause with the enemies of the Word of God and of the cross of Christ."

In the third place, let it be noted that this caricature of the biblical narrative does not at all accord with what the Bible actually says. The narrative does not tell us that the earth is flat. It does not teach that the firmament is some kind of solid dome. Nor does it say anything about rain or about the source of possibility of rain. In fact, it is quite biblical to believe that it did not rain for centuries to come.

Instead, therefore, of assuming a haughty and critical attitude, let us believe that God made the heavens and the earth, and that He certainly also knew how to tell His people about it in this creation narrative.

Turning now to the creative work of the second day, we may note, in the first place, that there is a distinction made between the waters below and the waters above. These are the wa-

ters that are separated by the firmament. They are below and above the firmament from the viewpoint of the earth, the viewpoint which pervades the narrative of Scripture — not because the earth is the local center of the physical universe, but because the earth is the center from the point of view of its significance. By the waters below are meant the waters that belong to the earth as it then was in its chaotic, or unfinished state. The waters above are not the clouds. For, in the first place, the clouds were not as yet. But besides, the clouds are not above the firmament, but below it. They belong to the earth. In the waters that are on the earth the clouds have their origin; and thither they return also in the rain. The clouds, together with the atmosphere that surrounds the earth at a considerable depth, the oceans and seas, and all the inland waters (the rivers and lakes) — these all belong to the waters that are below.

By the waters above are meant the waters that are now diffused throughout the entire firmament and distributed in the heavenly bodies. There are those who consider it possible that these heavenly bodies became light bearers on the fourth day, but that they were already formed on the second day. Whether or not that is possible certainly cannot be determined; nor is this the important question with respect to the creation of the second day. As such, the waters that belong to the heaven in its unformed, chaotic state, and which later are formed and finished in the sun and moon and stars, constitute the waters above. And these are separated from the waters below, the waters of the earth in its unfinished state.

In the second place, that which causes the separation between the waters below and the waters above is described in the text as the firmament. The firmament is that which from our earthly point of view we see as the blue sky, as it stretches itself apparently like a beautiful dome over the earth on a clear and sunny day. It is in reality an immense ocean, filled with what the biblical term appar-

ently describes as a very fine, beaten out, or stretched out substance, and which the Bible describes as a molten looking glass (Job 37:18): "Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass?" We refer to the vast reaches of this firmament as "space" or as "outer space." We must remember, however, that space is not "nothing," or mere emptiness. But space is the created and limited vast reality in which all the physical world floats.

The original Hebrew word for firmament signifies something "beaten or stretched out, a finely beaten substance." This suggests that God formed the firmament by beating or stretching out the original waters, everywhere present in the chaos, the unfinished earth and heaven. Part of these waters were stretched, expanded, thinned out, into a very fine substance. Thus the Bible speaks of the firmament. This is true in the passage already quoted, Job 37:18, which speaks of the sky as stretched out, but strong. Psalm 104:2 speaks similar language: "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain." Isaiah 40:22 speaks as follows: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Job 26:7 speaks of God as stretching out the north over the empty place.

All of this stands in close connection, in the third place, with the purpose of this firmament, namely, to separate the waters from the waters. This also implies that it separates, keeps apart, and keeps in their places all the different bodies of creation. It serves as a medium to sustain all the various bodies in space in their proper orbs and in their relative position. The firmament is a vast ocean, deep and wide, in which all the heavenly bodies and the earth float. It supports them and presses on them from all sides; and it keeps them in their paths. At the same time, that firmament is the means of communication. For if the space between us and the light

bodies were absolutely empty, the light would never reach us. If space were mere emptiness, nothingness, there could be no communication of any kind.

Finally, we must remember that this firmament, which God called Heaven, is not unlimited in its extent. We speak sometimes rather glibly of space as being endless or infinite. But we must remember that there is nothing infinite in this world. It may be true that we cannot imagine a limit to the firmament, or a limit to the world. It may be true that when we think of a limit, or end, to space, we are ready with the question, "And what is beyond space?" — somewhat in the same way as we are ready with the question, "And what was before the beginning?" This does not change the fact that the vast and deep ocean of the firmament is limited. For it is created, it is a creature. And the creature is not infinite, but finite; not endless, but limited. Moreover, above the heaven of the firmament is the heaven of glory and the heaven of heavens. The firmament is even presented as the pillars upon which that heaven of glory rests. Through the heavens Jesus Christ passed when He ascended; and through the heavens the souls of the saints pass to glory.

All this mighty creation came into being by the Word of God. God "made" the firmament, we are told in the text; and He made it so that it *divided*. But this making of the firmament was by the almighty creative Word, spoken on the second day. He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

In conclusion, we must remember that this firmament, occupying as it does an essential place in the very structure of the present universe, was not made to be permanent. Though it was created good, that is, fit to serve the purpose for which God made it, that purpose was not His final purpose; and it was not God's purpose that the firmament should abide forever. By the Word of God the heavens were of old, and by the Word of God the heavens and the earth which are now are kept in store, reserved unto

fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. This world is to be destroyed. For the temporal is but the image of the eternal. No, it is not to be annihilated, so that all returns to nothing. But it will be destroyed in the day of the Lord. The universe, not only the earth, but also the sun and moon and stars as well, is to be burnt up. And from the elements a new heaven and earth are to be formed, in which righteousness shall dwell.

Scripture speaks of this. In Revelation 6:14 the breakup of the physical universe is described in part as follows: "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." When we remember that the heaven, or firmament, separates the heavenly bodies, and bear in mind that this heaven is rolled up like a scroll, then we can also understand what is stated in the preceding verse: "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." This is in harmony with the picture of the final catastrophe which shall come with the day of the Lord, according to II Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The only thing that keeps the fire from igniting and consuming all things is the firmament, kept there by the same Word of God that created it. When that firmament shall be rolled up, the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat — all in order to give way to the new heavens and the new earth, in which all things shall be united in our Lord Jesus Christ. □

Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World, by Richard J. Mouw. InterVarsity Press, 1992. 173pp. \$8.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Relying heavily on I Peter 3:15 ("But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"), the author deals with the important question of the manner in which the Christian is to promote his Christian principles in an ungodly world. He faces head-on the problem of how Christians are to witness to the right and good while at the same time being kind, civil, decent, and non-confrontational. In his development of this theme, the author rightly points out that we must reflect God in His kindness and gentleness; he makes the valid point that in our defense of the truth we may not stoop to any kind of tactic, but must be reasonable, fair, and honest in our treatment of another's position (pp. 54ff.); and he argues that coercion and efforts to legislate morals are not within the prerogatives of acting civilly in an uncivil world.

Nevertheless, the argument of the author is flawed.

It is flawed in its theological basis. Our civility, he says, is rooted in God's universal love, in His desire that all men be in conformity with God's will, and that all men must serve Him. All men are image-bearers (p. 88) and, therefore, eventually right will prevail in this world; good-will will have the victory; and the cause of Christ will be triumphant. All this introduces an incipient Arminianism, an Arminianism which becomes explicit when the author speaks of hell as "the culmination of a

person's freely chosen life-plan" (p. 138).

With an incorrect theological basis for a starting point, it is not surprising that very little good leadership is provided in telling us how precisely to be civil towards unbelievers. While from time to time we are urged not to surrender our Christian principles, we are told that we ought to seek legislation of *public displays* of morality; that we ought, in theological discussions with others, to listen carefully, for civility means finding truth in other religions (p. 106); and that we ought in industry, film, and politics, to learn as well as educate so that, speaking out of a Christian context, we may promote general themes such as righteousness, honesty, etc. In fact, toleration and compromise are essential because God's *shalom* (peace) only comes gradually into the world (p. 37).

The emphasis in all the book is too much on man. Insufficient emphasis is placed on God's glory and honor which are trampled under foot in a sin-filled world. ■

The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology, by Ernest F. Kevan. Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993. 294pp. \$12.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Although this book is actually the doctoral thesis of the late Principal of London Bible College, its great worth is evident from the fact that this volume is its second reprinting.

Dr. Kevan explores the biblical teaching of the indispensable place which God's law occupies in the life of the Christian, and the spiritual character of God's law and God's grace in relation to that law. He deals prima-

rily with the Puritans in the 17th century, although references are made to later Puritans as well.

The primary concern of the book is to demonstrate that the Puritans, in their treatment of the law of God, faced the dangers of antinomianism on the right and the dangers of legalism on the left. They developed a view of God's law which was both biblical and in the tradition of the orthodoxy of the Westminster Confessions.

The book is not difficult to read and has many good points about it that make it a valuable addition to one's library. It is an excellent book to introduce the novice to Puritan thinking on what was an important part of their theology. It deals with problems which the church faces today as the church continues to fight the battle against the enemies of antinomianism and legalism. It gives considerable information concerning the idea of the covenant of works: its origin, its importance in Puritan thinking, and its influence on subsequent thought. This alone makes it worthwhile for Protestant Reformed people who have rejected the idea of the covenant of works.

A bonus in the book is its treatment of the so-called third use of the law. Historically, as is the teaching of our Heidelberg Catechism, the law is said to have two purposes: a mirror by which we know our sin, and a rule for the grateful life of sanctification for the believer. Some of the Puritans also spoke of a third use: the restraint of sin.

We recommend the purchase of this book to our readers. Whether one acquires a used copy from previous editions or whether one buys it new, get it and enjoy its thorough study. ■

Revealed to Babes: Children in the Worship of God, by Richard Bacon. Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1993. 75 pp. \$4.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

Presbyterian pastor Richard Bacon reminds Reformed parents and churches that the children of believers are privileged and required to participate in the public worship of the congregation. The basis is their inclusion in God's church by virtue of the covenant.

Although very brief, the explanation of God's covenant with believers' children is in the main sound and profitable. The author recognizes that predestination cuts through the sphere of the covenant. Not all the natural children are elect. He points out that God works conscious faith in the elect children by the Word in the worship services at a very young age. He impresses on parents and churches that

raising covenant children is arguably the most important thing that Christians do in the Kingdom. God has chosen in His sovereign wisdom and mercy to make the church herself the "seedbed of election" (p. 5).

There is a lack of clarity on the question whether the holiness of infant children signified by baptism is actual, inward sanctifying grace of the Spirit or merely the external position of formal membership in the church. On the one hand, it is recognized that Calvin taught that infant baptism means the regeneration and (actual) sanctification of elect children in infancy:

Calvin also was of the opinion that infants of believers are both holy before their baptism and that, in fact, many of them are actually regenerated and saved prior to their baptism. Calvin emphasized in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that baptism is tied to regeneration (p. 14).

On the other hand, Bacon speaks of the "federal" holiness of the children

as though it were merely a right to "the outward privileges of the church" (pp. 15-19).

The main error of the book concerns its chief purpose. This is the application of the truth of the covenant to a condemnation of nurseries. Nurseries — rooms in the church building where infants are cared for during worship services — are "idolatry and will-worship" (p. 61). The ground for this startling charge is the "regulative principle" of worship (p. 64). God must be worshiped as He has commanded in His Word. He has commanded that children participate in worship. Nurseries violate this commandment. Therefore, nurseries are transgression of the second commandment.

This is another instance of such extremism in application of the regulative principle of worship as to bring the principle itself into disrepute among Reformed Christians. On Bacon's reasoning, every time parents keep their infant child home when the congregation gathers for worship, the parents break the second commandment.

Why does the Presbyterian not make a valid point this way? In the covenant, God wills to be worshiped by the children as well as by their parents. Therefore, as soon as the children are old enough to have some idea what worship is, to sit still and be quiet, and to listen and understand, parents are called to take the children to church with themselves. And the children are privileged to go. ■

A Marvellous Ministry: How the All-round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to us Today, by Tim Curnow, Erroll Hulse, David Kingdon, and Geoff Thomas. Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1993. Pp. xiii + 147. \$8.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

This is an account of the interesting life and fruitful ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon was a Baptist preacher in London, England in the 19th century who confessed

and preached the doctrines of grace commonly called the five points of Calvinism. Spurgeon was pastor of a huge congregation in London for almost forty years. God blessed his ministry with enormous influence that continues today through his writings, especially his commentary on the Psalms and his printed sermons.

In addition to a biography and an examination of Spurgeon's preaching, there are chapters on his social concern, his involvement in the politics of his day (Prime Minister Gladstone was an admirer of Spurgeon and visited his services), and his stand for the truth in what is known as the "Downgrade Controversy."

There is much that pastors can learn from Spurgeon. There are also elements of Spurgeon's ministry that pastors should studiously avoid. One is the preparation of Sunday morning's sermon on Saturday evening.

Gifted in many ways, Spurgeon had a way with words. Reacting against the jingoistic militarism of Prime Minister Disraeli, Spurgeon debunked the reasons put forward to justify war ("British interests"), declaring, "the fact is that the national bulldog wants to fix his teeth into somebody's leg" (p. 143).

The authors have collaborated in presenting a fine and worthwhile portrayal of a truly "marvellous ministry." ■

The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian, by Greg L. Bahnsen, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Douglas J. Moo, Wayne G. Strickland, Willem A. Van Gemeren. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993. 416 pp. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

The question of the relation between the law and the gospel has been on the agenda of the church from the time of the Reformation. It is a question of no little importance in the field of theology not only, but also in the field of ethics. The latter is undoubtedly the reason why the authors have

added to the title the words "and the modern Christian."

The five men who have collaborated in the writing of this book are all leading figures in the evangelical world and significant scholars. They represent different backgrounds and traditions, however. Greg Bahnsen represents the theonomic position of post-millennialism; Walter Kaiser comes to the question with new, fresh, and unbiased ideas; Wayne Strickland is a representative of the dispensational view of the law; Douglas Moo writes from the perspective of Lutheranism; Willem VanGemeren speaks more from the Reformed tradition.

All this makes the book a fascinating one. But added to its fascination is the fact that each chapter (written by one of the five men mentioned above) is followed by a short critique prepared by the other four. The benefit and worth of this is that the areas of agreement as well as the basic disagreements are sharply defined.

We cannot, of course, give a thorough review of the contents of the book. It is best to be limited to some general remarks about its value, in

the hopes that our readers will be tempted to purchase it.

The book reveals a much wider chasm between these thinkers from various traditions than most people are conscious of. The variety of viewpoint comes as something of a surprise to anyone who has not carefully studied these various theologies. The book is an extremely helpful aid in learning these differences.

Interesting questions are brought up which need to be answered. Does the law itself have power to give life, as Leviticus 18:5 (quoted by Paul in Galatians 3:12) seems to suggest? Does the law have power to give eternal life? Does the law have two or three uses? What is the relation between the law and sanctification? Does dispensationalism really teach, (as John Gerstner insisted in his *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*) that there are two ways of salvation—one for Jews and one for the church? Strickland emphatically denies this. Is Strickland correct when he insists, contrary to some dispensationalists, that dispensationalism does not necessarily imply an antinomian position over against the law in the new

dispensation? What relevance do the civil laws of the Old Testament have for the new dispensational church? If Reformed believers are to answer Bahnsen's theonomy, this is one question they have to face.

The book contains some real nuggets which delight the soul. Kaiser's insistence on a unilateral and unconditional covenant warms one's heart; and his discussion of the meaning of *torah* in the Pentateuch as instruction and faith is excellent.

It is interesting that Bahnsen, in his defense of theonomy, appeals to the doctrine of common grace, especially as applied to civil good and government. Does Bahnsen mean to suggest that the kingdom envisioned by theonomists can only finally come about through common grace?

Everyone who is interested in the all-important question of the relation between the law and the gospel ought to read the book; it will help him understand the problems involved in the question; and it will force upon him the necessity of thinking his way through the difficulties to come to clearer understanding of the truth of God's Word in this matter. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Young People's Activities

I can safely say that virtually every one of our churches' young people's societies has been, is now, or will be involved in some fund-raiser for this year's convention, scheduled for the first week in August in Lynden, WA. I count at least twelve current activities that could be mentioned in this news column. So I trust that you will forgive me if yours is not included. Just keep those good ideas coming, and continue your commitment to the upcoming convention.

Activities vary from church to church, but the common thread of

food seems to run through each one. Randolph, WI society sponsored a Belgian waffle breakfast. The young people of First in Grand Rapids, MI made and sold pizzas. The Young People's Society of South Holland, IL made 349 subs (their most ever) for their congregation's enjoyment. Hudsonville, MI young people held their annual Beast Feast (wild-game) dinner. The young people of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB Canada sponsored an evening of volleyball, games, and fellowship with refreshments and hotdogs served afterwards. The congregation of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL was able to purchase Easter lilies from their young people. And, finally, the congregation of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC was able to get together in March for

a sloppy-joe dinner followed by a service auction—that is, the young people auctioned off their services for any household chores or other work which someone might desire to have done.

School Activities

Mr. Dale Bekkering, a member of our Grandville, MI PRC, and a biblical counselor with the Biblical Counseling Center of West Michigan was the featured speaker at a recent meeting of the Hope PR Christian School Circle. He spoke on the topic, "Grief, How Can We Help?" He focused primarily on helping children cope with various kinds of grief.

The Association for PR Secondary Education in South Holland, IL recently invited their members to

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

gather for a special lecture at the South Holland PRC to hear Prof. Hanko speak on the subject, "The Increasing Need for a Protestant Reformed High School."

The Lacombe, AB, Canada PR School Board recently decided to establish a library for all their grade-school children, and also to make these books available to society members. To help them with this project, they were looking for anyone able to donate good Reformed books. Interested? Please contact Tim Zylstra at (403) 782-4579 or Wilbur Linker, (403) 782-4089.

Congregational Activities

In a reminder that the time is coming soon when the world will seek to snuff out any witness whatsoever of the gospel, the congregation of our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada was recently notified by the radio station in their area that the time for broadcasting the Reformed Witness Hour had been changed to 11:30 p.m. Sunday night. The radio station told them that this was the only time they would make available to them. Immanuel therefore canceled the broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour on that station, and are looking now for a suitable alternative.

In an unrelated matter, the congregation of Immanuel recently had to choose between which phase of their long-range building plans they wanted to consider first — their parsonage, or their church. They chose to make plans to build their church.

After the evening service of February 27, the congregation of our Grandville, MI PRC met for a short program to commemorate the 10th anniversary of their organization.

Rev. W. Bruinsma was recently asked to speak on the subject, "Your

Family and the New Age Movement," at our First PRC in Grand Rapids for their Mr. and Mrs. Society.

At its inaugural meeting, the newly elected Council of our Georgetown PRC, currently meeting in Bauer, MI, elected Mr. Jay Kuiper, 4964 Laurelwood, Hudsonville, MI 49426, (616) 669-5561, as clerk. Anyone needing to contact that congregation can notify him.

Minister Activities

Georgetown has also formed their first trio, from which they hope, the Lord willing, to call their first pastor soon. On this trio are the Revs. C. Haak, J. Slopsema, and C. Terpstra.

Food For Thought

The Lord Christ leads none to heaven but whom He sanctifies on earth. This living Head will not admit of dead members.

John Owen □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on April 20, 1994, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. ROGER
(FLORENCE) KEY,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for their enjoyment of a Christian marriage, and for His giving us God-fearing parents who taught us also the fear of the Lord. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them in the way that lies ahead, and that they may experience His peace which passes all understanding.

- ✿ Pastor Steven and Nancy Key
Stephanie, Michelle, Elisabeth,
Mary Anne
- ✿ Daniel and Judy Key
Jonathan, Deborah, Timothy, Brian
- ✿ Thomas Key

Grandville, Michigan

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 1994 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, MI.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI, extends its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. David (Sue) Higgs and their family, in the death of Sue's mother,

MRS. KNOEL GREATBATCH.

"Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24).

Rev. J. Slopsema, President
Mary Kalsbeek, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 15, 1994, **ROLAND and JANE PETERSEN**, celebrated their 40th anniversary of loving marriage. As children and grandchildren, we rejoice with them and thank them for their good practical parentry, based on and pointed to the Word.

"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:15).

- ✿ Glenn and Mariel Grevengoed
Dania and Lincoln

Grand Rapids, Michigan