



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

***A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine***

It is in that same Spirit, the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ poured forth into the church, that believers in this world lift up their hearts to the God of their salvation in Christ Jesus their Lord, crying, Abba, Father!

For He is the Spirit of adoption!

See "Spirit of Sonship" — p. 363

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*In This Issue ...*

On Sunday, May 22, the Reformed churches that stand in the tradition of Dordt will commemorate Christ's sending of His Spirit to the church. Article 67 of the original church order of Dordt calls the churches to "observe ... Pentecost."

A good way for the preacher to lead the congregation in this observance is to preach a sermon on the historical event in the morning service and a sermon on some aspect of the Spirit's work or benefit in the evening service.

This event in the ministry of our Lord is worthy of such special observance.

The threats to the faith from the modern charismatic movement make sound instruction of the people of God concerning the Spirit and His work urgent.

Several articles in this issue of the *Standard Bearer* treat of the Spirit. The meditation views Him as the Spirit of adoption who works in us the assurance of our being children of God. The contribution by Rev. Rodney Miersma ascribes to the Spirit, as Spirit of truth, the production of the churches' creeds. The secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches reports on mission labors and plans that depend upon the Spirit as the one by whom the Son of God gathers His church. The second segment of Rev. Charles Terpstra's critique of the modern church-growth movement subjects the "signs and wonders" aspect of the movement to criticism.

The saints today, as always, must "try the spirits" (I John 4:1).

The Spirit of God confesses Jesus Christ.

— DJE



# Spirit of Sonship

*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

Romans 8:15, 16

Blessed Spirit!

It is through Him, the *Parakleet*, the Comforter, whom the Lord had promised to send from the Father, and whom He poured forth into His church on the day of the firstfruits, that we become heirs and partakers of all the blessings of salvation!

He it is that imparts unto us the fullness of Christ and all His benefits!

Apart from Him we are children of wrath, and lie in the midst of death, incapable of laying hold on the Christ of God, the blessings of forgiveness, eternal righteousness, the adoption unto children, freedom from all condemnation, the everlasting love of God, eternal life and glory. For how could we possibly reach out for the Christ and His fullness? He must come to us. And in the Spirit He returned! He was with us for a little while, in our death and in our misery. While He was with us still, He took all our sicknesses and pains upon Himself, assumed the full burden of all our sins and iniquities, and carried them all to the accursed tree, there to become obedient unto death, and to descend into lowest hell, that He might

bring us to God. He is no more with us. For He was raised from the dead. And He is exalted into the highest glory, at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, Lord of life and of death! Thither He must draw us. From thence He must reach out for us. For we cannot reach out for Him. And He did come, in the Spirit, to abide with us forever, and to impart unto us Himself in all the riches of His grace!

So, through the Spirit He lives in us.

Through the same Spirit we live by His grace.

And, living by His grace, we do mortify the deeds of the body, realizing that we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh, but to the Spirit to live after Him.

Mortifying the deeds of the body, we know that we are the sons of God, children that are led by the Spirit of God in the way of His good commandments.

For the Spirit whom the church received on the glad day of Pentecost is the Spirit of the living Lord. He is not a spirit of bondage again to fear, but He is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

Thus, Spirit controlled, and Spirit led, we receive the testimony through that same Spirit that we are the sons of God!

Blessed Spirit of the Lord!

\* \* \* \* \*

Abba, Father!

In this outcry of faith, of love, of hope and longing, the church that is led by the Spirit expresses spontaneously her assurance of sonship. In it they give testimony of their being conscious that they are the children of God.

*Abba, Pater!*

In the original there is a repetition of the same word, first in the Chaldean, then in the Greek, both words meaning simply "Father." The double phrase was probably a standing expression that had gradually been adopted in that form by the early church. In the New Testament we find that it is used by our Lord in the hour of His great agony in Gethsemane; in the sixth verse of Galatians 4, where it is said that God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and that it is He that cries, Abba, Father; and here in the fifteenth verse of Romans 8, where believers are said to make this outcry under the impulse of the Spirit of adoption. Perhaps it was the fact that the Lord expressed Himself with this phrase in the hour of His suffering, coupled with the circumstance that the early church consisted of converts from Jews and Gentiles, that led to its adoption as a standing expression, perhaps even as a liturgical formula used by the church.

Abba, Father!

It is the strong and clear expression of our sonship in relation to God, both in virtue of His gracious adoption, and by reason of our being born of Him.

For we are, first of all, children by adoption. By nature we are not children of God but children of wrath. Because of our sin we are born as exiles from God's home, wandering about in darkness and under condemnation. We have no right to be called God's sons, no right to dwell in His house, no right to the enjoyment of His blessed favor and of the pleasures that are at His right hand for

*This meditation by Herman Hoeksema, appeared in the SB 50 years ago — June 1, 1944.*



evermore. But in pure grace He adopted us, bestowed on us the legal right to be called His sons, to be the objects of His love and favor, to dwell in His fellowship, and to become heirs of the eternal inheritance in His heavenly tabernacle. He forgives all our transgressions, and clothes us with an eternal righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord, all of pure grace, without any merit on our part.

And the consciousness of this adoption as children of God, of our full redemption, of the forgiveness of sins, of our perfect righteousness before God, of His free and sovereign everlasting love to us we express in this outcry: *Abba, Father!*

But there is more.

For it is not only by adoption that we become children of God. In fact, it would be impossible to lay hold on this blessed adoption, or even to long for it and to rejoice in its possession and assurance, if God did not also bestow upon us and work within us the wonder of grace whereby we are born of Him, His image is restored within us, and we become sons of God in spiritual reality. But He realizes the adoption in our hearts by making us partakers of His nature. By nature we are not only devoid of the right to be called children of God and to dwell in His house, but we are also enemies of God, minding the things of the flesh, loving the darkness rather than the light. We care not to dwell in God's house. Far from Him we wander and seek the good foolishly. But He reaches out into our hearts, removes the darkness, roots out the enmity, enlightens the mind, changes the refractory will, instills into our hearts a new life, the life of the risen Lord, assures us of His love, and causes us to love Him, to love His precepts, to love the brethren, to long for His fellowship, and to seek to be pleasing to Him.

It is also the consciousness of this real, spiritual sonship, of this love to God and to one another, of this longing for His favor and fellowship, that is expressed in the cry: *Abba, Father!*

We cry!

It is a matter of fact!

The apostle does not speak here of a possibility. He does not state a general doctrine: believers cry, *Abba, Father!* He does not put it in the form of an admonition or exhortation. The matter is definite and personal: *we*, the apostles, all believers, the whole church of Christ in the world, cry, *Abba, Father!*

Is it true?

Dare we follow the apostle and adopt his bold statement in application to ourselves?

O, let us not forget, as we try to answer this question, that it is a *cry* that leaves our lips, that is pressed from our hearts, when we say, *Abba, Father!*

To be sure, this means that the testimony concerning our sonship is expressed with fervency. It is strong, powerful, clear. But it also implies that it is made from the depths, by those who, while they are conscious of their nearness to God, are yet far off at the same time; as those who, while they are assured of their sonship, yet look upon that sonship as something that must still be realized, and the realization of which seems to lie in the distant future; or as those who, while they are sons, yet are not sons; who, while they are righteous, yet are full of sin; who, while they live, yet lie in the midst of death; who, while they are heirs of all things, are in possession of nothing. From the depths, out of the midst of death, believers raise their cry: *Abba, Father!*

It is an outcry of the assurance of our adoption, and of the consciousness of our being children of God, but then, it is still a *cry*!

A groan of hope!

A cry of longing for the perfect day!

For as yet we have but a small beginning of the new obedience!

Yet, the beginning is a principle.

And by virtue of that principle we do sing with the psalmist: As the hart panteth after waterbrooks, so longs our soul for Thee!

For Thee, the living God!

*Abba, Father!*

\* \* \* \* \*

Blessed Spirit of adoption!

For through Him alone may we carry this assurance of our sonship in our hearts.

It is not we that of ourselves cry, *Abba, Father!*

How could we? Or what comfort and blessedness would there be in this outcry of assurance and longing, were it of ourselves? Are we, perhaps, not deceiving ourselves in so crying to God? Will He hear us and receive us, and will He respond to our outcry? Do we, perhaps, too audaciously appropriate to ourselves what does not belong to us? Are we claiming a right which God does not seal?

Only when the outcry is divinely wrought, only when it is but the expression of what God Himself impels us to cry, can there be the true assurance of sonship in our hearts when we cry, *Abba, Father!*

And so it is.

For we have received the Spirit!

And the Spirit we have received is the real Author of this outcry, not we ourselves. He it is that always cries, *Abba, Father!* He does so as the Spirit of the Son in the adorable and blessed Trinity. For in that Spirit the Father eternally faces the Son saying: *My beloved Son*; and the Son is eternally facing the Father, saying: *Abba, Father*. He does so as the Spirit of Christ in Christ Himself. For it is in that Spirit that He cried to the Father in the days of His flesh and humiliation; and it is in that same Spirit that the Holy Child Jesus, now in the state of His exceeding glory, constantly turns to His God, crying, *Abba, Father!* It is in that same Spirit, the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ poured forth into the church, that believers in this world lift up their hearts to the God of their salvation in Christ Jesus their Lord, crying, *Abba, Father!*

For He is the Spirit of adoption!

He is not a spirit of bondage again to fear.

Such a spirit controls those that are outside of the sphere and influence of this Spirit. It is the spirit of the sinner that, instead of being filled with the true reverence of love that acknowledges that God is God and that causes us to prostrate ourselves



before Him in true humility, proudly brings to Him the sacrifices of the wicked, claiming the right to be accepted of God on the basis of his own goodness, his religiousness, his own works, and thus becoming abominable in the sight of the Most High, and receiving the testimony of his condemnation and rejection in his conscience.

That is the spirit of bondage, that would work for God as a wage earner, being a stranger to the freedom of sons.

And that is the spirit that always fills with a slavish fear those that are possessed by it, for they never receive the assurance of forgiveness and righteousness, essential to all confidence and joy.

But such is not the Spirit we have received.

He is the Spirit of adoption, and, therefore, the Spirit of true and perfect liberty, the Spirit of forgiveness and righteousness, the Spirit of the love of God, in which there is neither bondage nor fear.

He is the Spirit of adoption in the sense that He serves the cause of our adoption, so that He realizes our adoption unto children of God unto us, and causes us to possess it, and to be assured of it, and to rejoice in it, and to live in the consciousness and con-

fidence and joy that we are the sons of God. We can speak of our adoption from before the foundation of the world. For God adopted us to be His sons in His everlasting good pleasure, when He chose us in Christ. We can speak of the objective realization of our adoption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, for He was delivered for our transgressions, and raised for our justification. The eternal adoption of all the elect was objectively realized when Christ died for our sins, and when God raised Him from the dead. And we may speak of our adoption through faith before our own consciousness when we prostrate ourselves in dust and ashes before the face of God with the prayer of the publican in our hearts and upon our lips, and receive the testimony that our sins are forgiven and that we are clothed with everlasting righteousness; that God loved us and gave His Son for us; and that He raised Him from the dead unto our personal justification.

It is in the last sense that the Spirit of Christ poured out into the church is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

He it is that brings us to a true knowledge and consciousness of our sin and guilt before the face of God.

He it is that ingrafts us into Christ, and makes us partakers of His death and resurrection.

He it is that pours out the love of God into our hearts.

He bestows upon us all the benefits of Christ.

He makes us children of God!  
Blessed gift of the Spirit!

\* \* \* \* \*

Sons of God!

Blessed assurance!

Blessed, because the assurance is not of us, but is the response to the testimony of the same Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God!

For the Spirit abides with us. And dwelling within us, He testifies constantly with our spirit concerning our sonship in relation to God. Not, indeed, as if there were two independent testimonies, ours and His, coinciding with each other, but so that the Spirit of adoption, through the Word of Christ in the Scriptures, works within us the personal assurance of our adoption and sonship, and thus becomes the ground of the witness of our own spirit!

Thus we are assured of our sonship by God's own testimony!

And we have confidence to cry:  
Abba, Father! □

## Editorial

# The Nose of the Camel (5)

This series of editorials gives a warning. The approval by a Reformed church of women voting at the congregational meeting permits the nose of the camel of feminism to enter the ecclesiastical tent. The occasion for the warning is the recent decision by the "liberated" Reformed Churches

in the Netherlands allowing participation by women at the congregational meeting as voting members.

In support of this warning, the previous editorial began quoting the esteemed Dutch Reformed theologian, Dr. H. Bouwman. In his authoritative work on Reformed church

government, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, Dr. Bouwman demonstrated that the election of officebearers at the congregational meeting is "an exercise of church-rule." He went on to show from I Corinthians 11:1-16, I Corinthians 14:34, 35, and I Timothy 2:11, 12 that the apostle of Christ



forbids women to rule in the church.

We pick up the quotation of Dr. Bouwman where, having finished his explanation of I Corinthians 11:1-16, he turns to I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2. The quotation is taken from volume 1 of *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, pages 386-394. The translation of this untranslated work is mine.

Starting from this principle, it is to be understood that Paul is not willing that the woman step forward in the congregation as teacher. Originally, the congregation came together in private homes, in the houses of influential members of the congregation (Acts 2:46; 12:22; Rom. 16:3-15), where anyone who wished could come forward and bring the Word. Also gifted women, who supposed themselves to be sealed by the Holy Spirit, let their testimony be heard. This gave occasion to disorder; and, therefore, Paul warned the women to know their place rightly; and, finally, he forbade their coming forward to teach in the assembly of the congregation.

He says in I Corinthians 14:34, 35: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law; And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Although Paul is not willing to suppress the prophetic gifts, he emphasizes that the woman, neither in Corinth nor in other congregations, may come forward to bring the Word, whether that be as a teacher or as a participant in the discussion. She may not even take the floor under the pretext of raising questions and receiving insight in these matters. If she desires instruction, she has her natural teacher in her husband. This regulation, that the women must keep silent in the congregation, is not merely a personal opinion of the apostle; but he is conscious that he is guided in his writing by the Spirit of God; and therefore those in Corinth who claim to be prophetic and spiritual men can prove this no better than by recognizing that the apostle's regulations are God's commandments (see I Cor. 14:37 — DJE).

Therefore, Paul lays down this rule,

that only the men occupy the pulpit as teacher in the gatherings of the congregation. This thought is confirmed in I Timothy 2:11, 12: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The public teaching in church by the woman is incompatible with the obedience which she owes to the man. Paul gives two reasons why the woman may not occupy the pulpit as teacher, and must content herself with hearing and being silent. The first is that Adam was first created and then Eve. Eve was added to Adam as a help, in order to be his support and his completion, and to be mother of the human race. And, therefore, the woman would act in contradiction to her destiny, or purpose, if she were to occupy the pulpit publicly as a teacher. And, in the second place, she may not preach, because the woman was first in the transgression; and she became the first temptress. Therefore, the female Christian accepts even more willingly the subjection to her husband, which is already grounded in the creation-order.

Now if Scripture so decisively condemns the woman's coming forward in the congregation to teach, to participate in the discussion, and to ask questions, on the ground of the creation-order, how could it ever then be supposed to be in harmony with Scripture that the woman participate in the election of officebearers at a congregational meeting?

The task of the woman, then, is not to stand in the forefront of the fiercely agitated sea of mankind, to give direction in the difficult storm of life, but to develop her powers and gifts in the background. Her destiny lies in her being a help, a mother. In extraordinary times, a gifted woman can sometimes be called to inspire the people as prophetess and, when the men sleep and are unfaithful, to give leadership. This is how Deborah

served the people with her counsel in a time of confusion, and encouraged Barak to fight, who himself lacked the godly inspiration before the combat with Israel's enemies; but also in these cases the pious women came forward as the help of the men. So Scripture has taught us; so also the Christian church has grasped the thought of Scripture. Therefore, when the mission-group became a fully instituted church, and the free Word died out, the ministry of the Word was bound to the bearers of the office; and only the man, called to this office by the congregation, might occupy the pulpit as teacher. The woman performed ministries of help in the apostolic age (Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:2; Phil. 4:2, 3; I Tim. 5:9), especially in the area of mercy, but of an exercise of a church-office, Scripture never speaks.

Undoubtedly, Scripture would have given an indication, if it was the intention that also the woman must participate in the election of officebearers. But from the fact that Scripture expressly forbids that the woman may teach in the worship services or may participate in the discussion and from the fact that Scripture is wholly silent about any participation of the women in the election of officebearers, we are able with more right to conclude that the women may not participate in the election of officebearers than that this should be permitted her.

This is even more compelling, because participation in the election

of officebearers is not a matter of advising the consistory, but cooperating in the rule of the church. This is denied by many, e.g., Dr. H. Bavinck and Rev. C. Lindeboom, but incorrectly. According to the manner of electing officebearers that is followed at present, the consistory presents a number of capable and qualified persons to the congregation; and those who are chosen by the congregation are then installed in office by the consistory, "agreeably to the form," unless preponderant

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objections are brought against those who are chosen. The congregation, thus, cooperates in the rule of the church, at the election of office-bearers; and this is exactly what is not permitted to the woman.

The argument that the members of the congregation only exercise the right of voting by virtue of the office of believer, and that, therefore, the woman is deprived of her rights, if the consistory addresses itself in the election of officebearers only to the men, has weight only if it is firmly established according to the Word of God that the right of voting belongs to believers as such. But then it would also follow from this that the woman must occupy an equal place in the church in every respect. And then one would come into conflict with the Holy Scripture which indeed gives to the woman, just as to the man, fellowship in the Lord Christ and in all His riches and gifts but with this, however, does not award her the right of teaching and ruling. And just as the right to vote in the public, political realm does not follow from a natural right, but is a positive right, a right that is granted, so also the right of voting in the congregation does not follow from the office of believer to all without distinction.

Something else is the case with the so-called approbation, with the right of approval of the acts of the consistory, or with the right to bring objections to a nomination. This right, that belongs to all members of the church, including those who are not confessing members, is a kind of exercise of discipline, a competence to make a stand for the honor and the right of Christ. Only if the place of the woman and her relationship to

the man is overlooked can it be said that the exercise of the right of voting in the church must be bestowed on the woman.

Practically speaking, the question of the women's right to vote in the church is of very little importance in the Reformed churches, because almost not a single woman desires the exercise of the right to vote in the church.

The rule ought to remain in the Reformed churches that only male members are fit to cooperate in election to the offices in the church.

Thus far, Dr. H. Bouwman.

Bouwman's remark at the end, that the question of the woman's voting is of little importance because Reformed women have no desire to vote, first makes one smile and then makes one weep. This could have been written in the Reformed churches worldwide in 1928. What has happened to God's church in the past 65 years?

But Bouwman's explanation is the Reformed view of the congregational meeting: The congregational meeting is government. It gives the Reformed stand on women voting at the congregational meeting: Women voting is forbidden.

Women voting at the congregational meeting is the nose of the camel of feminism in the church tent.

It is the first beginnings of female rule in the church in disobedience to the prohibition of such rule by Christ's apostle in I Corinthians 14 and in I Timothy 2 and 3.

Participation by women at the

congregational meeting touches the headship of the husband directly. Now Mrs. VanDer Smithsma stands up in the official, public gathering of the congregation to debate with her own husband. Her husband may well be Elder VanDer Smithsma or Pastor VanDer Smithsma. Having refuted her husband's position on some issue, she will sit down to cancel out her husband's vote for a nominee for office by her own contrary vote.

As a matter of principle, it is as objectionable to the Reformed church and the Reformed believer that women vote at the congregational meeting as it is that women become preachers and elders. Practically, of course, it is easier to accept women voting at the congregational meeting. The congregational meeting is relatively infrequent and obscure in comparison with a woman in the pulpit and in comparison with women in the elders' bench every Sunday. But the principle is the same: Women rule in the church in defiance of the authority of Jesus Christ as expressed in Holy Scripture.

For this reason, we are called to resist the nose of the camel.

The reason is not that we dislike the certain prospect of sharing our tent with the whole camel, although we do dislike this prospect intensely.

But the nose itself of this camel in the tent of the Reformed church is rebellion against the Lordship of Christ over His church.

The nose stays out. □

— DJE

## All Around Us

## Prof. Robert Decker

### ■ SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS

This is what is being felt by the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), largely as a result of her recent decisions concerning women in office and the creation account of the Bible. The 1994 Yearbook of the CRC indicates that the CRC has suffered its second consecutive year

of decline in membership. According to the Yearbook the CRC now numbers 300,320 members. In 1992 the CRC reported 316,415 members, and one year later the church had 311,202 members. The total loss over two years, therefore, is 16,095 members. A little over twenty-five percent of these lost members are in Korean

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



churches (six churches, reporting 2934 members) and two Vietnamese congregations (about 550-600 members). Most of the decline, however, is in the "Anglo" churches. The 1994 total-members figure is the lowest since 1983 when the CRC reported 299,685 members. What this means is that about ten years of numerical growth has been lost by the secessions of the past two to three years.

What accounts for this loss of members? The 1994 Yearbook says in its preface, "It appears that there are three particularly disturbing matters that bring about a negative response from some CRC members: homosexuality, the question of the admission of women to all offices of the church, and referring to God with feminine pronouns. Homosexuality touched off the departure of some Korean congregations even though synod spoke forthrightly and clearly on this matter twenty years ago." The yearbook also criticized the news media for contributing to the decline. "The news media contribute to uncertainty among our people and to a skewed public image of the CRC.... They frequently base their reports on news releases circulated by persons presently or formerly connected with the CRC who appear to have their own agendas, which distort their reporting of the truth." The editor of the yearbook may say what he will, but the fact is that the CRC's decisions re women in church office and creation/science are the explanation for the decline in membership. Those who have seceded repeatedly claim, and rightly so, that the Bible and the Confessions are no longer the standard by which issues are judged and evaluated in the CRC.

Serious repercussions are also being felt in the area of interchurch relations. The 242,000-member Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which has a fraternal relationship with the CRC, is unhappy with developments in that church. In both 1992 and 1993 the General Assembly (equivalent to our synod) of the PCA instructed its Interchurch Relations Committee "to prepare documenta-

tion with regard to the Christian Reformed Church ... such documentation to include such matters as the view of Scripture, the toleration of beliefs in evolution and homosexuality, and the treatment of brethren who have stood against these modernist trends." At its January 28 meeting the South Texas Presbytery (equivalent to our classis) adopted an overture to be sent to the 1994 General Assembly alleging that the Interchurch Relations Committee, "did not accomplish the task outlined by this order." The overture says,

WHEREAS, the General Assembly in 1992 ordered the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) "to prepare documentation with regard to the Christian Reformed Church for presentation to the 21st General Assembly, such documentation to include such matters as the view of Scripture, the toleration of beliefs in evolution and homosexuality; and WHEREAS, the IRC did not accomplish the task outlined by this order; and

WHEREAS, the 21st General Assembly renewed the same call for an investigation of the CRC by the IRC and in other ways indicated the Assembly's intention with regard to this sister denomination; and WHEREAS, some of the sins and errors mentioned in the overture adopted by the Assembly include such things as the ordination of women to the office of elder and allowing other women to exercise the pastoral office (albeit without ordination), the refusal to exercise discipline on an ordained minister who is a professed homosexual, the refusal to exercise discipline on Calvin College faculty who teach evolution; and

WHEREAS, such apparent lack of compliance with the will of the General Assembly should not be allowed; NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that South Texas Presbytery hereby overtures the 22nd General Assembly to instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to respond in a timely and thorough way to these concerns that have been raised and to be more circumspect in carrying out the clear will of the General Assembly in the future.

The fact that this overture passed without audible dissent prompted its sponsor, the Rev. Ronald Rowe, pastor of First Reformed Presbyterian Church, Beaumont, Texas, to say, "Even though the main point of the resolution was trying to get the IRC to do what they are supposed to do, some of the vote was due to people not liking what the CRC is doing." The Rev. Eric Perrin, chairman of IRC, said the overture was unnecessary. Perrin promised that a full report on these matters from the IRC will be presented to the General Assembly which is scheduled to meet next June.

Assuming the CRC does not change its position on these matters, will the eventual outcome be that the PCA breaks fraternal relations with that denomination? That remains to be seen.

*Christian Renewal  
Reformed Believers Press Service*

## ■ EVANGELICALS EMBRACE ROME!

For centuries, Roman Catholics and evangelicals considered each other anathema. In the recent past these joined hands in the political realm to advocate common positions on such issues as abortion and school choice. Many, however, still regarded each other with distrust.

On March 29 a group of evangelical leaders, among them Pat Robertson and Charles Colson, and conservative Catholics asked their fellow believers to cross a theological frontier and accept each other as Christians.

Addressing a major source of tension between Catholics and evangelicals in the United States, Eastern Europe, and South America, the coalition specifically called for an end to aggressive proselytizing of each other's flocks.

"As evangelicals and Catholics, we dare not by needless and loveless conflict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cross of Christ," said the signers of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."



The consultation was started in 1992 by Colson, the Watergate figure who founded Prison Fellowship ministry, and the Rev. Richard Neuhaus, a Roman Catholic priest and director of the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York.

What is different about the joint statement is that it recognizes the groups' common faith. "We together,

evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples," the statement says.

In effect the statement is saying that the Reformers of the 16th century (Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, *et. al.*) committed a great sin "against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples!" Do not these evangelicals

know that what they call their "common faith" with Rome includes the accursed idolatry of the popish mass (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. 80)? Of course they know this. One can only conclude, then, that they do not care. On this and many other points the evangelical faith and the Romish faith are totally inimical. □

*The Grand Rapids Press*

*Special Article*

*Rev. Wayne Bekkering*

# Essentials and Non-essentials in Missions

The mission field is a very difficult place on which to work because the missionary may encounter people from many different backgrounds and with many different theological pre-suppositions and views.

The missionary must be as open and undefensive as possible. That is not easy because people may throw all sorts of questions at him, which may cause him to feel threatened, vulnerable, and insecure.

The missionary must be very sure of the foundation upon which he stands, so that if someone asks a question for which he has no immediate answer he will not panic. No one is going to think of the question this week that will bring Christianity crashing down. The missionary must simply say to the questioner, "I don't have the answer to that one right now, but I'll be glad to dig it up for you."

The essentials of the Reformed faith are important to understand and to hold because they comprise the message of the preaching of the gospel, and they give the strength of

confidence to the missionary. The missionary must have the confidence that the gospel of Christ crucified is the work of God's sovereign grace which the Holy Spirit applies to the heart of the elect sinner when and where it pleases Him.

The essentials are the heart and core issues of the faith about which there can be little difference of understanding or interpretation. The Word of God and the Reformed Confessions embody the essentials of the truth.

The missionary must know that the believer's life and walk will bear certain discernible marks, "marks of Christians: namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Savior, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbor, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof" (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). These marks may be seen wherever Christ has His people, regardless of where in all the world they may live.

The non-essentials of the Reformed faith are the areas of the sanctified life in which the believer makes moral choices and judgments for himself on the basis of his knowledge and understanding of God's truth as dic-

tated by his own conscience and according to his Christian liberty.

The matter of the believer's conscience is a difficult area to deal with because there is a subjective element involved. The area of the "essentials" is less subjective. One may say that the Bible objectively says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." There is not much room for differing practice for believers. In the area of the non-essentials the conscience of the believer plays a large part in determining his direction and practice.

The conscience of the believer is not, however, autonomous, but must be subject to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ makes His will known to His people mainly through His infallible Word, but the believer's conscientious understanding of the will of Christ for him is also shaped by many other factors under the providence of God. Such factors as one's rearing as a child, the instruction one has received, the culture in which one was reared, and the traditions that have been handed down to him. As those factors just mentioned can differ widely, so can the believer's conscientious perception or understanding of what, for him, is acceptable to Christ.

God's Word in Romans 14 shows

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us that two believers for whom Christ died can and do come to positions that are diametrically opposed to each other. For one believes that he may eat all things; the other, who is weak, eats only herbs (v. 2). Again, verse 5 says that one man esteems or considers one day above another; the other man esteems every day alike. God's command to both is clear in verses 3-6: "Don't judge or despise each other!" God upholds each believer, as he lives unto the Lord. Who then may judge or despise him? Love and respect for each other as believers is the rule in the realm of the non-essentials. A man may never understand how another Christian can do things that he cannot do with a clear conscience and yet be a Christian, but he must trust

the Word of the God who says, "I am able to make him stand."

How does this apply to the mission field where the missionary encounters widely varying views and practices? First, he must stand in the strength of the power of the gospel to change men's hearts, minds, and consciences. The missionary must patiently deal with those whose consciences are yet not as sensitive as they should be to the precepts of the gospel, and deal equally patiently with those whose consciences are overly sensitive to the precepts of the gospel.

The missionary must learn that the fundamental, life-changing work of the Holy Spirit takes time, and cannot be rushed. The temptation is to try to help along the work of the

Spirit by urging or requiring external conformity to an unwritten code of conduct or practice that exists in the mind of each of us as to how others ought to act. To yield to that temptation may shift the focus of the missionary's work away from Christ to himself.

The missionary must be careful to guard himself against the temptation to give a quick or thoughtless rebuke when he observes someone doing or saying something with which he disagrees. He must take time to think through what happened and perhaps come back to the matter later. He must avoid the mistaken idea that if we do not condemn a certain attitude or deed, we will be condoning it. □

Special Article

Rev. Charles Terpstra

## A Critique of Modern Church-Growth (2)

### II. ITS MESSAGE

When one examines the message of the modern church growth movement, he soon finds some disturbing things. While they claim that they do not undermine or alter and compromise the gospel message, the fact is that in the interests of reaching the masses and enticing them to believe and join the church they *do* undermine and alter and compromise the gospel message.

This is evident from those who advance "power evangelism" through signs and wonders. Apart now from the error of believing the continued exercise of these temporary gifts of

the Spirit, the proponents of this type of evangelism and church growth elevate special signs above the preaching of the gospel, and in fact displace the gospel with the miraculous. As John Armstrong remarks following his reading of John Wimber's book, *Power Evangelism*, "One of the significant things I noticed...was his failure to offer any definitions of the evangel (i.e., the gospel message). Center stage are healings, words of knowledge, phenomena of the Spirit's presence — all things Wimber believes will bring people to faith. One searches in vain for exposition of the content of the gospel itself."<sup>1</sup> Wimber

and others with him openly boast of the fact that unbelievers have been converted through signs and wonders without having heard the gospel and therefore without any knowledge of Christ crucified and raised.<sup>2</sup>

What is this but a denial of Romans 1:16 and 10:14-17, and I Corinthians 1:18,23,24! What is this but a denial of the truth set forth in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism concerning faith, that a "certain knowledge" belongs to the essence of saving faith and therefore of true conversion! When Jesus and His apostles went out for the gathering of the lost, they preached the gospel, and the signs that followed were de-

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1. *Power Religion*, ed. Horton, 80-81.

2. *Ibid.*, 82.



signed to confirm the message, not detract from it or replace it. The miracles never stood by themselves and were never intended to be the sole means unto conversion. It was faith in Christ through the Word which was taught and practiced.

Others have pointed out that when and where the gospel is proclaimed by the signs and wonders movement it is an Arminian gospel, declaring the natural ability of man and the inability of God to save unless man wills, and a Pentecostal gospel, proclaiming the need for the "second blessing" (baptism) of the Spirit in order for a conversion to be authentic.<sup>3</sup> What is this but a denial of the biblical truths of man's inherent and radical depravity and total inability to come to Christ, and of God's absolute sovereignty in the salvation of the sinner (cf. Rom. 3:10-18; Eph. 2:1-3, 8-10; Rom. 9:16; Phil. 1:2, 13)! What is this but a denial of the nature of God's saving work in the sinner and of the very nature of the life of the true Christian (cf. Rom. 7; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:13, 14; Col. 1:2, 10)?

If the message of "power evangelism" is a compromised and corrupted one, so also is that of "market evangelism." This branch of the church growth movement tells us that the "old message" of human sin and salvation by grace is no longer relevant; the church needs a new message. The gospel must be tailored to fit the audience, not the other way around. The church's message must be "user-friendly," i.e., designed for the easy consumption and use of the audience. Anything offensive and hard and deep must be removed. The gospel must be made palatable to all. Not strong doctrine, meat, must be set before them, but

watered down milk, "how to" messages, helpful hints for successful living.

Lest you think we are exaggerating, we quote from one prominent spokesman, Doug Murren, who in his book, *The Baby Boomerang: Catching Baby Boomers as They Return to Church*, writes such things as:

...People in our culture are truly broken and deeply wounded. They need desperately to be healed and put back together. But the process of healing, I believe, is different for every era and every generation, including this one. Yes, different times do require different messages.

Though unchurched [baby] boomers may privately acknowledge they are flawed — and maybe even sinful — they are hardly going to sit in a public place and listen to themselves being described as worms, wretches, fallen creatures and other totally depraved types.... I'm convinced that they need to hear even negative messages presented in positive terms. It is the grid through which we filter things. So if we can't be positive — even when talking about negative

topics — boomers will probably not listen. We have to be careful, therefore, about the tone we take in our services....

Limit your preaching to roughly 20 minutes, because boomers don't have too much time to spare. And don't forget to keep your messages light and informal, liberally sprinkling them with humor and personal anecdotes.<sup>4</sup>

It ought to be evident to the discerning Christian that this is not

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belongs.*

4. The first two quotes are from John F. MacArthur, Jr.'s *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993), 120, 132. The last quote is from Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 83.

what biblical and Reformed evangelism is. True missions and evangelism never shrinks from proclaiming the whole gospel and the whole counsel of God revealed in Scripture, regardless of what men think of it or how they will respond to it (cf. Jer. 1:8, 17; Mat. 28:20; Acts 20:17-27; 2 Tim. 4:2). It never caters to the hearers but submits to the sovereign God to whom this message belongs. It is never compromising, but brings all that God commands. The true missionary and evangelist preaches sin as well as grace, hell as well as heaven, the wrath of God as well as the love of God, the duties of discipleship as well as the blessings of salvation. This is what Jesus and the apostles preached; that is what Augustine and the early church fathers preached; that is what the Reformers preached; and that is what we must preach. We are stewards of the mysteries of God, and it is our sole duty to be faithful, not popular (1 Cor. 4:1, 2).

It is this message of the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. As Douglas Webster points out so well,

Nobody in the New Testament ever heard a casual, laid-back, easygoing gospel. The gospel they heard from Jesus and the apostles was a blend of compassion and conviction, delivered with life-and-death seriousness. Holy intensity provoked thought, generated hostility and compelled commitment. Popular rejection was predictable, but the power of their passion for truth prevailed. The thousands who had eaten miraculous bread and thrilled with the prospects of a popular messiah dwindled down to only a few, but the few who remained would end up turning the world upside-down.<sup>5</sup> □

3. *Ibid.*, 81-83.

5. Webster, *Selling Jesus*, 108-109.



# No Creed but Christ?

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 10:32

Today there are, as in the past there have been, those who oppose the use of creeds in the church of Jesus Christ. Their familiar cry is, "No creed but Christ." It is their claim that creeds are but the work of men, while the Scriptures are God's infallible Word. Therefore, according to them, one should turn from creeds to the use of the Bible alone, for it is in the Bible that Jesus Christ is revealed to us. Thus, there is no need for a creed. It is even argued that creeds are detrimental to the church. Many arguments are set forth in defense of this position. In the course of this article we will look at some of these arguments and try to answer them.

We believe that the church of Christ has always been a creedal church. That can be seen in the history of the church prior to the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and certainly it is seen in the church immediately after the Reformation. In light of this we believe that creeds are indispensable for the church of today. By maintaining the creeds the church of today faithfully preserves the heritage of the truth as passed on to her by the church of the past, particularly the church of the Reformation.

In dealing here with this subject (setting forth the idea of the creed, presenting the arguments against the creeds, and demonstrating the value and importance of creeds), this writer is indebted to Herman Hoeksema, whose notes on this subject were given and taught in the seminary of our churches.

There are three names associated with the idea of a creed, which, when defined, give us the meaning of the word creed. The first name is symbol. A symbol is really a sign. For example, a flag or a banner is a sign by which one nation is everywhere distinguished from other nations. Witness the many different flags at the Olympic games, each representing a different country. Thus, a symbol is a sign representing the faith of the church in general over against all the world, or of a particular church over against all other churches. In the seminary the course in which one studies the creeds is in fact called *Symbols*.

The second name is confession. Literally it means "to speak with" or "to say the same thing as." By this word the church indicates that she expresses her faith in unison with one another and with her head, Jesus Christ. Individual members in a church are members of that particular church because they say the same thing as the other members do. The church in turn joins a federation of churches or a denomination because the church says the same thing as do the others. And each church not only says the same thing as the others, but the same thing as Christ, the same thing as the Holy Scriptures.

The third name associated with the idea of a creed is, of course, the name creed itself. This word is derived from the Latin *credere*, which means "to believe." The word creed expresses that its content is the object of the faith of the church. The Heidelberg Catechism is a creed the contents of which we believe. It is, therefore, the object of our faith.

In combining the idea of the three words just given we can arrive at a definition of creed. A creed is a statement by a church or a group of churches containing a declaration of what such a church or group of churches believes to be the truth of the Word of God as it is developed organically in the church and as it is officially adopted by the church. This definition covers different kinds of creeds. There are creeds that express the whole of Christian doctrine, such as the Belgic or the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Canons of Dordrecht are an example of a creed that expresses only a part of the Christian doctrine, their purpose being to combat the error of Arminianism by pointing out the error and setting forth the positive truth over against that error. The above confessions or creeds are examples of longer creeds, but there are short creeds as well, such as the Apostolic Creed. Another type of creed is termed *minor* or *lesser*, such as the forms for the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

As to the origin of creeds, we can say in general that the church has never been without a confession, for it is simply impossible for the church not to confess the truth. What the

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church says and lives is her perpetual confession. In fact, a church without a confession is a contradiction in terms. Even to say "No creed but Christ" is in itself a creed, for they believe they need no creed. A church without belief ceases to be a church, for it is spiritually impossible to be neutral concerning Christ, and practically impossible as well. To confess Christ is a command of Christ to the church. (Cf. Matt. 10:32, 33; 16:16-18; Rom. 10:9, 10).

Moving from the general to the particular we see that the truth of the Word of God is reflected in the consciousness of the church organically. This is accomplished, not in any individual apart from the whole of the church, but in the church as organism. This operation is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word, all of which is in harmony with the promise of Christ to the church. Before Christ's death on the cross He comforted the disciples in promising that He would return, and that He would do so in such a way that He would be with them forever. This coming was in the Spirit of truth, by which Spirit Christ Himself would be with them forever. The same Spirit that gave us the Scriptures also lives in the hearts of God's people and causes them to appropriate and understand the truth. That truth, then, becomes definitely formulated in the mind of the church. Often this takes place when the truth is attacked or when the church is persecuted, forcing the church to define sharply the truth over against error. Then, when the time is ripe, that formulation is set forth officially by the church in a brief statement called a symbol, confession, or creed.

The authority of a creed so set forth is none other than the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. This means that the authority of creeds is not inherent, but derivative. They only

express what Scripture already expresses. As a result, to be bound by creeds is to be bound by the Scriptures. This implies several things. In the first place, the permanent criterion is Scripture, with nothing ever coming in the place of Scripture. Secondly, the creeds are never placed on a par with Scripture, but are always subject to Scripture. Further, the church must live out of the Scriptures as guided by the creeds. Thus, the authority of the creeds is the authority of Scripture. Creeds are not infallible, but they are an expression of what the church believes the Scriptures to

say. And because creeds state what God Himself has spoken through Christ, they possess an authority which is not their own, but Scripture's.

This is why the Reformed approach to Scripture has always been a creedal approach. A non-creedal church (if that is even a possibility) goes directly to Scripture. This is always the approach of the heretic, who appeals to isolated passages of Scripture in support of his own pet doctrines. But this is a method which is contrary to the Reformed faith. The creedal approach to Scripture looks at the Scriptures as a unity. And, as Christ has promised, the Spirit of truth leads the church into the truth. Knowing this, one does not isolate certain texts, taking them out of their own context and out of the context of the whole of Scripture. By taking texts out of context, one can prove anything, no matter how absurd. Basically it is a question of what is taught from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22, because Scripture is its own interpreter. Treating Scripture as a unity, the church discovers the current teaching of the Word of God, and sets it forth in her creeds. The creeds, then, lead us into an understanding of the unity of the truth as found in Scripture as a whole. Therefore, the creeds are not superior to Scripture, but are

the means, the way, by which we go to the Word of God. In the Word we find our hiding place, our rest, our peace, the joy of salvation. But going via the creeds, we recognize the work of the Spirit of truth, the unity of God's Word, the one faith of the church of all ages.

What we have just written can be demonstrated in the history of the church. While Christ was yet on earth, one of the first confessions was heard. In Matthew 16:16 Peter is recorded as confessing, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Later, in Acts 8:37, Philip hears the Ethiopian eunuch confess, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. In the early church there was the Apostles' Creed, with which we are all familiar. Added to this are what are called the ecumenical creeds, such as the Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian. Then there is the period following the sixteenth century Reformation. As the Reformation spread from country to country, each area formulated its own creed in harmony with time and circumstances. Our own Three Forms of Unity are among them.

However, there have always been those who have raised various arguments against the creeds. It is argued that creeds supersede the Bible as a standard of faith. The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is so complete that it needs no human addition, and so easily understood that it requires no human explanation. In response to the above argument, we can posit that no Protestant ever professed his creed to have an authority equal to or greater than the authority of the Scriptures. Such objections are raised generally in ignorance of Scripture and its doctrine. We too believe in the sufficiency of the Scriptures, but the above argument carries no weight when used in opposition to creeds. It is a denial of the historic-organic development of the church in the world, and of the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit in that historical organism of the body of Christ. It is a sin to set aside the fruit of this guidance of the Holy Spirit in the past. The church has the

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Himself  
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calling to confess her faith in the midst of the world. Her creed or confession is a summary of what she believes the Scriptures teach. Scripture is not a system of truth, nor a compendium of faith, but it is the divinely given source from which the church derives both: the system and the compendium.

A second argument is that creeds force and bind the conscience. One may say, "What right has any church, or body of churches, to impose a creed on me, or dictate to me what I shall believe?" In reply, we can certainly agree that the Word of God is the only power that is binding upon the conscience and heart of man. But it is equally true that the members of a church or group of churches have the right to agree and declare how they understand the Scriptures. If one agrees with them he is free to join, and if he disagrees he is free either not to join, or to leave if he is already a member. Nobody is forcing his conscience.

It is also alleged that creeds promote discord and strife, create divisions. Just look at all the different denominations, each one separated from the other by a wall of separation, the creed. These must be broken down in order for there to be unity. In refutation, we notice that creeds do not create divisions or distinctions, but merely express existing distinctions. Does one really believe that the removal of creeds actually would make possible the worshipping together of the Reformed with the Arminian, or with the Roman Catholic? The removal of creeds to the point that all could agree would so water down the truth that there would be virtually nothing left of it.

A fourth objection to creeds is that they impede the development of the truth. It is said that one is tempted to rest on a creed, and to say that it is the last word, with no need for further development. In order to have development, one must have free dis-

cussion; but creeds limit discussion and do not give free rein to discussion of truth. In response, we can point out that the fault of lethargy lies not in the creed, but in the members of the church, who no longer are living their confessions, but regard their creeds as so many papers in the archives. A belief that the creeds are too narrow is based on an erroneous conception of the organic development of the truth. What creeds do is narrow the discussion to the Scriptures, which are the fountain of all truth. The church develops in one age on the basis of the work in the past. There is organic continuity from Pentecost to today.

The church of today stands on the shoulders of the church in the past.

Having seen what creeds are, and having looked at and answered objections to the creeds, we must yet state positively the value and importance of creeds. We begin by declaring that they are the means by which the church as a whole can express her faith over against all the

world, or by which a denomination of churches can express her faith over against all other churches. To be faithful to her calling, the church does this over against the world of unbelief and over against the apostate church.

Creeds are also a means to unite us with the church of the past. The unity of the whole church is a unity of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. As this same truth is confessed throughout all time, it is this truth which binds the church of all ages together into the one body of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the child of God there is great comfort in this; for the truth may be despised and rejected and the company of the faithful grow smaller, but the confessions assure us that we stand in a noble company of mighty warriors and faithful men and women such as the Augustines, the Calvins, the Luthers, etc.

In addition, creeds serve as a basis for further development. It is

spiritually irresponsible to turn our backs upon the truth, and to seek out new inventions which deny the creedal heritage which our God has given us. Ever it is our calling to develop the truth. But we do that on the basis of the confessions. Development is truly possible only when we have both feet firmly planted in our creedal heritage.

To this can be added the fact that creeds are the testimony of the fulfillment of the promise of Christ to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. In this truth as given by the Spirit, Christ Himself abides with us. Therefore, the creeds must be in the hearts and on the lips of the people of God as a living confession. Consciously, explicitly, and continuously they must be brought to the attention of God's people. Thus, they are preached from our pulpits and are taught in the catechism rooms; they form the theological basis for our schools in the instruction of our covenant children; and they are studied in our homes so that both parents and children know them, love them, and are thankful for them. In summary, they must be a living part of all the life of the people of God in all their calling.

It is not difficult to see, then, that creeds are also a strong defense of the truth against heresy. Many if not most of the creeds were written in defense of the truth against heresy of one kind or another. A heretic hates creeds because he must take them down point by point in order to get at the precious truth.

Our creeds serve to preserve the unity of the saints among ourselves, not just with the church of the past. But not only do creeds serve to unite us with the church of the past and among ourselves in the present. They are also an excellent means to transmit the heritage of the truth to the generations that follow.

From what we have just seen, it certainly will do neither us nor our fellow saints any good to be critical of the creeds. Instead of being critical of them it is time to go back to them and study them in the light of the Word of

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God. In them is expressed the eternal truth of the Scriptures, the glory which no man will ever fully comprehend. A faithful, prayerful study of the creeds in the light of the Word will

lead the church into an ever deeper understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of God as taught in the Word. May God grant us in these latter days the grace always to "earnestly con-

tend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," the faith as set forth so eloquently in our confessions. □

*A Cloud Of Witnesses*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

# Peter Datheen: Father of Reformed Liturgy (1)

## The Reformation in the Netherlands

### Introduction

In this and subsequent articles we intend to write sketches about certain leaders in the Reformation which God brought to the Netherlands. This is of particular concern to many of our readers who trace their ancestry to the Netherlands and find in the work of God in the Netherlands their own spiritual roots.

While there are several important men whom we wish to discuss, our first articles will deal with Peter Datheen. I have given these articles the title: "Peter Datheen: Father of Reformed Liturgy." This does not mean that Peter Datheen made contributions to the Reformation in the Netherlands only in the area of liturgy, for he was a leading figure in the work of God in the Lowlands, some say the most influential of all from an ecclesiastical point of view. He was surely one of the earliest preachers of the Reformed faith. He was bold and brave in the face of persecution. He was a fugitive from persecution almost more times than one would care to count. But, above all, he placed an

indelible stamp on the liturgy of the Reformed Churches, a stamp which remains to this day.

That he was a fugitive and exile was so much his life that one biographer, B. J. W. DeGraaff, has given his book on Datheen, with an obvious allusion to Psalm 42, the title: "Hunted As A Hart" (*Als Een Hert Gejaecht*). Unfortunately, the book is in Dutch. (The old spelling of the last word in the title is due to the fact that the title is taken from the Dutch versification of Psalm 42 as composed by Datheen.)

But Datheen's work was done within the context of the early years of the Reformation in the Netherlands, and it is impossible to understand his work without understanding the suffering of the saints in the early years of the work of Reformation. We shall, therefore, first, describe that early Reformation.

### Early Years

The area in which is now the country of the Netherlands was part of a larger area called "The Lowlands" at the time of the Reformation. The Lowlands comprised approximately what is now the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and part of northern France. It was technically a part of the Holy Roman Empire over

which Charles V ruled, a kingdom including Spain, Germany, the Lowlands, and Italy. This Charles V was the same Charles before whom Luther made his stirring defense at Worms.

The Lowlands were much more independent than other parts of Charles' domain. They had been, from the time when the people were still barbarian, a freedom loving people who fought tenaciously for their personal rights and were ready to make huge sacrifices to protect themselves from outside interference. They were composed of 17 provinces, each of which was ruled by a prince, but the whole constituting a rather loose federation.

They were also extremely prosperous and poured much money into Charles' coffers. Industry, trade, commerce, shipping, agriculture all flourished. Europe's goods passed through the Lowlands on their way to the sea and to foreign ports. Ships daily docked in the harbors and unloaded their treasures from distant countries.

All these things were facts which Charles kept in mind when he pretty much allowed the Lowlanders a great deal of autonomy and self rule.

Many "Protestant" influences were present in the Lowlands long before the Reformation started. Fugitive

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tive Waldensians had found a home there; Lollards (followers of John Wycliffe in England) had come across the channel from time to time to escape persecution in their homeland; some of the better mystics, such as the Brethren of the Common Life, had settled at the mouth of the Rhine River, which emptied into the North Sea near the province of Zeeland; the Latin Vulgate had been translated into the vernacular so that many people possessed a Bible in their own tongue.

Earliest Reformation influences were Lutheran. Lutheran teachings had been widely circulated, and Lutheran writings were openly peddled and sold in the markets of the cities. Some of the provincial rulers adopted Lutheran teachings and urged their people to become Lutheran. In 1522, five years after the Reformation began, Luther's Bible was printed and a Dutch translation of it prepared.

Some less than favorable influences were also present. Zwinglianism could be found, especially in East Friesland, and the Anabaptists, persecuted elsewhere in Europe, settled in the Lowlands and found a place to escape persecution. Many of these were the more radical Anabaptists, who rebelled against constituted authority, attempted to set up their own kingdom, and caused true Protestantism no end of grief, for the Roman Catholics were delighted to lump Anabaptists with other Reformers.

### The Spread Of Calvinism

Calvinism actually came rather late to the Lowlands. Around 1535 it first appeared in the French-speaking Walloon provinces and gradually spread northward. Its spread was aided by converted Anabaptists who had been instructed in Strassburg by

Martin Bucer, Capito, and Calvin. It was not long before Calvinism swept all other influences aside. Anabaptism, Lutheranism, and much of mysticism gave way before the rapid spread of what was to become in these Lowlands the Reformed faith.

God used many different means to promote the Reformed faith. In 1561 Guido de Brès published that magnificent creed, the Confession of Faith, in the Lowlands, a confession quickly adopted by the Churches. In 1563 the Heidelberg Catechism was written, and, within a couple of years of its publication, was translated into Dutch. The Convention of Wezel began the work which was later to become our Church Order. The first Synod met in Emden in 1571, and the second Synod in Dordrecht in 1578.

But the Reformed faith was not established without untold suffering.

### Persecution in the Lowlands

The persecution of our forebears in the Lowlands was some of the worst persecution the church had ever experienced. While it is utterly impossible to determine accurately how many people of God were killed, the conservative

estimates run as high as 100,000, while others claim that as many as 200,000 were killed. From 1523 to 1573, a period of only 50 years, more Protestants were killed than in all the years when the Roman Empire engaged in persecution. From Nero's first persecutions in the middle of the first century to the reign of Constantine the Great, when persecution ceased in 312 (a period of over 250 years), fewer of God's people suffered martyrdom at the hands of a pagan world power than in the Lowlands when God's people were butchered by the Roman Catholic Church. And Rome has never expressed one single word of regret! Our fathers sealed their faith with their lives and gave to us a heritage of

the truth written in blood. How much the more ought we not to treasure it.

Although Charles V issued an order in 1521 that all heresy should be extinguished in the Lowlands, the persecution did not begin until 1523, when two Augustinian monks were burned at the stake in Brussels for Lutheran tendencies. While the fire was burning, the two recited together the Apostles' Creed and sang the *Te Deum Laudamus* (We Praise Thee, O God). Their suffering moved Luther to write a hymn, one stanza of which is:

Quiet their ashes will not lie:  
But scattered far and near,  
Stream, dungeon, bolt, and grave  
defy,  
Their foeman's shame and fear.  
Those whom alive the tyrant's  
wrongs  
To silence could subdue,  
He must, when dead, let sing the  
songs  
Which in all languages and tongues,  
Resound the wide world through.

Persecution remained somewhat sporadic, however, and so, Charles, expressing a deep regret that he had not burned Luther at Worms, ordered that the dreaded Inquisition be used as an instrument of persecution in the Lowlands. That awful Inquisition, which used the foulest means, trampled under foot every principle of justice, made use of most exquisite tortures, and was answerable to no one, became the instrument for the suppression of heresy. Within Charles' lifetime, not many less than 50,000 were killed.

But the worst was yet to come.

Charles, weary of ruling, plagued by gout, and perhaps burdened in conscience, retired to a monastery, and the rule passed to his son, the cruel Philip II. Under Margaret of Parma, who was made regent in the Lowlands, Philip attempted ruthlessly to exterminate all heresy from that part of his domain by ordering that no books by Protestant authors be printed, sold, or read; that no images in Roman Catholic Churches be destroyed; that no meetings of Protes-

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tants be held; that no reading of Scripture take place anywhere; that no discussion of disputed points of doctrine be allowed. And, violators who recanted and confessed their disobedience to Rome were to be killed anyway: men were to be beheaded, women buried alive. If Protestants refused to recant, they were to be burned alive. All their property was to be confiscated, and large rewards from the proceeds of the property were to be given to informers.

It was a time of terrible cruelty and suffering. Because many noble

and courageous Protestants made good confessions to the assembled crowds while the fires were burning their flesh, the Inquisition ordered that their tongues be screwed with metal screws to their jaw bones and the whole cauterized with a hot iron so that the swelling made it impossible for them to speak.

The stories of the courage and steadfastness of God's people under the exquisite tortures of apostate Rome bring tears to the eyes. One can read of them in Wylie's extremely worthwhile work, *The History of*

### *Protestantism.*

The persecution became all but unbearable: towns were emptied, factories were idle, market places were without buyers or sellers, homes were dark — almost all life came to a stop.

Under these conditions, the princes of the Lowlands and the burghers of various cities joined together in a pledge to withstand and resist all tyranny. It became known as the Compromise of 1566. It was the beginning of national and political resistance to Spanish rule. □

*Guest Article*

*Mr. Don Doezema*

# Domestic Mission Committee Report

## Northern Ireland

Reflecting on his first year as missionary in Northern Ireland, Rev. Ronald Hanco noted that "things have gone so well that it is difficult at times to see anything negative."

What was Rev. Hanco talking about? About his work as missionary, surely — for he wrote the above in connection with his observation that the Word had been eagerly received, and that the Lord had opened many doors for him and for the Covenant Reformed Fellowship (CRF). But we think he intended more. In fact, from the monthly reports which Rev. Hanco submitted conscientiously throughout the year, we would dare say that he intended the statement to be all-inclusive. In every aspect of their life and work in Northern

Ireland, things are going well for the Hankos.

That must have come as a great relief to them. For there would have been, by way of anticipation, not only excitement for what lay ahead, but also certain apprehensions. What about schooling? How would they get along with the members of the CRF? What about the IRA? Would they ever get used to driving on the wrong side of the road, and get accustomed to hearing Irish English?

In every respect the Hankos have been able to "see the gracious hand of God" in their life. The warmth of the welcome extended to them by the CRF on their arrival turned out to be a good barometer of the affection shown them consistently thereafter. The children have settled well into the school situation and have made a good adjustment to life in another country. (In fact, according to their father, they "have been a great help in the work, witnessing to others, and being in general an asset to the

group.") And the Hankos have found very gratifying the support from back home. Noteworthy in that regard was Hudsonville's decision to send, at their congregation's own expense, a committee of two elders to Northern Ireland, to encourage the Hankos and to assess, personally, the work being done there. And they came bearing gifts — one for each member of the Hanco family, "in appreciation for their labors in N. Ireland." Tangible evidence, that was, of the continued care and concern for the missionary and his family, on the part of the congregation which had called and sent them.

The work to which Rev. Hanco was called was in part to minister to the CRF itself. But hardly was that all. And a perusal of Rev. Hanco's monthly reports gives clear indication that he has taken his other responsibilities seriously. A bi-weekly newsletter, much of it written by Rev. Hanco, is sent now to more than 400 addresses in the UK. Bi-monthly ar-

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ticles were prepared for two Ulster newspapers. Special meetings, at the rate of about one per month, were held in various places in Northern Ireland. Rev. Hanko spoke also at several conferences in England, and, while he was there, he would conduct Sunday services as well. At one point last fall, a week of "Gospel Meetings" in Ballymena was followed by a conference sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship in Morley, England. Looking back, Rev. Hanko counted 14 times that he preached or gave a speech in that 15-day period. He returned home, he said, exhausted ... but looking forward to the next conference in Belfast the following week — a conference, incidentally, which was not very well attended, probably partly because a large bomb had exploded in the city the evening before, and parts of the city were still closed off at the time of the conference.

There are also, of course, catechism classes to teach, Bible Study to lead, chapel speeches to give at a local Christian school, and sermons to prepare — to say nothing of Rev. Hanko's family responsibilities. (Just the transporting of his children to and from various schools every day can take precious hours out of the work week.) But, so far from complaining, Rev. Hanko views the very busyness of his life as evidence of the Lord's prospering his work in Northern Ireland.

A good part of the reason for his ability to cope, Rev. Hanko is quick to say, is that the members of the CRF are actively involved in the work. One man has taken charge of taping sermons, another of the book store, while still another attends to the finances, and someone else takes care of the distribution of the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, while another distributes tapes and pamphlets. And that's just a beginning. Work which *can be done* by others in the group *is done* by others. The members of the CRF insist on that — so that the missionary can devote his time to writing and teaching and preaching. Rev. Hanko notes too, with appreciation, that the members of the CRF

faithfully attend all of the special meetings — even when those meetings are held in Portadown, a town about 60 miles distant from Ballymena. "Their entire life," according to the two elders who visited the CRF last fall, "seems to be the Fellowship and its members. They do not appear to be wealthy, nor are they poor, just average families who are dedicated to bringing up their children in the fear of the Lord. Family and the church are their whole life." The elders found additional evidence of that in their visiting a couple of catechism classes. They were much impressed by how well the students knew their lessons when they came to class. It was obvious that there had been diligent preparation in the homes. Hardly surprising, is it, that Rev. Hanko is so full of enthusiasm about the work!

The Covenant Reformed Fellowship is small, numbering only 14 adults, three young people, and 13 children (not counting the Hanko tribe). Regular and irregular visitors, however, can swell that number to the point where there can be as many as 50 in attendance at a worship service. And that's stretching the capacity of their little rented meeting place. If there is one important "negative" in the work of the CRF, it is probably this, that their efforts to find a better place in which to worship have thus far come to nothing. Last September they made an offer to buy the Salvation Army Hall in Ballymena and were optimistic that "before too long" they would have a building of their own. (They even had assurance from their bank that they could obtain a 7% loan!) The Salvation Army however ran into a snag in their own plans to purchase another facility, so they had to put the negotiations to sell their building on hold. Convinced that they need a different meeting place, both because it is inadequate for their current use and because it is an impediment to external growth, the CRF is looking into several other possibilities, while maintaining periodic contact also with the Salvation Army. Finding suitable, and affordable, fa-

cilities for worship in Ballymena is not easy, for a little group; so, this remains a somewhat troublesome aspect of the work of the CRF.

Overall, however, we echo Rev. Hanko's sentiments that things are going well. The Mission Committee is very pleased with Hudsonville's oversight of the field and with the work of their missionary during the past year. Further, as we said in our report to Synod, "the relationship among the four parties involved (the CRF, the missionary, the calling church, and the Mission Committee) has been marked by harmony and cordiality beyond that for which we would have dared hope. This part of our labors has therefore been a great pleasure, and we thank the Lord for it."

(The British Reformed Fellowship, incidentally, is sponsoring another "Family Holiday Conference" this summer in Scotland, with Profs. Engelsma and Hanko being again the speakers. All of you who are planning to attend do well to try to persuade your friends to do the same.)

### Jamaica

The work of our churches in Jamaica began before any of the current members of the Mission Committee had ever served on a synodical committee. We can well imagine, however, that there must have been a good deal of excitement that a door of opportunity was opening for the churches in a foreign country, with a people of a different race and culture. It soon became apparent, however, that Jamaica was an ambitious undertaking, for a small denomination of churches whose mission labors had before been pretty much limited to the U.S. and Canada. We had to learn as it were by trial and error — and of the latter there were probably not a few. One thing we did learn was that no real progress could be made in the work without a missionary in the field. And then that *one* missionary was simply not enough. In recognition of that, Synod authorized the calling church to call two missionaries. To First Church's great dismay,



however, it became apparent, in the years following the return of Rev. Bruinsma, that getting even one missionary to labor in the field was proving to be impossible. It is of course the Lord who calls His servants, through His church, to labor where He pleases in His vineyard. Synod 1993 therefore concluded that God Himself, in His wise providence, had not "enabled us to work the vast and difficult field in Jamaica as this kind of field requires." Synod then instructed the calling church and the Mission Committee to "do whatever is necessary to close the field in an orderly and brotherly manner."

That was the sad task of the two bodies this past year. First Church wrestled long and hard with the question of how best to implement Synod's instruction. They decided at length, in consultation with the Mission Committee, to send Rev. Joostens (pastor of First Church) and Rev. Gritters (member of the Mission Committee) to visit Jamaica for a ten-day period, in order 1) to visit each congregation to explain the decisions of Synod and to encourage the saints in their faith; 2) to ask for a meeting of the Jamaica Classis in order to provide spiritual encouragement for the leaders of the various congregations; and 3) to review all legal documents with the officers of the Classis, and update them if necessary.

From the report of the emissaries we conclude that they carried out their mandate well. They met with as many individuals as possible; but the majority of time was spent with the pastors, in order to encourage them to continue the work of the ministry in their churches. The emissaries testified that it was "a most difficult task to convey the decision of our churches." With respect both to leaders and parishioners, individuals and groups, the response was great discouragement. They simply cannot imagine continued existence without the help of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Rev. Joostens preached from church to church from Acts 20, the passage in which Paul speaks to the

elders of the church of Ephesus, reminding them of his labors among them, warning them of the dangers that they would face in the future, and commending them to the care of the Lord. Rev. Joostens' message was received well. And in every instance, they "parted with tears."

Thus ended a long chapter in the work of the Mission Committee. First Church of Grand Rapids, we think, deserves the gratitude of the churches for their conscientious labors, on behalf of the denomination. Those most closely connected with the work understand well that it was a privilege to be involved in it. To labor for and among the dear saints of God in Jamaica was a delightful experience and spiritually rewarding. At the same time, the work did demand a great deal of time and energy, was often frustrating ... and has now ended in sad disappointment. For that labor we sincerely thank the calling church, its pastor, and its Jamaica Mission Committee.

#### **San Luis Valley**

The Mission Committee meanwhile began to cooperate with Loveland PRC in an exciting work in southern Colorado. Back in May of last year Loveland followed up some written correspondence with various individuals in the San Luis Valley by sending their pastor, then Rev. Ronald Cammenga, along with a couple of elders, to meet with a group of people in Alamosa, one of the two main towns in the valley. Of the five families (and two individuals) represented at that meeting, most were members of another Reformed church in the area but were dissatisfied with recent developments in it — especially, they said, the many changes that had been introduced into the worship services by those who were determined to be "progressive." Some of them had been listening to sermon tapes sent them by Loveland, and the older members of the group noted with appreciation that that kind of preaching was like what they used to hear. And all wanted to hear more.

On the basis of the report of their

delegation to Alamosa, the consistory of Loveland decided to respond to the call for help by arranging preaching services there as soon as possible, supplying the group for at least two Sundays per month for an initial period of six months, to give the consistory sufficient time to evaluate the work. Loveland decided, too, to communicate at once with the Mission Committee, in order to make the work from the very outset a cooperative endeavor. They realized also that, though they intended to involve their own congregation in the support of the work, they needed some financial assistance in order to conduct the work they had in mind.

It did seem to the Mission Committee that Loveland would be better advised to begin more slowly — by, for example, holding mid-week meetings for the purpose of Bible Study, or to give instruction in various points of Reformed doctrine. Loveland was however convinced that the circumstances called for more. They saw an "open door" in Alamosa, and reasoned that, since the preaching is what makes us distinctive and is the chief means of grace, it ought to be started as soon as possible.

Content to let the local consistory take the lead in such activity, the Mission Committee agreed to assist in the work as outlined by Loveland. And, after having read the reports of those who have labored there (ministers both from Classis West and Classis East, including several members of the Mission Committee), we are fully persuaded that things are going well. In addition to making all the arrangements for a preaching schedule, Loveland has seen to it that, on a regular basis, a member of the Council is in attendance at the worship service in Alamosa. This interest and involvement on the part of Loveland is much appreciated by the group — as is also the preaching. The people there speak often of the great difference between what they had been receiving in their former churches and what they are receiving from the ministers of the PRC. One of the elderly ladies, in fact, asked a



visitor from our churches, "Are you, after having heard this kind of preaching all your life, as touched and moved as we are when we hear it?" Ah, yes — as an elder from Loveland put it, "We have so much to be thankful for!"

The group, according to one of the ministers who preached for them, is "an interesting mixture of relatively new converts to the Reformed faith, and those established in the Reformed faith." Taken together, he continued, they have both enthusiasm and stability. Another of our ministers noted that he saw in the core group evidence of a solid base for a future congregation. He was impressed, he said, "by the potential officebearer material, by the great appreciation for the preaching and reading sermons of the PRC, by the earnestness of their faith, and by their teachability."

(We would be remiss were we not to mention that, during their spring vacation this year, three members of our churches who attend Dordt College traveled to the San Luis Valley to be of assistance, if they could, in the work. This was motivated, apparently, by the fact that a number of Dordt students regularly take advantage of spring break to go to missions of their own denomination to help in various ways. So, with the approval of Loveland Consistory, and to the delight of Rev. Terpstra, the three (Julie Bekkering, Jennifer Buys, and Gary Eriks) traveled by car to Colorado to help out on our "field." Members of the mission group enjoyed their presence, Rev. Terpstra was able to make very good use of their help in [among other things] making prepa-

rations for a lecture, and the students themselves benefited from the experience. Rev. Terpstra was moved to write, "I believe that there is a proper place for this kind of practical assistance in our mission work and hope that their contribution begins a new tradition for the use of our college students' spring break.")

Already last fall the members of the "core group" voted unanimously to have as their ultimate goal that they be established as a Protestant Reformed Church. They wished to have that goal as a matter of record, so that they would be better able to tell visitors to their worship services who and what they are. They understand well, however, that, given their current numbers, much work must be done before they would be able to realize that goal. They therefore followed that decision with a formal request that the work in the San Luis Valley "gain official mission status by the PRC."

#### Home-missionary

Though the work of Loveland in Alamosa is being done as best it can be done at present, a labor of this sort demands the presence of a missionary, to live with the members of the group — to minister to their needs and to help them work the field. The Mission Committee has advised that that kind of provision be made by Synod 1994 for the San Luis Valley — howbeit, not by "declaring it a field." We have decided, rather, to ask Synod to approve Loveland PRC as the calling church for a home-missionary, whose labors would begin in the San Luis Valley.

The idea here is that such a mis-

sionary will labor in the San Luis Valley until the will of the Lord is accomplished there, but be available also for short periods of time to investigate other areas of interest as they arise. And when mission work in this particular area is terminated (either because a church is organized or the work is unfruitful) the missionary will move elsewhere, still under the oversight of Loveland's consistory.

This is different from our recent practice of calling a man only to an officially declared field. But, at the same time, the calling of a home-missionary for the work as we have envisioned it, has abundant and solid precedent in the history of missions in our churches. Surely, as it seems to us, it will help the Mission Committee to fulfill its mandate to find fields and recommend them to the churches. And it will alleviate the problems attendant upon declaring an area a field too soon ... or too late; or declaring an area a field and being unable to secure a man to work it; or having to "prove" viability before a man can be sent to an area to discover by working in it whether or not it is "viable"; or, after working a declared field for a time, and seeing little growth, having to decide when and on what grounds it can be "closed."

The Mission Committee is excited about this one. As is also Loveland, and the brothers and sisters with whom we are laboring in the San Luis Valley. We look, of course, to Synod for instruction in this matter — and surely also to the King of the church to incline the heart of a man to accept a call to serve, in whatever way Synod under the guidance of the Spirit deems wise, as missionary on the homefront.

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## Book Reviews

*Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice*, by Andrew Cornes. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993. 528 pp. \$24.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

This is a careful, thorough treatment of Scripture's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Although concentrating on marriage, the book does justice to the single life as a blessed, preferable way of life for some Christians. Following the 300-

page section of biblical exposition is a 200-page section devoted to instruction of officebearers and congregation concerning pastoral practice.

Anglican minister Andrew Cornes demonstrates that it is the doctrine of Christ and Paul, that is,



the New Testament, that divorce is permitted only in the case of the sexual infidelity of one's mate and that remarriage is always forbidden as long as one's husband or wife is still living. Taking sharp issue with virtually all of Protestant thinking today, Cornes contends that the Bible forbids the remarriage also of the so-called innocent party.

This book is convinced that in Matthew 19:9 — as in Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18, and Matthew 5:27-32 — Christ prohibits remarriage even in the case of divorce for adultery ... (p. 305).

The one text that might possibly be understood to allow for the remarriage of the "innocent party" is Matthew 19:9. Cornes rejects this popular interpretation and convincingly shows that Jesus in fact is teaching that "it is always wrong to remarry in the lifetime of your divorced partner" (p. 220). Especially the surprise of the disciples at Jesus' teaching and Jesus' response to this surprise (vv. 10ff.) lead Cornes to the conclusion that Matthew 19:9 teaches that "a man may divorce his wife for marital unfaithfulness, but anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman — for whatever reason — commits adultery" (p. 236).

The basis for this view of divorce and remarriage is the biblical truth about marriage. Marriage is an unbreakable bond between one man and one woman formed by God Himself. Death alone as the dissolving act of God breaks the bond. Divorce in the sense of the dissolving of the marriage is, therefore, not only forbidden, but also impossible. Accordingly, every subsequent remarriage is adultery.

Jesus' teaching (in Mark 10:1-12 — DJE) also means that divorce — at least in the sense in which the Pharisees thought of it — is not only wrong (9) but is impossible. Again, it is of course perfectly possible to secure a divorce that is valid from the legal point of view. But it is not possible to undo what God has done. God has

joined a man and his wife together (9). He has created a marriage "yoke" (9) or unity (8) or bond (I Cor. 7:39). Since, even after divorce, to marry someone else is to commit adultery (11, 12), clearly this marriage bond still remains, even after legal divorce. Therefore full divorce — in the sense of the "dissolution" or elimination of the marriage bond — is not something which any legal process is capable of achieving. Only death dissolves the bond (Rom. 7:3; I Cor. 7:39) (p. 193).

The reason why the churches and their theologians, ministers, and marriage counsellors permit remarriage is that they do not know the reality of marriage: "People today do not understand the New Testament position on divorce and remarriage because they have never understood what, according to the Bible, happens at marriage" (p. 288).

The one area of weakness in this powerful, courageous presentation is Cornes' tolerance of those who are already divorced and remarried as members of the church, especially if they remarried in ignorance of the biblical teaching. This tolerance is cautious and unenthusiastic, even grudging. It demands repentance for the sin of adultery in every case. It seems to call for stripping remarried officebearers of their office. But there is this tolerance.

Repentance will not mean breaking up a remarriage that has already been entered into, but it will mean recognizing that this second marriage — however much it is, rightly, a cause of praise to God — should not have been embarked upon, and attempting to be reconciled — to ask, to receive and to give forgiveness — with one's first partner (p. 412).

Cornes ignores the truth that on his own (biblical) view those who are remarried after divorce are involved in an ongoing adulterous relationship. He also fails to note that genuine repentance invariably consists of turning from the sin that is repented of. His tolerance of (repentant) remarried persons in the church runs the

author stuck. He rightly condemns "a service of blessing" for a remarriage, that is, a ceremony in which the pastor or church blesses the remarriage that has just been performed by a civil magistrate since the church refused to be involved. But Cornes is forced to approve the church's subsequent prayer on behalf of this remarriage:

Can it be right later on to pray for the healing of a second marriage that has run into difficulties or for the continued growth of a happy remarriage? We saw in chapter 10 that the new couple have entered into a marriage covenant. They should not have done so, but they have; and that covenant is now binding on them. They cannot repudiate it at will; they should not repudiate it, even if they subsequently realize it was a mistake (cf. Eccles. 5:4-7). Therefore it is entirely right that Christians should pray for a second marriage that has run into difficulties to be sustained. But it cannot be right at the very beginning of the marriage for the Church to give its seal of approval (which is how it is inevitably seen) by offering a service of blessing. This must be withheld (pp. 483, 484).

Like the section of biblical exposition, the section on pastoral practice is outstanding, with the exception just noted. Cornes pleads for education of the members of the church in the truths of singleness, marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He calls for a "caring" that sympathetically helps those in marital distress and that dares to discipline those who sinfully divorce and who remarry. Reconciliation must be the church's aim, although this involves strenuous effort. In a culture dominated by the thinking and behavior of the world, the church must see her calling to be that she "bear(s) witness to God's standards, to Christ's teaching" (p. 465).

This is a splendid, timely, and rare book. Above all, it is a book that is uncompromisingly faithful to Scripture in a matter — marriage — that is simply crucial to the life of the Christian and to the existence of the church. It is the best book that I have read on



the subject, and I have read many.

Published by Eerdmans (to their credit), it will have to be acknowledged by evangelicals who have long since abandoned the biblical principles that the book advocates and who approve the same easy unfaithfulness on the part of married persons to God and to each other that the book condemns. What will these evangelicals say about it? ■

*Many Verses!*, by Ernest Springer. Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1993, i-ii, 73pp. \$4.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

The subtitle of this little book informs us of its main contents: "The importance of reading the Scriptures in Reformed worship."

The author is concerned, and rightly so, that Scripture reading as a part of worship is increasingly being

de-emphasized and even abandoned. This is not only being done in circles where contemporary forms of worship are being used, but also in more solid and staid churches which hold to traditional forms to worship God. He contends for the fact that Scripture reading has always been considered an essential aspect of worship and that its demise or de-emphasis is contrary to the Word of God. He points out that Scripture requires it and that the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition insist upon it, even to the point that commonly two entire chapters were read in the worship service. Whatever the motives of the minister may be, and sometimes these motives are only to free up more time for the sermon, the reading of the Scriptures is crucial in Reformed worship.

In dealing with the subject, Mr. Springer takes the opportunity to discuss other matters connected with

Scripture reading: the regulative principle, modern translations, annotated Bibles, red-letter Bibles, etc. In broadly addressing himself to whatever detracts from the reading of God's Word, he takes on charismatics and the practice of putting unbelievers into office in the church.

Adding to the value of the book is an appendix which gives the debate which was carried on at the Westminster Assembly concerning Scripture reading in the worship services.

The book is an excellent reminder that, after all, sometimes the reading of God's Word is the best part of the worship service.

I cannot resist the temptation to add that ministers ought to read the Word of God fluently, without mistakes, and with proper emphasis — something which requires careful preparation. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Minister Activities

Subsequent to the writing of our last news column, both of our vacant churches (the newly-organized Georgetown PRC in Bauer, MI and the Hudsonville, MI PRC) met in congregational meetings to call a pastor. Both these congregations have extended calls to Rev. C. Haak, presently serving as pastor of the Lynden, WA PRC.

In a matter somewhat related to the above, Rev. G. VanBaren has chosen Sunday, May 8th, as his farewell to the Hudsonville congregation, which he has served for over 16 years. Plans call for the VanBarens to arrive in Loveland, CO sometime in early June, D.V.

You might also be interested to know that Rev. VanBaren, with his 16 years at Hudsonville, was second on

the list of pastors with longest years of continuous service in one congregation. Only Rev. B. Woudenberg has served a church longer, having been in our Kalamazoo, MI PRC for over 17 years. These two are still out-distanced, however, by Profs. R. Decker and H. Hanko, who have served our churches in common in our seminary for 21 and 29 years respectively.

### Congregational Activities

This year marked the 4th annual Young Adult Spring Retreat, sponsored again by our Loveland, CO PRC. As in past years, the young adults met at the Covenant Heights Conference Center in beautiful Estes Park, CO. Revs. R. Cammenga and C. Terpstra were the featured speakers again this year. They developed the theme of "Christian Liberty."

Scheduled around these speeches and discussion groups were all the usual retreat activities, and some not so usual, like going snowshoeing in the Rocky Mountain National Park.

The popularity of this particular retreat is starting to be seen, in that there were more participants this year than in the past. In fact, some first-time participants from Michigan have even confided that they intend to move out to Loveland permanently when they get a little older. (Maybe we should not encourage our sons and daughters to go next year.)

The Council of our Hull, IA PRC recently informed their congregation that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, also of Hull, IA, will not be able to keep their commitment to purchase their old church. However, Hull's Council did give them permission to continue renting it through the month of June.

At the request of many in the congregation of our Byron Center, MI PRC, their program committee once again sponsored a Request Night on April 17. Byron's congregation was encouraged to sign up if they felt they had a special talent, or if they knew someone who did.

The Council of our Lynden, WA

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



PRC recently formed a committee to organize their efforts of help to the Sovereign Grace Reformed Church of Spokane, WA. Evidently as part of this effort, Rev. Robert Hargrove, pastor of this church, visited our congregation in Lynden. Lynden's Council arranged for Rev. Hargrove to speak to the congregation on his and his church's history and background. He planned to meet with the Council later that night, and he agreed to speak at a chapel at Covenant Christian School the following day. In an effort to help this small congregation become better grounded in the Reformed faith and to move in the direction of closer fellowship with our denomination in the truth of the Word of God, Lynden has also arranged for other of our churches' pastors to

preach for them. Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, was scheduled to preach there at the end of April.

#### Denominational Activities

Our own PR Seminary sponsored a series of lectures by Dr. John H. Gerstner, Professor Emeritus of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, on Friday, April 22, at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. At 10:00 A.M. Dr. Gerstner spoke on the topic, "An Examination of the Well-meant Offer of the Gospel"; and at 2:00 P.M. he spoke on "The State of Presbyterianism Today." A discussion period followed each lecture.

We can also let the word out that families coming with campers, RVs, tents, or the like to this summer's

Young People's Convention in Lynden, WA will be allowed to use the grounds of Covenant Christian School for camping. The charge is to be a freewill donation to the school. Covenant will make available the use of showers and bathrooms in their new school building. Electrical use will also be allowed, but on a minimal basis. Interested? Call Mr. Monte Stap at 206-354-7063 with questions or to make reservations. □

#### *Food for Thought*

True conversion is a lifelong process. Consequently there is only one relevant question: In which direction are you traveling: to Christ, or away from Him?

— Abraham Kuyper

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 30, 1994,

**MR. and MRS. TOM SPRIENSMA**, God willing, will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, wish to express our love and gratitude for their covenant nurture, and for their faithfulness to the truth once delivered to the saints.

"The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.... The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, even for evermore" (Psalm 21:5, 8).

- Ike and Jeanne Spriensma
  - Peter and Dorothy VanDer Schaaf
  - Rev. Audred and Alva Spriensma
  - Howard and Eileen Pastoor
  - Randy and Sue Spriensma
  - Phil and Helen VanDer Wall
- 28 grandchildren

Grandville, Michigan

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to Deacon Mark Engelsma and his family in the death of his father,

**MR. DEWEY ENGELSMA**,

whom the Lord took unto himself on April 4, 1994.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Pastor G. VanBaren, President  
Henry Boer, Secretary

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, mourns the loss of a faithful member,

**MR. DEWEY ENGELSMA**,

who was taken to his eternal home. We express our sincere Christian sympathy to his wife, Mrs. Dena Engelsma, and family. May they find comfort in the words expressed in Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Peter Petroelje, President  
John Kuiper, Secretary

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid "Ruth" of Hope Church, Walker, Michigan wishes to express its sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Dena Engelsma and family in the death of her husband, father, and grandfather and to Johanna Bomers, Eilene Terpstra, Dorothy Engelsma, and Josie Koole in the death of their brother and brother-in-law,

**MR. DEWEY ENGELSMA**.

May they be comforted by the promises of God's Word and sustained by His grace. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord, Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:2).

Tom DeVries, President  
Delores Kuiper, Vice-Secretary



### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The faculty, staff, and student body of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, and the Theological School Committee, extend their sympathy to Prof. David J. Engelsma and his family in the death of Prof. Engelsma's father,

#### DEWEY ENGELSMA.

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

Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rector

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Staff of the *Standard Bearer* extends its sympathy to the Editor-in-Chief, Prof. David J. Engelsma, and his family in the death of Prof. Engelsma's father,

#### DEWEY ENGELSMA.

"The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate" (Psalm 34:22).

Prof. Robert D. Decker, Secretary

### CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1993 appointed Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI the calling church for the 1994 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1994 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 7, 1994 at 9:00 A.M. in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 6, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. Slopsema, president of the 1993 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Andrew Brummel, 240 Suncrest Ct., Grandville, MI 49418. Phone: (616) 667-1378.

Consistory of  
Faith Protestant Reformed Church  
Andrew A. Brummel, Clerk.

### ANNIVERSARY

Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan will celebrate its

#### 50th ANNIVERSARY

on June 10, 11, 12, 1994.

Former members and friends are invited to join us. The theme for this commemoration is: "God's Great Faithfulness."

### TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School is seeking applicants for a Choir Director. Applicants for this position are asked to call Agatha Lubbers at the school: 453-5048 or home: 458-2057, or write the school at

1401 Ferndale S.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

### from *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*

Let us reflect how near He is, and that none of the thoughts or reasonings in which we engage are hid from Him. It is right, therefore, that we should not leave the post which His will has assigned us. Let us rather offend those men who are foolish, and inconsiderate, and lifted up, and who glory in the pride of their speech, than [offend] God. Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let

us esteem those who have the rule over us; let us honour the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God; let us direct our wives to that which is good. Let them exhibit the lovely habit of purity [in all their conduct]; let them show forth the sincere disposition of meekness; let them make manifest the command which they have of their tongue, by their manner of speaking; let them display their love, not by preferring one to another, but by showing equal affection to all that piously fear God.

Let your children be partakers of true Christian training; let them learn of how great avail humility is with God — how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him — how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind. For He is a Searcher of the thoughts and desires [of the heart]: His breath is in us; and when He pleases, He will take it away.

A.D. ca 95-100