



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*

It is almost laughable that men and women who profess to love the kingdom of God, whose apparent zeal for the kingdom is nearly a frenzy, and who dedicate themselves to creating the kingdom, first of all renounce the preaching of the gospel. It is as if a man who intends to build a house throws away his hammer....

See "The Worldwide Preaching of the Gospel" — p. 114

Vol. 71, No. 5  
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### In This Issue ...

In his "All Around Us" column, Prof. Robert Decker keeps our readers informed of certain developments in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). Over the past few years, these have been developments of strife and schism. The present column reports on resistance to synod by a classis and on division resulting in significant separations within two more CR congregations.

Members of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) have an interest in these developments keener than that of any others with the exception of the members of the CRC themselves. The PRC are a daughter-denomination, though disowned, deposed, and disinherited by mother. Besides, there are many, close ties of families and friends. Once, we shared the same rich and glorious tradition — the Dutch Reformed of 1618/1619; 1834; and 1886.

Now playing themselves out, in the judgment of God, are the vital doctrinal and church political issues that resulted in the formation of the PRC in 1924. The CRC herself freely acknowledges this. Prof. Decker quotes a leading spokesman of the CRC referring to the deposition of consistories by major assemblies in the 1920s. In striking contrast is the determined silence of those who leave, carrying out to the bitter end the policy of the "conservatives" in the CRC to "ignore the PRC to death."

Our attitude is grief.

If only that church had listened to the prophets God sent to her, proclaiming the antithesis, particular grace, and the autonomy of the local church.

Read "A Classis Still in Disobedience" and "Two Congregations Split in NW Iowa."

— DJE



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# Knowing Our Colors

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

Psalm 1:1, 2.

When light passes through a suitable prism it is diffracted or dispersed so that one can see a whole spectrum of different colors. So, when the light of God's Word shines into the believing mind, the effect of it is that the believer can see a whole variety of colors. These are the colors of the gospel. Our text, in fact, is very colorful! God grant us grace rightly to divide the Word and to see its many colors.

## Black and White

Black and white are two colors one never sees in the natural light spectrum, but they are colors, nevertheless, which the believer must see first if he is to understand God's Word.

When we talk as believers of the "black and white" of things, we are using these colors to express our understanding of truth. By speaking in terms of black and white we say that truth can be clearly distinguished from all that it is not. Just as black can be easily distinguished from white, so, we believe, truth can be easily distinguished from the lie.

The black and white of Psalm 1 is the truth of the blessed man. To teach this the psalmist speaks first of all of the godliness of the blessed man. The blessed man is godly. And his godly life is distinguished from the life of all others. There are godly men, and there are the ungodly.

Ungodly men are described in our text in three ways. They are ungodly. That is, they are unholy and unrighteous, unlike God who is holy and righteous. They are sinners: those who disobey God's law. They are scorners: those who mock God and holy things.

The Psalm teaches that the ungodly are *thoroughly* ungodly. They have an ungodly heart. Arising from an ungodly heart are ungodly thoughts and desires. From these come ungodly plans or "counsels" (we call them "schemes") to sin and get others to sin. Besides, the ungodly man walks in a "way" or life of sin. In his home, at work, at play, the ungodly man lives in sin. To promote his sinful way the ungodly man has a "seat." His seat is where he likes to be. He sits where he can sin and mock openly and freely and with others of like mind.

But the godly are not so. They are ... godly! They are image-bearers of God. God has graced them anew with true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. They have the mind of Christ. They have, like David, a heart after God's own heart.

Being godly, the godly do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. That is, they do not listen to their

advice. Nor do the godly stand in the way of sinners. That is, they do not live a life of sin. Further, the godly do not sit in the seat of the scornful. That is, they have no fellowship with sinners.

Positively, the godly do the good. They bear good fruit, verse 3 teaches. They serve God. They walk in the way of a life of good works. They fellowship with those who are godly that they may encourage godliness among themselves.

The text emphasizes that the godliness of the blessed man is seen especially in his delighting in the law of the Lord (v. 2). The law here may be interpreted to include the ten commandments, the promises, and indeed the whole counsel of God revealed in the Scriptures. The godly man loves the promises, loves the gospel, takes pleasure in the revelation of God as Savior in Jesus Christ. And he shows this delight in meditation upon it. He takes time to think on it, contemplate it, study, reflect, pray over it. Indeed, the godly man meditates upon the law of the Lord day and night, according to the text. This does not mean that the godly man is a monastery man. No, the godly man lives in the world, and has an earthly calling. But his meditation is, nevertheless, regular, constant, consistent. And the godliness gained through meditation is seen in all his life.

Thus the godly man is distinct from the ungodly. There is a sharp contrast between the two. The ungodly is in no wise godly. The godly man is not ungodly. He is still a sinner, with only a small beginning of

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the new obedience. But he is godly. God has made him that way. And that is the black and white of it.

### A Rainbow of Colors

Being enabled, by faith, to see the black and white of things, we can discern many other colors in our text. These are the colors of the blessedness itself of the godly man.

What colors do we see in our text? All the colors of the rainbow! This is because the blessedness of which the text speaks is covenant blessedness. It is the blessedness of God being our Friend. According to Genesis 9, one beautiful sign of covenant blessedness, and therefore of the friendship of God, is the rainbow.

Just as there are many beautiful colors in the rainbow, so also, many and beautiful are the blessings of God's covenant friendship enjoyed by godly men. The psalmist rejoices in this when he cries out, literally, "O the blessedness" of the godly man! The blessednesses are described in verse 3. They are the blessednesses of the covenant life. The psalmist compares the covenant life with God to the life of a tree planted by the rivers of water. There may be desert and drought all around, but the godly man is as a tree with an abundant and wonderful water supply. The rivers are the life-giving Spirit, the Word, and the grace of God. The godly man is planted there, by these rivers — taken out of the contaminated soil of humanity and engrafted by faith into the new humanity in Christ. There the godly man is rooted so that the life of God courses through him, he knows this God, he enjoys this God. There by the rivers are peace, happiness, joy, and hope. And there by the rivers is a grove — many trees. This is God's oasis, the church of Jesus Christ.

And there by the rivers is prosperity. The rivers cause the godly man to bring forth fruit in his season — good fruit. And his leaf does not wither, his life does not ebb. Indeed, due to the life of God cours-

ing through him, the godly man prospers in all he does. In poverty, in a drought of material goods, through striking his roots deep into Christ and reaching for the waters, the godly man still flourishes. In death itself, there is the rich eternal life of heaven on the other side.

Then there is *this* blessedness: the blessing of being able and willing to serve God. That is the blessedness of which the psalmist sings first of all in this psalm, in verse 2. The blessed godly man has the riverside life, a house on the rivers of grace. He is so glad for this, so thankful to his God, that his chief delight is to honor this God. And thus, to obey God, to live the godly life, is in itself a great blessing to the godly man. God's law, and doing it, is his delight, his meditation, his blessing.

### Red

Would the godly man fully appreciate God's rainbow of blessings to him he must always remember the black and white of his blessedness. The black and white of it is this: there are only certain ones who receive these blessings. Covenant blessings are for God's elect only. The portion of the ungodly reprobate is cursing. Many grow up, even in the church, but they are not planted by the rivers of water, they bring forth no good fruit, they delight not in the law of the Lord. These are under God's curse. And, like the chaff which is separated from the wheat in the time of harvest, so the ungodly will be separated from God's godly elect in the day of judgment when they are blown, by the wind of God's wrath, to hell.

But why? That is the question the godly man asks when he perceives the black and white of the rainbow. Why is the rainbow for me? I am just as ungodly in myself as the sinner given over to sin. What is the reason for my godliness and blessedness?

The reason is the Godly Man, Jesus Christ. Jesus, God's appointed

Mediator, came to earth to save us. While on earth He never sinned. He in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily was always godly. He ever delighted in the law of the Lord — day and night! And as Mediator He did this all for us.

He went obediently even to the cross for us, paying the penalty for our sins. Yes, there at the cross was red. The first color of the rainbow. The most important color: red. Blood-red. Blood shed for us. The blood, the red of the covenant.

And Christ was blessed! That is, the Father honored Jesus' perfect, atoning death. He raised Him from the dead, He seated Him at His right hand, and gave Him all power and authority to rule and to gather and defend and glorify His church.

Therefore, we are blessed! Justified by His blood!

Thus there is black and white. All the colors of the rainbow. And red. Let us be thankful that God has given faith to see and take a stand about the black and white of things. Let us be warned when the devil and the world want us to see gray where there is black and white. Let us rejoice in God's covenant blessings, so manifold in our life, and even painted in the sky in rainbows. Let us trust in the blood of Christ only, the shedding of which is our salvation.

But more. There is a deeper reason yet for our salvation. That is the love of God. It is a love whereby God knew us and chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Love explains why Christ would die for ungodly ones such as we are in Adam. Love explains the electing distinction of God, the rainbow, and the red. That God loves us is why God keeps us in the right way of faith, repentance, and godliness. Love is why there is heaven.

And what is the color of love? No color compares. God is love. Worship and bow down. □



# PRC Featured in a Dutch Daily Newspaper

(2)

In the preceding issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I began the translation of a lengthy article in the Dutch religious newspaper, *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, featuring the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRC). The article appeared in the August 12, 1994 edition. Written by the paper's correspondent, K. vander Zwaag, the article was based on interviews that he had conducted earlier in the year with Rev. Richard G. Moore, pastor of the Hull PRC in Hull, Iowa, and with the editor of the *SB*.

The first part of the article, which appeared in translation in the November 15, 1994 issue of the *SB*, dealt with the history of the PRC and with the defense by the PRC of the truth of particular grace in the preaching of the gospel. The second part of the article treats of the PRC's distinctive doctrines of the covenant, marriage, and the sovereignty of God.

What follows is my translation of the concluding section of the article in *Reformatorisch Dagblad* on the PRC without comment.

## Instruction in Faith

To the question, how members of the PRC come to faith, Prof. Engelsma answers that children are instructed in catechism. When it is time to make confession of faith, the young people appear before the consistory to be examined whether they "are sound in doctrine" and whether they can testify to "the living reality of faith."

Young people must have sorrow over sin, must trust in Jesus Christ, and must have desire to be obedient to the law of God out of love to Him. Making confession (of faith) is more than possessing intellectual knowledge of doctrine. Indeed, you confess that you are a true be-

liever. In that case, you are also obliged to show the death of Jesus Christ (by partaking of the Lord's Supper). If after some time that does not take place, the consistory asks whether perhaps there are spiritual problems, and it will carefully apply discipline.

The PRC differ with the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) in America (*Amerikaanse Gereformeerde Gemeenten*) on the matter of the view that is taken of the children of the congregation.

The NRC teach that all the children who are baptized are unsaved, are unregenerated. Conversion is possible for them

only in the way of an extraordinary experience. Our denomination is strongly opposed to this (conception).

To the question whether this implies that all baptized children in the PRC are regenerated, or are supposed to be regenerated, Engelsma answered:

We view our baptized children from the standpoint of election. Election must determine our attitude, as also our instruction. Many children are regenerated in infancy. How would they be able to sing the psalms, if they are unregenerated, or to worship the LORD? Our children grow up under the Word of God in a spiritual atmosphere. (Conversion) takes place in a gradual process.

According to his own testimony, Engelsma himself never knew an "unspiritual earlier time" (when he was unconverted).

If there had been no work of the Holy Spirit, I would never have come to make confession of faith. I would not have been able to pray (as a child). You do not recognize the work of the Holy Spirit by a special feeling. I fear that the demand for that extraordinary feeling, that extraordinary mystical experience, causes problems for people, be-



cause they do not have that experience.

### Remarriage

According to Prof. Engelsma, the PRC depart from the Reformed tradition in only one point, namely, in the belief that remarriage after divorce is condemned.

There is one biblical ground for divorce and that is sexual unfaithfulness. But marriage is a lifelong bond, so that remarriage is the same as adultery, even for the "innocent party." The lifelong bond which God has established between two persons is unbreakable. Divorce cannot break that bond, but is only the decision to live apart from your marriage companion. Only death dissolves the marriage bond.

Engelsma distinguishes this view from the Roman Catholic conception, which sees marriage as a sacrament rather than as a creation ordinance.

In the Bible, marriage is compared with (the) covenant that is established by God with His church. (The) covenant that is established by God in His sovereign grace can never be broken. Therefore, also marriage can not be broken. That the covenant can be broken is taught in the "liberated" churches and in the Christian Reformed Church.

### "We are not Very Popular"

Just as does Engelsma, so also

PRC-preacher Rev. R. G. Moore of Hull, Iowa rejects the offer of grace. "Our startingpoint is this, that the gospel is not offered," he says.

Christ commands repentance and faith. If there is a general offer, God is dependent upon men, who either accept or do not accept that offer. It is God who hardens or gives life. We strongly emphasize God's sovereignty and reprobation. We preach the gospel, but we do not know who is elect.

His denomination remains so small because "it is not popular when the sovereignty of God is so sharply preached," says Rev. Moore. This preacher, who unlike Engelsma is unable to read the Dutch, knows Dr. Steenblok by name and says that he feels kinship with everyone who teaches an "unconditional covenant."

First there is the law, then the gospel. From the beginning of the spiritual life, it is the sovereign work of God--from the calling by means of the preaching to the working out (of the calling) in which Christ applies His work.

What he has heard of Steenblok has a great deal of similarity to the NRC-congregation in neighboring Rock Valley, according to Moore. But he has serious criticism of this denomination.

The NRC stop with the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism: misery. It is said that one can

go further only by a special revelation and experience. The problem is that this quickly leads to Pharisaism. The entrance to the Lord's Supper is dependent upon man's own work rather than going out from this, that man is nothing with a view to redemption. Indeed, it is the question whether they really see their sins. If they would do that, they would surely embrace grace.

Says Moore:

We must stand for certainty, not for doubt. The danger of mysticism is great. We experience the work of the Spirit, not directly but in the preaching. Of course, grace is only for the elect. In this, I am in agreement with the NRC. But they make grace so narrow that members of the congregation think that they receive it by a special revelation.

Rev. Moore was asked whether every member of the congregation in the PRC is considered as an elect. However, Rev. Moore does not want to go this far:

No, there is also a carnal seed. At the same time, on the basis of the covenant we hope for the good regarding the members of our congregations. We do that, therefore, not on the basis of the supposition that they are elect.

□

— DJE

## All Around Us

*Prof. Robert Decker*

### ■ "HOLY LAUGHTER" or "THE TORONTO BLESSING"

Ever since January 20, people have been traveling long distances to a modest warehouse in an industrial district near Toronto's Lester B. Pearson Airport. These people are

attending meetings of a group called Airport Vineyard. They are seeking what is being called "the Toronto blessing." Apparently the "Toronto blessing" is a special anointing of a person by the Holy Spirit, an anointing marked by "holy laughing."

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People from a wide spectrum of churches attend: Pentecostals, Presbyterians, dispensationalists, Roman Catholics, and others. Meetings of about 1000 people are held every night except Mondays. Those attending come not only from all over Canada, but from all over the world. So many Britons are attending that flights from London to Toronto are often sold out for days.

How did all this begin? A year ago St. Louis pastor Randy Clark attended a conference in Tulsa conducted by South African Pentecostal pastor Rodney Howard-Browne, whose name has become most closely linked with the "holy laughter" phenomenon. Last November (1993) Airport Vineyard's pastor, John Arnott, during a Vineyard leadership conference in Palm Springs, California, learned that Clark had experienced powerful manifestations in ministry since Howard-Browne prayed for him. Arnott invited Clark to a January conference at his church in Toronto. On January 20 about 120 people gathered at the Airport Vineyard. Arnott says both he and Clark felt a heightened sense of faith. At the service most church members fell on the floor "laughing, rolling, and carrying on," recalls Arnott. Clark ended up staying at the church for two months.

By then people were coming to Arnott's Airport Vineyard in large numbers from distant parts of the globe. "It went from something hard to catch to something very contagious," Arnott says. "Our whole ministry team — boom they were anointed."

What's occurring in Toronto is nothing new, according to John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement. "Nearly everything we've seen — falling, weeping, laughing, shaking — has been seen before, not only in our own memory, but in revivals all over the world," says Wimber.

Where in Scripture do we find that "laughing, rolling, and carrying on" are evidences or fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts

and lives of God's people? Scripture does teach that the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23). Where this fruit is seen in the lives of people there is the Holy Spirit. What is more, "against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:23).

*Christianity Today*  
*National & International*  
*Religion Report*

## ■ A CLASSIS STILL IN DISOBEDIENCE

Earlier in this column (Oct. 1, 1994 issue) we reported on a decision made by Classis Grand Rapids East of the Christian Reformed Church, which decision put that Classis in disobedience to the decision of the 1994 CRC synod concerning women in office. The synod refused to ratify a change in its Church Order which would allow women to be ordained as ministers and elders. The synod also "urged" local congregations which have already ordained women elders to release them from office by June 1995. Meeting in special session in July, the Classis decided to "permit its individual churches the freedom to decide whether or not the word 'male' in article 3a of the Church Order is operative in their particular settings." The Classis, by taking this decision, allows what the synod said "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits." In so doing the Classis decided "in principle" to disobey the synod's ban on women in office.

Not wanting to be in disobedience to the synod, the Classis at its regular session in September declared that "recognizing synod's legal right to insist on the retention of the word 'male' in Church Order Article 3a, classis nevertheless acknowledges its congregations' moral right of conscientious objection (with any attendant consequences) to that insistence with respect to the office of elder." The Classis also resolved "not to attempt to force its congregations to comply with the decision of Synod 1994" urging churches to

release women elders by June 1995 and not to ordain more women elders. These resolutions came from a five-member committee appointed by the July Classis "to do further work and refinement" on the motion. Dr. Henry DeMoor, professor of Church Polity at Calvin Seminary, served as reporter for this committee.

The July decision provoked a great deal of negative reaction. Objections came from Classis Illiana, First CRC of Chino, California, and the Presbytery of Southeast Alabama of the Presbyterian Church in America (a denomination with which the CRC has fraternal relations). DeMoor told the Classis (September session), "You've got to do something to fix July, because there are many people who are really upset." Concerning the September decision DeMoor said, "This says something different from defying synod. One thing classis can't do is say, we're going to say Article 3 does not apply to churches in classis, that's defiance, we can't do that." Concerning Classis' decision not to urge the churches to release women elders or elect more women to that office, DeMoor said, "Synod is going to have to understand that there are churches, not just one or two, that cannot do what synod urges them to do. We're saying to synod, do not, please, expect us to go to those particular churches and say, you're going to have to get rid of these women elders or we will have to depose your entire council, then you have another 1926 on our hands."

The 1926 date refers to the year when the CRC synod upheld the deposition of three CR councils by Classis Grand Rapids East (Eastern Ave., pastored by H. Hoeksema) and Classis Grand Rapids West (Hope, pastored by G. M. Ophoff and Kalamazoo I, pastored by H. Danhof). Those depositions of course led to the formation of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

In spite of DeMoor's opinions concerning the September decisions,



they do not get Classis Grand Rapids East "off the hook." According to Article 29 of the CRC Church Order, decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies, "... shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order." What Classis must do, therefore, is not merely plead conscientious objection to those synodical decisions, but Classis must appeal to the synod of 1995 and prove to that synod that the 1994 decisions re women in office conflict with the Word of God. This the classis may do, under the provi-

sions of Article 30 of the CRC Church Order. Unless the Classis does this, she is still in defiance of the synod of 1994.

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

## ■ TWO CONGREGATIONS SPLIT IN NW IOWA

Recently approximately 70 of the 140 families of the Sanborn CRC left the church to form an independent church. Soon after the Sanborn split, some 50 families left the First CRC of Orange City. Rev. Ralph Pontier, former pastor of First Orange City, and several former council members

of the church are leading the independents in Orange City. Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, is also a member of the newly formed independent church.

First CRC of Orange City was organized in 1871, making it the oldest congregation in Classis of the Heartland. Numbering 180 families before the split, it was also the largest congregation in the classis. □

*The Banner*

*Christian Renewal*

*Reformed Believers Press Service*

*Day of Shadows*

*Homer Hoeksema*

# Chapter 4 The Last Four Days of Creation Week (cont.)

## God's Creation of the Heavenly Luminaries (Gen. 1:14-19)

The next question to be considered is: for what purpose did God create the heavenly luminaries?

The text informs us, in the first place, that they were created to give light: "And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth" (v. 15). Again, in verse 17: "And God set them (referring to the two great lights) in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth." Hence, both the light centers and those luminaries which reflect the light are for lights in the heaven and on the earth. These luminaries not only give light upon the earth, but they light the entire universe, also the firmament

of the heavens. Nevertheless, the work of creation has its center in the earth, and finally in man. Particularly concerning the two great lights, the sun and the moon, we are told that they, together with the stars, are for the purpose of light upon the earth, which is to be man's habitation. There is no conflict here with the record of the creation of the first day. As we have already noted, the light that was created on the first day is now fixed in these heavenly light fixtures and is permanently regulated, so that these luminaries now serve to give light upon the earth.

Secondly, they serve to divide between the day and the night. On the first day already God brought about the division of day and night. Now, however, that division is permanently regulated and fixed. Because the light of the day is concentrated in the sun and the light of the

night is concentrated in the moon and the stars, they serve to divide between day and night. There is a continuous dividing line between the day and the night on the earth, determined by the earth's relation to the sun and the earth's rotation around its axis.

Moreover, in this same connection we may note that these lights serve to measure off time. Not only do they divide between day and night; but also seasons and days and years, according to the text, are measured according to these light-bearers. Also here, of course, there is no conflict with the first part of Genesis 1. Time is not created on the fourth day. Time, with all that it implies, is created with the very beginning of the heaven and the earth and belongs to the very increated nature of the creature. But the measurement of time is fixed and ordered in connection with the heavenly lights.

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The days and the years are measured off by the relation of the sun to the earth, the month by the relation of the moon and the earth. Minutes and hours and days and months and years — time in its minute division — were ordered by the creative work of the fourth day.

In the third place, the Scriptures inform us that these lights are for "seasons." The reference here is hardly to the four seasons of the year. In the first place, the general meaning of the word is that of set, or appointed, times, including hours and days and months and years. Besides, it is not at all impossible that the seasons as we know them were not known in the world before the Flood, but rather originated at the time of the Flood. It is after the Flood that we read of God's word to Noah: "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." If this view is correct, then we also have another glimpse of the nature of the catastrophe of the Flood. For this would mean that the earth was tilted on its axis, thus bringing about our seasons, through the Flood. However this may be, the reference is to the various appointed times, the different periods determining and regulating the life of the creatures and the cycle of their life, such as the time for sowing and for harvesting, the time for the breeding of animals, time for growth and for dormancy, the time for the migration of the birds and for the hibernation of the beasts of the forest, and so forth. We must always remember that all these aspects of the life of God's creatures are not a matter of some ill-defined and vague instinct, but are a matter of their creation and of divine regulation and ordering.

Further, the Scriptures speak of the greater light ruling the day and the lesser light ruling the night. This ruling is, of course, not to be understood in the heathen sense of the word. They soon conceived of the heavenly bodies as being animated

and as gods; and they worshiped the host of heaven — something against which God's people are repeatedly warned in Scripture. They worshiped the host of heaven as ruling not only over day and night, but over man. This is the folly of sin, and it is the perversion of God's ordinances. For it was precisely in the foolishness of sin, according to Romans 1, and under the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven, that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto the corruptible creature. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-25). But the meaning is that creation is governed through the influence of sun and moon. The sun by day controls the atmosphere, gathers the rain in clouds and disperses them. It controls the wind and the storms, it quickens the seed in the earth, produces life and light and joy, and rules over the period of labor and toil for man and for beast. In this sense the sun is divinely appointed to govern the day. The moon with its weaker and borrowed light rules the night. This is not only to be understood figuratively, as pointing to the fact that the moon is the chief light in our night, even as the sun is the light of our day. But also the moon has its influence in the creation, determining, for example, the ebb and flood of the tides in the oceans. Also the moon, therefore, keeping watch in the silence of the night, has its function of rule, together with the sun. In fact, as its powers of investigation increase, science discovers more and more of the details of this rule which was ordered in the creation on the fourth day.

Finally, Scripture speaks in this connection of "signs." Again, these signs are not to be understood in the sense of the superstitions of astrology, so that by the stars and their constellations future events in the history of mankind may be foretold. This is nothing but a perversion of these God-instituted signs which

arises out of the corruption of man's totally depraved nature. But, in the first place, the reference here is to natural signs. It is in connection with the heavenly bodies that the four quarters of the compass are determined. They are signs for direction and navigation. Signs there are, too, of the weather — something to which the Lord Jesus alludes in emphasizing the Pharisees' ignorance of the signs of the times.

But especially does Scripture point us to the fact that the lights in the firmament are signs in the spiritual sense of the word. In the first place, quite in general, these works of God's hand, according to many passages of Scripture, though they have no gift of speech, nevertheless utter a powerful language concerning God's power and wisdom. This we have already mentioned in connection with Psalms 8 and 19 and 136. In the book of Job one will find many similar references to the stars and their constellations. In the second place, Scripture points us to the fact that at the end of the world there will be special signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars — signs that are fearful and terrifying to the wicked, but signs of the final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory. In the third place, Scripture points us to this truth also with respect to the sun and moon and stars, namely, that God, having before determined that all things should be united in Christ, made of the temporal a picture of the eternal, of the natural a symbol of the spiritual.

To this Scripture points very often. Let us note only a few of the many references. In Psalm 84:11 we read: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Malachi 4:2 prophesies that "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." The Lord Jesus tells us in Matthew 13:43 that "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." According to Isaiah 60:19, 20, the sun and moon are descriptive of



the church's glory. Very often Scripture points to the stars as spiritual signs and symbols. In their multitude the stars are a sign of the multitude of Israel's seed, the church. To mention no more, in the book of Revelation the angels of the seven churches are pictured under the symbolism of the seven stars in the right hand of Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself is called the bright and morning star.

Thus, in the light of Scripture, in the light of Christ, there is rich gospel in the firmament with its heavenly lights. God is the Sun, the Light of lights, the sole fount of all goodness and glory. In His light of

righteousness and holiness do we see the light. His people are light, but only as they receive their light from Him and reflect it, through our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not light in themselves, but only reflect the light, and that, too, only in continual communion with God, who is light and life in Himself. All of this has its unity in Christ Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, the bright and morning star. Through Him we receive the light of eternal life from God.

Thus conceived, there is also clear prophecy here. In Paradise the first, the night of death fell over us. But the Sun of righteousness has arisen in Christ Jesus. Through Him

the light has dawned in our hearts, the light of the eternal day. To that eternal day, in which there shall be no night and in which the light of God shall fill the city of God, all things point, and all the signs in the firmament of the heavens remind us of it. Even the silvery moon in the silence of the night is a reminder of the presence of the sun and thus a reminder of the faithfulness of our God, a reminder that though we are surrounded by the darkness, yet we are not without light, the light of His Word, and that ere long the day shall dawn, the eternal morning, when we shall see face to face. □

# William The Silent: Father of the Netherlands

## Introduction

William of Orange is to the citizens of the Netherlands what George Washington is to Americans. If anyone at all can claim to be the father of that country, it is William. And yet he is more than father; he is also the savior, under God, of Calvinism in the Lowlands. He occupies a crucial place in Dutch history, and he is honored in the Dutch national anthem: "Wilhelmus van Nassau; ben ik van Duitschen bloed..." (William of Nassau; I am of German blood).

That he could be both father of his country and savior of Calvinism was due to the close relation between church and state in those times; but it was also because God used him

to be the savior of Calvinism that he is of interest to us. The Calvinism of Dort, of the great theologians in Dutch Reformed theology, of the *Afscheiding*, of a robust Calvinistic church in the Netherlands and in Reformed churches in this country is due to the courageous work of William the Silent.

## Early Life and Youth

William was born in the last half of April, 1533<sup>1</sup> in Germany — hence the line in the national anthem. His family was of the nobility (of the House of Nassau) and lived in Dillenburg in Nassau. William was one of 12 children, and the family was brought up and educated in the principles of the Lutheran Reformation. From an early age William was prepared to take over family property of Orange in Southern France. Thus, in later years, his official title was: William I of Orange of the

House of Nassau.

Charles V, a Spaniard, had been chosen shortly after the Reformation in Germany to be emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, an Empire which included Spain, Germany, parts of Italy, and the Lowlands. The Lowlands, though belonging to the Empire from earlier times, had always been granted a great deal of autonomy, and had become, under the hard-working and thrifty Lowlanders, far and away the most prosperous part of the emperor's domain. But the Lowlanders loved their independence and would be loyal to the king and emperor only as long as he did not interfere unduly in their affairs. So it was that each province had its own

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<sup>1</sup> Some disagreement exists as to the exact date.



“stadholder,” the principal magistrate who had effective rule in his province. The Lowlands included what is now the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Because they were nobility, his family had contact with the emperor, and Charles V became interested in William’s career. Charles took William to court to learn the ways of imperial policy.

It was while in the court of Charles that William learned the art of ruling, but the price that had to be paid was training in and commitment to Roman Catholicism and a loss of his Reformation heritage, for Charles was a bitter enemy of the Reformation and was determined to stop the spread of Lutheranism in his realm.

The king took a special liking to William, and he became Charles’ closest intimate. William was the only one present with the king when Charles met foreign ambassadors on important official business; he became a confidant of the king in the most secret matters of the empire; he even could give advice to the king which the king acknowledged was useful to him. No one was more powerful. Although some dispute exists over the question, most historians claim that William received the name “the Silent” because of his complete discretion in matters of the realm.

God prepares His servants in ways in which they themselves are not conscious of being prepared. William’s education in the court included a study of languages which made him fluent in Flemish, German, Spanish, French, and Latin. William’s family possessions in Orange gave him entry into French political circles. William’s appointments and assignments as a servant of Charles brought him into contact with and gave him knowledge of the Lowlanders. All these were to be used at a later date in William’s important work.

### Conversion To Protestantism

William was on his way to fame,

fortune, honor — and a life in the Romish Church, when suddenly God intervened in a strange way.

Charles V, weary of the cares of empire and the struggles with the problems confronting Europe when the whole continent was in turmoil because of the Reformation, decided to abdicate and to spend the rest of his life wearing a hair shirt in an obscure monastery in Spain. Announcing his abdication while leaning on William’s arm, Charles turned the empire over to his son, the cold Philip, who hated the Reformation with an implacable fury.

From that time William occupied a rather anomalous position in the court. He continued to be used in various diplomatic tasks, although Philip hated him for his close association with Charles V.

It was during this time that William’s sympathies began to change to concern for and interest in the battered and beleaguered Calvinists in the Lowlands.

What events God used to bring about this change are not entirely clear, for God often works in mysterious ways, and perhaps William himself was not altogether sure of what was happening to him or of how to give account of the changes taking place in his soul. But several things are clear. William had been brought up in Lutheranism. And one never forgets what one learns as a youth. He may forsake it, as many do, but he cannot forget it. Sometimes God is merciful and will use that early instruction for good even after a terrible period of apostasy.

William saw Roman Catholicism at its cruelest under Philip. Philip was determined to eradicate Calvinism from the Lowlands, and he used the Spanish Inquisition at its cruelest to accomplish this task. William, often in the Netherlands, saw at first hand the blood and heard the screams of thousands who died for their faith. It made an indelible impression on him.

William hated tyranny of every kind and in every land. He hated

the tyranny of the Spaniards. His heart went out to those who suffered under Philip’s relentless blows.

One event brought the whole matter to a head. A diplomatic mission brought William to France while Henry II, a dedicated Roman Catholic, ruled. Here in France William learned of the secret plot which Henry and Philip had hatched to destroy Protestantism. Henry thought William occupied the same confidential position in the court of Philip that he had occupied in the court of Charles; and so, in the woods, on a hunt, in a moment when no one else was around, Henry told William of the plan to destroy “that cursed vermin, the Protestants,” even though it would require treachery.

Appalled at such an outrage, William managed to keep an outward demeanor which did not reveal his true feelings.<sup>2</sup> But as soon as he was able, he informed the Protestant leaders in Brussels of the foul plan. It did not take long for Philip to learn that the secret was out, but he did not suspect William.

### Savior of the Calvinists

William’s work in the Lowlands increased in importance. He served as a representative of Philip; he was a member of the council of state which was to assist the Spanish regent in ruling in Philip’s name.<sup>3</sup> He was even stadholder of the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht. In these positions he did what he could to help the Protestants, ease the horrors of persecution, and restore political power to

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<sup>2</sup> Some historians claim that this silence of William in the forests of France gave him the name, William the Silent.

<sup>3</sup> The regent was first Margaret of Parma, who had some sympathy for the Protestants. But she was replaced with the Duke of Alva, one of history’s most cruel men. The regent was responsible to carry out Philip’s determination to destroy Calvinism.



the stadholders of the provinces in the Lowlands.

All his efforts proved unsuccessful. Philip multiplied his cruelties and continued his treacherous conduct. At last William could take it no more; he increasingly considered himself responsible for what was happening.

He retired briefly to his home in Nassau in 1568 where he evaluated his life, scrutinized his loyalties, brought his dilemma before the Lord, and decided to cast his lot, for better or for worse, with the persecuted people in the Lowlands.

The whole story of William's long and difficult struggle for freedom in the Lowlands is too complicated to tell here. It is a story of victories and defeats, of courage and sacrifice, of suffering and grief, of losses and gains, but finally of victory which came more through stalemate than success on the battlefield.

Three different times William raised an army in Germany or France or the Lowlands themselves. Every time his efforts failed, sometimes because of changing political fortunes (such as in France), sometimes because his armies were insufficiently equipped to fight the skilled and well-equipped Spaniards, sometimes because of financial resources, sometimes because the horror of persecution overwhelmed the people.

But several events helped gradually to turn the tide. The Dutch navy, manned by men called "Beggars of the Sea," was successful in raiding Spanish shipping, seizing Spanish armed boats, and harassing Spanish troops in lightning raids on the mainland. Noted for their skills in seamanship, their unmatched courage, their knowledge of the canals, dikes, bayous, marshes, and swamps of the Lowlands, they kept the Spaniards from overcoming the country and were the main reason why many cities in the Lowlands declared themselves independent from Spanish rule.

The siege of Leiden is a remarkable instance of the courage and skill

with which the Lowlanders fought. Surrounded by Spanish forces who were unable to breach the thick walls of the city, the inhabitants were nearly starved into submission. Seeing their families and children dead from the famine, many spoke of capitulation until the burgomaster stirred their failing spirits with the words: "Here is my sword; plunge it, if you will, into my heart, and divide my flesh among you to appease your hunger; but expect no surrender as long as I am alive."

The Beggars of the Sea had breached the dikes in an effort to sail to Leiden's rescue, but contrary winds prevented the waters from moving sufficiently far inland to sail the boats over the land. But on October 3, 1574 God turned the winds about so that the tidal waters rushed inland carrying the boats with them, and bringing supplies to the beleaguered garrison. The Spaniards were routed, the siege lifted, and the city spared.

For the courage of the citizens William proposed the establishment of a university within the city, and the University of Leiden became one of the great schools in subsequent Dutch history.

Although the Lowlanders never could whip the Spaniards in pitched battle, the Spaniards never got any closer to subduing the nation and overcoming the Dutch. What was to the advantage of the Dutch was the possession of key cities which Spain could not recapture, and total supremacy at sea.

In 1576 seven Dutch provinces (Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel, and Gelderland), under the leadership of William, signed the Union of Utrecht by which these provinces became a republic. William became the King, and the Netherlands was formed. The Spanish were not defeated, but were gradually driven from the North and pushed to the South so that two nations emerged: Belgium, primarily Roman Catholic to this day, and the Netherlands, a strong, independent country which was Cal-

vinistic throughout. Although fighting ceased, the war was not officially over until the Peace of Westphalia was signed in 1648, which Peace brought to an end all the religious wars in Europe.

William was something of an enigma through it all. He suffered greatly, for he lost all his possessions in the interests of helping the persecuted people of God. His motives for coming to their rescue have never been completely clear. No doubt he hated tyranny, of all kinds and in all lands. He hated the Spanish for their persecution of the Lowlanders. He was moved by opposition to the presence of Spanish troops on Dutch soil; to the formation of new Roman Catholic bishoprics in a land in which the people had chosen for the Reformation; to the persecution of those whose only crime was a determination to worship God as they believed right.

He was a man of deep religious convictions, though he cared little for the forms of religion. He was a man of faith, resolution, and unbending tenacity of purpose. But his motives were political as well as religious. He had to be moved by love for His God and for the faith of Calvin or he would never have sacrificed all that he possessed for a cause which often seemed hopeless. Out of his untiring efforts was born not only the land of our forebears, but also a bastion of Calvinism which was to influence thousands upon thousands in that land and abroad.

Above all he was a man who, before the times were ripe for it, wanted nothing so much as freedom of religion. When he marched with his army into the Netherlands, he issued a proclamation which read in part:

My taking up of arms is because of "the security of the rights and privileges of the country, and the freedom of conscience."

In instructions issued to his deputy he required of him:



First of all, to deliver the towns of that Province from Spanish slavery, and to restore them to their ancient liberties, rights and privileges, and to take care that the Word of God be preached and published there, but yet by no means to suffer that those of the Romish Church should be in any sort prejudiced, or that any impediment should be offered to them in the exercise of their religion.

When the Union of Utrecht was formed, William insisted absolutely that freedom of religion be practiced in the land.

### His Death

Philip hated William and offered 25,000 crowns and nobility to anyone who would kill William.

Many tried, lured by such promises, and one succeeded. He was a down-in-the-heel scoundrel by the name of Balthazar Gérard who obtained an audience with William on the pretense of having important business. Mad with covetousness, Gérard shot him through the body in Delft on July 10, 1584. William died shortly thereafter with the prayer: "My God, have mercy on my soul and on these poor people."

The enormity of Rome's crimes ought, even if no other reason ex-

isted, to give pause to anyone who seeks peace and union with the Roman Catholic Church. Never in all history has this apostate church breathed so much as one word of remorse for her cruelties. God delivered his people in the Netherlands from them, as God always delivers His people from their oppressors.

But more importantly, God made the Netherlands the cradle of the Reformed faith. It did not remain that; but it was such for a sufficiently long period of time to be the means for the Reformed faith to be brought to many places around the world. To that faith we are the heirs. □

*The Strength of Youth*

*Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

# Communicating with Parents

I'm a minister — a minister who is himself a parent. What makes me, therefore, think that I can give you as young people good advice on communicating with parents? It would seem that a minister is in the wrong camp. He cannot possibly know the difficulties involved in communicating with parents because he is not a young person himself. All he will do is take the part of parents, and as a result young people will hear another lecture on their duty to obey father and mother.

Maybe I am not the best qualified to give all the answers in this regard. But I do know the Word of

God, and I can apply it to the point in question. Besides, as a pastor I do listen to the complaints of young people in this regard. (This was a topic at one of our young people's outings a couple of years ago.) I know what you commonly say: "Parents just do not understand! Every time I try to talk with them they end up yelling at me. I can't talk to them as I can with my friends because they always seem to be looking down on me and judging me. My parents do not trust me. They are always looking at me like I'm a little kid and cannot make any decisions for myself." I think that if I were to take an honest look at myself as a parent I would be forced to agree in some of this assessment. Not that I necessarily agree with all of it. You must admit as well as I that there are two sides to the issue.

Maybe that is another reason you should at least hear me out by reading this article. I am a parent and I do see and understand the other side of the issue as well. This does not mean that parents ought not to consider their faults and weaknesses and attempt from their end to improve communication with their children. If they are at all sensitive to the needs of their children they will. That, however, is not the aim of this article. My concern is for the strength of *youth*! So perhaps, I can offer a perspective on communicating with parents that you have never considered before and maybe, just maybe, this will lead to better communication.

There are several truths the Bible teaches that you must remember when holding a conversation with your parents. The first of these is

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their *God-ordained authority*. Does that sound threatening? It ought not. God is a God of order, and He has established a certain chain or order of authority in the home as well as in every area of life. To parents God has commanded: raise your children in the fear of the Lord. Instruct and admonish your children in the ways of God. Parents have no choice but to listen to that command of God. They *must* obey God in their duty to teach and discipline their children. I know, at this point in your lives you wish to assert your own independence from this authority. You wish to decide for yourselves what is right and wrong according to God's Word. This is good. There is nothing wrong with that. But always bear in mind that all of your decisions are subject to the will of your parents. God has placed them over you, and the Word of God in Colossians 3:20 holds true for young people too: "Children, obey your parents *in all things*, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."

When a young person addresses his parents out of disrespect, when he argues with them as if they are his peers, or when he challenges their authority, then we can expect the parent to react to this with righteous indignation. The result? Communication breaks down. Whose fault is it?

The second truth that we must remember in our conversation with godly parents is that God has given them *wisdom*. Solomon, a godly father, writes these words in Proverbs 2, the first few verses: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding ... then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." No, parents do not know it all. But,

believe it or not, they have experienced many of the same difficulties and problems as you have. They may have taken on different forms, but the difficulties and problems of youth are the same from generation to generation. Having themselves gone through straits similar to yours, your parents have learned something along the way. They have learned where they failed and where they had victories as young persons. When they talk to you about your walk and way as a young person, they do that with this knowledge in mind. They do not wish you to commit the same sins they may have. Also, they want you to follow in the right ways that they chose when they were young. They wish you to use God's Word to keep you in the way of holiness.

"Well," you may ask, "what makes parents think we are not going to be wise in the ways we choose?" It is true, sometimes parents do not give the adolescents in their family the credit that they deserve. Maybe parents are too suspicious or too narrow-minded.

When you deserve their trust, they must be willing to give it to you. Is it not true, however, that parents know their children, including you, quite well? What does Solomon write in Ecclesiastes 11:10? "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity." Or again

in Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." I'm sorry! I do not mean this as a personal insult to you! But here is the fact: you as well as your parents are sinners! We all are. We all carry with us the old man of sin. A young person is no exception to the rule.

God has given your parents wisdom to discern that fact. They also

realize that adolescents (read the last article written in this rubric) tend to do something before really thinking it over. A young person is a bit impetuous (not always, of course), and will do something and think about its consequences later.

It is true that parents do not always call the shots right every time. Perhaps that is because the many temptations in the world that seek to lure young people into sin, at times frighten your parents. But if you can sit with them and reason with them, they also are wise to see and understand if you are right. Do not forget, however, to approach them in the right way! The wiser you show yourselves in the things you do, the more your parents will give to you the responsibility of making your own decisions.

Up to this point I realize that it may seem as if I as a pastor and parent am intent on defending the parent. It may seem to you that I am dictating changes in your attitude, but as for the parent, he does not need to change in the least. That is not my intent. Yet, it is true that you too as young people must examine your attitude in approaching parents and attempting to communicate with them. Your attitude also matters if proper communication is to take place.

There is a third truth the Bible teaches us concerning parents that you must bear in mind when attempting to converse with parents: your parents are *sinners*. Parents, too, have their spiritual ups and downs, their good times and their bad. Parents are not free from bad moods any more than you are. Sometimes parents say "yes, dear" to everything; at other times they may say "no way" to everything. Sometimes parents do not raise their voice at all; at other times they seem to raise their voice with everything they say. It is important to understand that your parents, just as well as you, carry with them an old man of sin. They do not do or say everything right. They do not always treat you the way they should.



What can I say? I am one of those imperfect parents too. I must ask God every night to forgive me of sins that I commit against my own family. I must thank God every night that He uses weak means to fulfill His will. The only reason I bring this up is in order that you as young people might understand your parents and might be sensitive to when and how you approach mother and father with a matter. When you are sensitive to the moods and pressures your parents experience, then you will know when to speak to them and when to back off respectfully. You will also see in Mom or Dad someone who can understand your sins and weaknesses because they have them too. Who better to talk to than those who can empathize with you? Will there be times you butt heads with Mom or Dad? There surely will! Will there be times when Dad or Mom may be wrong? There surely will! Then we should give heed to the Heidelberg Catechism in its explanation of the fifth commandment: Honor father and mother. "That I ... also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand." If you can grasp that, then you will understand your parents better and will talk with them as well.

Now, I realize that there can be more involved than simply the "normal" sins of a father and mother. There are sometimes extraordinary sins, even unrepentant sins of which parents are guilty that only serve to alienate us from them. Some parents are guilty of neglect and abuse of their children. Other parents are guilty of drunkenness or even unfaithfulness in the marriage.

There are parents like that in the church? O yes there are! They are good at hiding it from everyone else. That is why they are members of

the church. It is a fact, however, that there are children in the church who must deal with that kind of parent. How can you communicate with parents of this nature? You cannot. More drastic measures must be taken in these instances: the church must become involved.

*The wiser  
you show  
yourselves  
in the things  
you do,  
the more  
your parents  
will give  
to you the  
responsibility  
of making  
your own  
decisions.*

Troubled young men and women, tell your pastor or an elder if this is true of one or both of your parents. And, by all means, if you need an adult to talk to (and what young person doesn't) find one in your congregation. Please, do not forget, your pastor is one such person to whom you can speak! Maybe we can address this in another article.

One last truth which Scripture teaches us about godly parents is that they love their children. If there is one thing that motivates godly parents in all their decisions with respect to their children and youth it is a deep and unbreakable love for them. There is nothing closer than a parent-child relationship. Our children are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! What is more, God has promised us that He would establish His covenant of friendship not only with us, but with you, our children. Sometimes anger and frustration may alienate parents from children. Never does it sever the bond of love a parent has for his child.

The love of a parent for his child overcomes the biggest obstacles that might seem to stand between us and our parents. We at times convince ourselves, when we have done something foolish and sinful, that we must hide these things from parents. Especially is this true when we have committed such heinous sins as drunkenness or fornication. I know that the reason we hide these sins from parents is that they have warned us repeatedly of the seriousness of such sins. We know they are going to be angry; no, more, enraged! They have a right to be. We

have done evil in the sight of God. To hide such sins from a parent only makes the problem worse. Yes, our parents will be enraged. Can we really blame them? Yes, they will probably at first react out of total frustration. They may even wish to punish us on top of the shame we experience due to our sin. But those same parents will in love lead us to the cross of Jesus Christ in sorrow and repentance. They will help us with sound advice. They will tell us what to do to relieve us of the burden of our sin. And they will do this because they love us.

We wish to talk about best friends. Godly parents are our best friends, young people. We must learn to trust them as such. Then in good times and in bad we can sit with them and enjoy a good conversation. We will learn to communicate to them our needs and discuss with them issues of concern and importance. "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed (happy) that feareth the Lord" (Ps. 128:3, 4). Happiness is sons and daughters sitting around the table, not necessarily to eat, but communicating with one another, sharing in the richest fellowship and friendship. How often do we sit with our parents around the table and talk?

□





# Weak and Strong Faith (II)

The real test of whether our faith is weak or strong will often come when we face some serious trouble in our life. Weak faith cannot stand in the trials and difficulties of life in this world. Those who have weak faith go to pieces when great trials come; they do not know what to do or where to turn. Our life is full of trials, some greater than others. Almost every child of God will at one time or other have to face great calamities, deep sorrows, and extreme hardships in his life. Do we fall apart when this happens? Are we cast into the depths of despair and depression? This happens because of the weakness of faith. Weak faith fails to lay hold on the truth of God's absolute sovereignty and the faithfulness of His promises. Weak faith does not rely upon the strength of God to endure hardness, neither does it trust in His goodness and mercy. The proud man can easily imagine sometimes that he can face life alone and solve its mysteries and overcome its great troubles in his own wisdom and strength. But when real trouble comes he finds out the foolishness of this imagination. This is shameful for the child of God to whom the Lord has revealed His great salvation and given the promise of His help and guidance. The world will say to such a one: "Where is now your God?"

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Those who go through life murmuring and complaining and yet call themselves children of God are weak in faith. This was the great sin of the children of Israel throughout the wilderness wanderings. God revealed His mighty and glorious presence among His people. In fact, there was no people in all the world like Israel, who had God dwelling in their very midst. Israel should have known that by faith. God led them through the desert. He wonderfully provided for their every need — daily bread from heaven, water from the rock and, strength to fight with and overcome their enemies. Yet Israel was given to constant murmuring and complaining. How shamefully weak was their faith. What about us? We have a far greater revelation of God than Israel did in the days of the Old Testament. We have the glorious revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Christ has now performed the mighty work of salvation. He has fully accomplished our righteousness. He dwells with us and in our hearts through His wonderful Holy Spirit. He daily pours down upon us the exceeding great riches of the blessings of salvation. He has given His truth to be our guide. What a shameful thing it is for us, then, to go through life murmuring and complaining about the small difficulties we have to face. How miserably weak our faith is when we do that.

*Weak faith fails to lay hold on the truth of God's absolute sovereignty and the faithfulness of His promises.*

Weak faith is faith that has meager fruit. The inspired apostle James says in his epistle that faith without works is dead. A dead faith is really a contradiction. True faith must manifest itself in good works. God comes to every man, especially to those who claim to be Christians, and demands, "Where are your works of faith?" John the Baptist said to the proud religious leaders of the Jews who came to him by the Jordan River, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Even the child of God can at times show weakness of his faith in the meagerness of the fruits he brings forth. Let us not console ourselves in a life of weak faith by thinking that faith must be entirely passive and so there is no need to strive to bring forth the fruits of good works. This is a perversion of the truth of the Word of God concerning faith and is an evil excuse for a shamefully weak faith.

When a man is weak in faith he compromises the truth of God. This is certainly one of the most shameful of all characteristics of weak faith. God commands His children to confess His glorious truth before men. We are called to maintain this truth steadfastly. We are called to do this not merely as individuals but also as members of the church of Jesus Christ, united with our fellow saints in supporting the ministry of the



church. We are called to confess the truth of God with our mouth and to live our whole life in harmony with this truth. The world in which we live hates and opposes the truth. There is a constant and real danger in the life of every child of God to compromise the truth of God. It is much easier to remain silent about the truth of God and to go along with the world in its evil philosophy and life style than to take a strong stand on the truth of God. How often opportunities to testify for the truth of God pass us by and we fail miserably to bring glory to God. Nothing can excuse such weakness of faith or make up for it.

Lively, active, robust faith that glorifies God is the opposite of all the above. Such faith gives the child of God strength to persevere in the deepest of all trials and difficulties of life. Faith does not deny the reality of those trials. One who is strong in faith is not one who is unaffected by the sorrows and troubles of life. He does not live like a stoic. There is no virtue in being a stoic. The Christian is not one who never weeps in anguish over the troubles of life. In fact there are times when he is troubled in the deepest depths of his soul and experiences inexpressible sorrow. The strong in faith cry out to God constantly for strength in trials. The strong in faith find mighty comfort in God's sure promises of salvation. The strong in faith steadfastly believe in the sovereign goodness of God in the greatest of life's troubles. The strong in faith testify of the tender mercies of God even when all things from a human and earthly perspective seem bleak and dark. Such faith will not be ashamed before God. God is pleased with such faith. His name is glorified by it. He will reward that faith with increased strength and joy in this life and with His eternal reward in the day of judgment.

The child of God who is strong in faith submits to the sovereign will

of God without murmuring. Strong faith is self-denying and ready to bear suffering and persecution and reproach for the Lord's sake. Strong faith is manifest in quiet trust in the Lord and hearty confidence in Him. It keeps the child of God from despair even when the ways of God are so deep that they are beyond comprehension. It knows for certain that God is good and righteous in all that He does, even when the experiences of life seem to contradict this. Strong faith believes that all things, no matter how difficult, no matter how dark, are ordered by the wisdom and goodness of God for the salvation of His saints and the glory of His name. It is truly a wonderful faith that believes this.

In this connection something must be said about a terribly false notion about strong faith that is current in some circles. This is the notion that strong faith means that a person can do whatever he wants or decides on his own to do. This is the evil idea that strong faith is identified with the power of "positive thinking." If you want something badly enough, the advocates of this idea suggest, just convince yourself that somehow you are going to get it and that God is going to give it to you no matter what it is. God

*The strong in faith cry out to God constantly for strength in trials.*

wants everyone to be rich and prosperous in this world, and if you have strong enough faith you will achieve what you want.

There is hardly a more ungodly idea of faith imaginable than this, and yet there are those who in the name of Christianity promote this idea. Strong faith does not make the Christian imagine that he can get from God anything that he happens to want. Strong faith certainly does not make the Christian imagine that God wants him always to be in health and to prosper. Strong faith means

*The faith of the child of God shines most gloriously and wonderfully in the greatest of adversity.*

that we believe that also adversity, poverty, and sickness are under the control of God and are ordered for our good and salvation. Strong faith believes that God is the One who determines the course of our life. He alone knows what is best for us.

In a very real sense it takes much stronger faith to trust in God in adversity than to trust in Him in health and prosperity. The faith of the child of God shines most gloriously and wonderfully in the greatest of adversity.

Strong faith is submitting to God's will no matter how hard that may be for us personally. Strong faith seeks not the will and pleasure of man but the glory of God, even if that should mean death for us. Strong faith enables the child of God to endure all the sufferings of this present time in the steadfast hope of the glory that God has prepared for him in eternal life in heaven.

Strong faith is the faith that abounds in good works. The child of God who is strong in faith is deeply concerned about good works in his life. The strong in faith do not at all imagine that such good works in any way merit their salvation. The strong in faith understand that the whole of their salvation has been merited by the perfect work of Christ Jesus. But the strong in faith are zealous unto good works in order that they might show their gratitude to the God of their salvation and bring glory to the name of the God they love and confess. In His beautiful allegory of the vine and the branches recorded in John 15 Jesus says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." The Lord has redeemed us to be a people zealous of good works. □



## 5. The Worldwide Preaching of the Gospel

It would be proper for anyone making a study of the last things as we are doing to begin with the preaching of the gospel in all the world. Instead of treating it after war, heresy, and lawlessness, we could have treated it first. Jesus Himself made plain in Matthew 24 that the preaching of the gospel has the place of primary importance as far as the end of the world is concerned. He taught this in verse 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

In answer to His disciples' question, Jesus instructed them — and us — as to what must be expected to happen on earth prior to His coming again. He gave various signs of the end of the world. Here He tells us what the main thing is that must take place, and what the primary sign of the end is: the preaching of the gospel in all the world.

Jesus makes a truly astounding claim for the activity of preaching. He maintains that the end of the world and His coming again wait on the preaching. Until the gospel has been preached everywhere, the end cannot come. As soon as this has happened, then will the end come. God who alone knows the day and the hour of the end, and

who knows it because He has determined it in His eternal counsel, fixed the time of the end with a view to the preaching's running its course through the world. All of the other things that happen in the last days, all of the other signs of the end, are secondary to the preaching of the gospel and stand in the service of the preaching of the gospel. These other events are tremendous, world-shaking events, but they are all subordinate to the preaching, like satellites about a great planet.

Take the Antichrist, for example. The Scriptures teach that in the days ahead, the whole world will unite under one, mighty ruler, who will oppose God, His Christ, and His church. But II Thessalonians 2 teaches that there is something which hinders the coming of Antichrist, so that he does not arise until his time. The Antichrist will put a stop to the preaching of the gospel, and the sovereign God sees to it that he does not come until the gospel has been preached in all the world. What is true of the Antichrist is true of everything that happens in history between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ; everything is subservient to the preaching of the gospel. Men try to characterize certain periods of history by their outstanding feature. We speak of a scientific age, an atomic age, and the like. A notable historian has written a series on the history of civilization, the volumes of which are entitled *The Age of Faith*, *The Age of Reason*, *The Age of Revolution*, and the like. But

God has revealed that the time from Jesus' ascension to the end, our age, is "the age of the preaching of the gospel."

In light of this, it is pathetic, almost incredible, not to say wicked, that there is a powerful and even respectable movement within the churches today to downgrade, and even dispense with, preaching. Churches that trace their ancestry back to the Reformation which restored the preaching of the Word to its proper place at the center of the church's worship and which viewed preaching as the church's one, main task are now replacing preaching with dialogues, movies, song-fests, love-ins, activities for social reform, and demonstrations.

But there is another attack on preaching today. This consists of preaching something other than the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus says in Matthew 24:14 that it is "this gospel of the kingdom" that shall be preached. The gospel of the kingdom is simply the good news of God's grace towards us sinners in His Son Jesus Christ. It is the good news of salvation from sin and death and hell in the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. The message of this gospel is the entire content of the Bible, including the doctrine of the Bible on the last things, but centering always on Jesus Christ, who by His death and resurrection is Savior and Lord.

Yet, Jesus here and elsewhere calls the gospel the *gospel of the kingdom*. It is the good news about the

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kingdom. The kingdom is the kingdom of God, not of man. It is the kingdom of heaven, not of this world. It is spiritual, not earthly. The foundation of this kingdom is the righteousness of the cross. The kingdom is the rule of Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit and His Word of grace. We enter this kingdom, no, we are *translated* into it, by faith in Christ. Throughout this age, the kingdom is established in the heart of the regenerated elect; there is the throne and scepter of Christ the King. The peace of a citizen of this heavenly kingdom is the forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God. The prosperity of this kingdom is the riches of salvation. This is the kingdom that must, and will, be preached worldwide before the end comes. But what do we hear in the preaching, more and more today? About another kingdom, a kingdom that is earthly — earthly power, earthly peace, and earthly riches — a kingdom of man and of this world. The preaching of the heavenly kingdom is sneered at as something foolish, weak, and ineffective.

And so it is — in the judgment of the natural man. The preaching of the cross is always foolishness to those who perish. But God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise, and the weak things to confound the mighty. In reality, God's foolishness is wiser than men, and God's weakness is stronger than men. Insignificant and ridiculous as it may seem to men, the preaching of the gospel of the heavenly kingdom is God's work and God's Word in the world. It is not an activity and a word of mere man. If it were nothing more than this, such great things as the coming of Antichrist and the end of the world could not depend on it. But *God* speaks His mighty Word through the preaching of the church. He speaks! And that which is spoken is His Word! This makes the preaching of the gospel uniquely important, and this is the reason why the preaching has power to accomplish great and wonderful things.

That which the preaching accomplishes is the coming and extension of the kingdom of God. Preaching is called the preaching of the kingdom, not only because it is about the kingdom, but also because the kingdom comes and grows through the preaching. The preaching of the gospel realizes God's kingdom in the world. Throughout the new dispensation, the risen and exalted Jesus, having laid the foundation of the kingdom in the blood of the cross, builds His kingdom and extends His kingdom by means of the preaching of the gospel. This is why it is almost laughable that men and women who profess to love the kingdom of God, whose apparent zeal for the kingdom is nearly a frenzy, and who dedicate themselves to creating the kingdom, first of all renounce the preaching of the gospel. It is as if a man who intends to build a house throws away his hammer, or as if a man who desires to give an eloquent speech begins by cutting off his tongue. In the time between His advents, Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, establishes, maintains, and enlarges His kingdom by the preaching of the gospel, the sharp sword that goes out of His mouth.

This also is misunderstood. There is a view of the last things that supposes that the preaching will have such an effect, before Jesus comes again, that almost the whole world will be converted by it and be saved. Because of this conversion of almost all of mankind, earthly life will become Christian. There will be a Christian politics, a Christian legal system, Christian art, indeed a Christian society. The kingdom of God will have come. Thus will be ushered in the millennium, "the golden age" of earthly peace and prosperity.

This notion likes to appeal to the vision of the little stone of Daniel 2, which rolls down the mountain, destroys the godless kingdoms of man, and grows until finally it fills the whole earth. It is fond of quoting the Old Testament prophecy of the

coming Messianic age when nations beat swords into ploughshares and the knowledge of God covers the earth. It points us to Revelation 6:2, the vision of the white horse and its rider who has a bow and a crown and who goes forth conquering and to conquer, a vision correctly interpreted as referring to Christ and the victorious progress of the gospel in the new dispensation.

But this dream has no substance. All the Scriptures plainly and loudly testify against it. Jesus' teaching about the end in Matthew 24 is conclusive. The time before the second coming is a time of raging sin, of false prophets and false Christs, of great apostasy, of terrible tribulation for God's people, of the necessity of the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect.

Still, we must not react to the various presentations of the kingdom as earthly by denying, or minimizing, that the preaching of the gospel runs a triumphant course through the world. It is not so that the preaching suffers one defeat after another now, but will be victorious when Jesus returns. Jesus Christ is sitting on God's right hand — *today!* The white horse and its rider go forth conquering and to conquer — *today!* The little stone of Daniel 2 is growing and filling all the earth — *today!* The preaching of the gospel is carrying out the victory of the cross and the open tomb over the kingdom of Satan — *today!* "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God..." (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

But the nature of the triumph of the gospel, the nature of the overthrow of the enemy-kingdom and the building of the kingdom of God, is different from that suggested by the view that makes it all earthly, visible, and tangible. Jesus showed the spiritual nature of the effect of the gospel when He added in Matthew 24: "for a witness unto all na-



tions." The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached for a witness. God's purpose with the preaching is not that all of mankind be saved. Who they are whom God wills to save by the preaching is shown in Matthew 24 by Jesus' repeated reference to "the elect." Nor is it God's purpose that the preaching turn earthly society into the kingdom of God. But the preaching must give a witness to all nations.

All of the nations of the world have been deceived by Satan, the god of this world, so that they deny God and hold the truth of Him which is revealed in the creation under in unrighteousness. They all seek their own kingdoms, which are essentially the kingdom of man, the kingdom which man builds, the kingdom in which man's will reigns, and the kingdom in which man is glorified. In the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, God witnesses to them of Himself and of His kingdom. This is an effective witness also. The result is that the nations *know* that God is God, that they are guilty sinners, and that the kingdom which He has purposed in Christ and established in the cross and resurrection of Christ is the true and everlasting kingdom. The Word never returns to God void.

However, this witness is twofold in its effect, according to the twofold purpose of God. First, the preaching is a witness that renders many people in every nation inexcusable. They hear the good news, but they reject it. Therefore, God will be just when He judges them. In fact, the effect of the preaching is to harden them, so that they fill the

measure of the cup of iniquity and are prepared for the final judgment. That this is one result of the worldwide preaching is evident from verse 9, where Jesus forewarns the apostles, and in them the church: "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." There is a witness unto condemnation.

The second and main effect of the preaching is that it saves the elect in every nation, bringing them to repentance and faith. By the witness of the gospel, God's elect are delivered from the power of darkness and are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, as Colossians 1:13 says. They become citizens of the heavenly kingdom already in this life. Christ rules them by His Word and Spirit. They confess Him to be Lord. They enjoy the peace of that Kingdom, the forgiveness of sins. They possess its treasures, not meat and drink, not earthly powers and success, for, as Romans 14:16 says, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

This is the primary purpose of God with the worldwide preaching of the gospel. This is the main reason why the end of the world cannot come until the gospel has been preached in all the world: the end cannot come until all those chosen in Christ out of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, whites and blacks, as God's kingdom people, the Israel of God, have been gathered by the Son of God through the preaching of the gospel. In these elect out of all nations, all nations are saved.

This, therefore, is the coming and extension of the kingdom of

God and of Christ in the present age: God's people are brought to faith and, having been brought to faith, are enabled to live as citizens of the heavenly kingdom in all their earthly life. In the realm of government, they obey the king. In the realm of labor, they submit to the employer, if an employee, or they treat the employees justly and kindly, if an employer. In the realm of marriage, they are faithful to their mate by loving their wife and by submitting to their husband. This is the kingdom and its life now. Another vision of it than this is the ancient, carnal, Jewish delusion.

When the end comes at Jesus' return on the clouds, He will renew the creation and perfect the kingdom of God in it.

We must learn from this how important and mighty the preaching of the gospel is. The church must preach it in season and out of season. We believers and our children must listen to it. Only let church and believer alike take heed that it is the gospel of the kingdom that is preached and heard, "*this* gospel of the kingdom," and no other.

From the fact that by this time the gospel has been preached in almost all the world, we know that the end is near. After Pentecost, the gospel went out to the ends of the earth. It began in Jerusalem and Judea, progressed to Samaria, and then spread to all the world. By now, almost all nations have received the witness.

Today, that witness comes to us. You are hearing it! You — what is *your* response to the witness of the gospel? □

## Book Reviews

*Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*, by David J. Engelsma. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, revised edition 1994. 216 pp. \$10.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Rev. Chris Coleborn.]

This book by Prof. Engelsma basically deals with the vital question, "Does the fact that the gospel of Christ Jesus is to be preached to all mankind mean that God desires and intends the salvation of all who hear that preaching, even the reprobate?" Those who hold to the well-meant

offer of the gospel answer in the affirmative. Prof. Engelsma clearly says "No" to the question, with good reasons given from Scripture and the confessed, historic Reformed faith. He also makes it clear that those who deny this notion are not hyper-Calvinists. Rather, they are true Cal-



vinists — consistent biblical Christians.

We are well aware that, to many, the relevance and importance of this question is really only academic, with no real application to vital Christianity, the welfare of the church, and to the great work of evangelism. We are also aware that others believe that to deny the notion that God intends and desires the salvation of reprobates when the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached to all is to deny the gospel itself, and the very reason for preaching it, and not to have a love for the salvation of souls. This, of course, is the most serious accusation to be made against a Christian and a preacher of Christ's church.

Here, in this revised edition of Prof. Engelsma's book, we may find plain reasons why the denial of the above question is not only very important and practical for the honour of Christ Jesus' person and work, but also for the welfare of the church and the true preaching of the gospel to all mankind. The author shows that any professing Reformed believer worthy of the name, and zealous for "the faith," will have a critical problem with the notion that the earnest, urgent preaching of the gospel and call to all men and women without distinction to come to the Saviour by repentance and faith of necessity implies that God intends and desires the salvation, not only of the elect, but also of the reprobate!

This important question has been debated for some time in professing Reformed circles. In fact, it seems to me that the debate is becoming more earnest in our day. This is good, for in my opinion the question has been left without proper consideration for too long by those who profess to love the doctrines of grace and who truly believe that the Reformed faith most accurately expresses the teachings of the Word of God.

It has not been easy to find a book that faithfully and yet in a popular way sets out the matter, not

only for the Reformed preacher but also for the Reformed believer. Here is such a book!

The author clearly denies that the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ to all mankind is an evidence of a desire in God for all who hear to be saved — the reprobate included. He also shows that this does not of necessity also mean the denial of "the indiscriminate, lively, urgent preaching of the gospel. It entails no hesitation to call everyone in the preacher's audience to repentance and faith. It originates in no determination to weaken the responsibility of man before the face of the sovereign God" (p. 7).

It is correctly pointed out that the well-meant offer is in fact a cause of great peril to the faith that Calvinists profess to love. It is an essential compromise of the doctrines of Calvinism.

The author draws out a most important lesson, I believe, from the controversy in England in the 1600s and 1700s, when the Arminianism of John and Charles Wesley was so strong and caused some Calvinists, in reaction to it, particularly to the well-meant construction of the preaching of the gospel to all, to fall into hyper-Calvinism. The real issue in the debate on the matter of the call of the gospel is that which Reformed theology speaks of as the external call of the gospel. The matter of the external and internal call is helpfully illustrated by reference to Matthew 22 (p. 109).

This book plainly refutes the accusation made against those who deny that there is a universal love in God for all mankind, and a desire for their salvation, particularly in the preaching of the gospel, of being hyper-Calvinists. Hyper-Calvinists deny that God calls everyone who hears the preaching of the gospel to repent of their sins and believe on Christ Jesus.

Another accusation brought against those who deny that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all, even the reprobate, is that a man cannot be a true, sincere, and ear-

nest preacher of the gospel to sinners, if he does not believe that Christ has a desire that all who hear the preaching be saved. The answer is given in this book: we must distinguish between the serious call of the gospel and the well-meant offer of the gospel. Condemnation of the well-meant offer is not rejection of the serious call of the gospel to all who hear it. Having heard the preaching within the Protestant Reformed Churches, and, indeed, within my own, I can testify that there can be a heartfelt, sincere, and serious call to sinners to repent and believe and so be saved, without holding to the well-meant offer notion.

The real issue is this, writes Prof. Engelsma: "... does God love and have a gracious attitude towards everyone who hears the preaching, and does He in the preaching desire to save everyone?" This is why we must ask the question of those who profess a love of the Reformed faith, but who at the same time hold to the well-meant offer, "What grace does the reprobate receive in the preaching?"

It is striking that much of the calumny by those who hold to the well-meant offer against those that oppose it is that of the Arminians. It very much involves the doctrine of reprobation. This awful truth is that God has eternally decreed "out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure that certain, definite members of the human race will not be saved by Him but that they shall perish in their unbelief and other sins." Reprobation is God's eternal decree that the destiny of certain men shall be everlasting death, whether one views it as God's passing those men by with the grace of election or as the determination to damn (Canons of Dordt, I/5).

We accept, of course, that those who profess to love the Reformed faith and at the same time hold to the well-meant offer can see that there is a contradiction in their position. The way they seek to resolve



their dilemma is to resort to what they call "the mystery" or the "paradox of God's two wills." These notions are refuted.

Prof. Engelsma correctly points out that the Reformed doctrine of reprobation and the theology of the well-meant offer are diametrical opposites.

Prof. Engelsma also correctly points out, we believe, the link between the theology and practice of the well-meant offer and an abandonment or compromise of the Reformed faith.

It is a most helpful book for Reformed preachers who desire to preach the "whole counsel of God" — the full gospel. The book is not simply negative, condemning the errors of both hyper-Calvinism and compromised Calvinism as seen in the doctrine of the well-meant offer, but there is also the positive setting forth of how a truly consistent Reformed preacher would proclaim the gospel to all (chapter 3, "The Reformed Doctrine of the Call of the Gospel").

On the matter of preaching, a

most valid scriptural point is made. It is that the reason why God has the gospel preached both throughout the world in missions and in the established churches is that the elect may be saved to the praise of His grace. The Scriptures teach that divine election — not a universal love of God or a desire that all be saved — is the basis and motivation of missions, indeed, of all preaching.

There are some most helpful summaries and descriptions.

As a Reformed preacher from a British Reformed background, I am pleased to see that the author is acquainted with the Westminster Confessional Standards as well as with the Continental Reformed Symbols. There are some comments, however, such as that on the covenant of works, that would trouble those of a Westminster background.

The matter of "common grace," a universal love of God, non-saving benefits and love won by Christ for the reprobate, and historical material relative to the subject are also dealt with in the book.

There is a most challenging in-

troduction to the book by the well-known and respected Presbyterian theologian, Dr. John H. Gerstner, strongly supporting Prof. David Engelsma on the issue of the well-meant offer.

The larger print of this edition is an improvement over the first edition, but, more importantly, this reprinting adds considerably more information to the first edition.

A general index would be helpful.

Apart from the "Introduction" being helpfully reworked, most of the chapters have been expanded. The most significant difference from the first edition is the addition of a new chapter, "Is Denial of the Well-Meant Offer Hyper-Calvinism?" This makes the purchase of this reprint vital for all who would love and seek to preserve the God-glorifying faith of our Reformed fathers. We trust to hear more from Prof. David Engelsma on this and related subjects. ■

*[The reviewer is a minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.]*

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Congregational Activities

If there seems to be a common theme in our churches this time of year, it would have to be the Reformation and our observance of it. We count no fewer than seven conferences or lectures sponsored by various of our churches this year.

Perhaps one of the more ambitious events was a two-day Reformation Conference sponsored by the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Over the course of a Friday evening and a Saturday morning and after-

noon, Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of Southwest, and Rev. K. Koole, pastor of Faith PRC, spoke four times on the theme, "The Reformation and Worship." This theme was considered from four different points of view. The first was "The Reformation's Emphasis on the Centrality of Preaching in Worship." This was followed by addresses on the Reformation's emphasis on congregational worship, spiritual worship, and family worship.

The church extension committee of the Loveland, CO PRC scheduled a lecture in their church for the 27th of October. Loveland's pastor, Rev. G. VanBaren, spoke on the subject "Yea, Hath God said...?" — an examination of the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church into all the truth.

Prof. H. Hanko, of our seminary,

was invited to speak at a Reformation Day celebration at the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA. He spoke on October 28 on the theme, "The Truth of Justification, the Pillar of the Church." While in Redlands he was also able to preach the following Sunday on the theme, "Fully Justified," expounding on Romans 8:33, 34.

The chapel of Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA was the location of a lecture sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of our churches in Iowa and Minnesota. On November 4 Prof. D. Engelsma, of our seminary, spoke on "Martin Luther: Theologian of the Glory of God."

Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, spoke on October 31 at Trinity on the theme, "Reaching the Nations with the Reformed Faith."

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



On October 27 Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Bauer, MI spoke at a lecture sponsored by the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL. He spoke on the topic, "What Is the Basis For Truth?"

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC also sponsored a lecture this past Reformation Day. It was entitled, "The Reformation: A Return to the Primacy of Preaching."

The El Bethel Christian Center in Elk Grove Village, IL was the scene of the installation service of Rev. C. Haak, as the second pastor of the Bethel PRC. This service was held on November 4 and was conducted by Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI. Bethel's council extended invitations to the congregations of both the Peace and South Holland churches to join them for this happy and historic event.

Plans called for a Haak family welcome to follow one week later.

The Consistory of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI has granted the re-

quest of the group meeting in Standale for an extension of six months for their holding of services in that area. This request was granted because the group has continued to grow and now comprises 24 families. It appears that, the Lord willing, they will proceed toward organization sometime in the near future.

#### Evangelism Activities

The Council of the South Holland, IL PRC approved their Evangelism Committee's plan for a series of gospel messages by their pastor, Rev. C. Terpstra, in Florence, Kentucky on November 15, 16, 17, in the Amazing Grace Lutheran Church. The purpose of these meetings is to reach the area with the Reformed faith and to try to determine what interest there might be in a Reformed work. South Holland's main advertising means was 40,000 flyers inserted in the November 5 issue of the Cincinnati *Post Enquirer*, the major newspaper of

northern Kentucky. South Holland's members were strongly urged to show their support for this work by coming down for some or all of these meetings if they could.

#### Minister Activities

Rev. R. Dykstra, of the Doon, IA PRC declined the call he had received from the Lynden, WA PRC. Rev. T. Miersma has accepted the call he received from the Loveland, CO PRC to serve as Home Missionary for our churches. Our congregation in Byron Center, MI called Rev. J. Slopsema to be their pastor. With him on that trio were the Revs. A. denHartog and C. Terpstra.

We also extend congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. M. Dick, of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, who were blessed with the birth of a son, Daniel Mitchell, born October 24.

#### *Food for Thought*

"An idle life and a holy heart is a contradiction."

— T. Brooks □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow members Ron and Deb Kuiper in the loss of his father,

**MR. HENRY KUIPER.**

May we rejoice together in the words of II Corinthians 15:55-57: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev. R. Cammenga, President  
Mrs. Steve Kuiper, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of Hope PRC of Grand Rapids, expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow members, Mrs. Helen Hop, in the passing of her husband,

**MR. DAVID HOP,**

and Mrs. Cornelia Kuiper, in the passing of her brother-in-law,

**MR. HENRY KUIPER.**

May they find comfort in Romans 8:28, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Mr. Tom DeVries, President  
Phyllis King, Secretary

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 22, 1994, our parents and grandparents,

**HENRY and CORYNNA BOER,** celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for the years He has given them and for the faithful Christian instruction they have given us.

"The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad" (Ps. 126:3).

- ❖ Scott and Deb Boer  
Ryan
- ❖ Todd and Wendy Boer  
Nathan
- ❖ Shawne Boer

Jenison, Michigan



### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow members Jim and Barb Kuiper in the loss of their father and father-in-law

#### MR. HENRY KUIPER.

May they be comforted by the Word of God in Lamentations 3:22, 23: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not, they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."

Darrell Huiskens, President  
Marie DeYoung, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to fellow officebearers Ronald Kuiper and Clarence Kuiper, in the loss of their father and brother respectively,

#### MR. HENRY KUIPER.

May they and their families find comfort in the promise of the Lord Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President  
Bill DeKraker, Vice-President

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 1995, at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

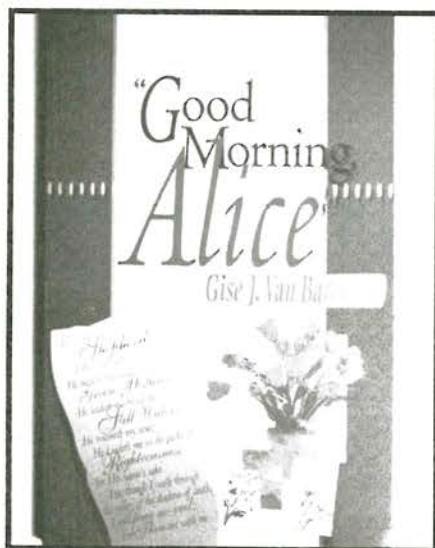
### CONFERENCE '95 — Reformed Evangelism April 3, 4, 5, 1995

Three days and evenings of addresses, discussion, fellowship, and family recreation at J Bar J Ranch, Scaly, Texas.

Featuring  
**Professor David Engelsma,**  
**Pastor Ron VanOverloop,**  
**Pastor Jai Mahtani**

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### Good Morning, Alice

In this book, a series of cards written to Alice by an anonymous friend is set into the framework of the story of Alice's struggle with Lou Gehrig's disease. Alice's story is written in an interesting and personal way, by her brother, Rev. G.J. VanBaren.

In the cards, Alice's friend shares her thoughts on certain passages of Scripture, and brings the

reader in close contact with the sovereign God, who does all things well. Both a devotional and a story, this book will be interesting and beneficial for readers of all ages.

Available for \$11.50 in the U.S. and \$12.50 outside the U.S. (prices include shipping).

### Studies in I Thessalonians Studies in II Thessalonians

Because these two epistles were written to instruct the Thessalonians about Christ's second coming, a study of this portion of God's Word is very helpful for present-day Christians, who see many signs pointing to the end of the world.

Written in workbook form these excellent guides will greatly aid the Bible student in either personal or group Bible study.

Available for \$3.95 each in the U.S. and \$4.50 each outside the U.S. (prices include shipping).

