



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

**Reformed amillennialism  
sees *the* enemy  
of the church approaching.  
It sees this in light  
of the Word of God,  
Holy Scripture.  
It is giving the warning.  
No opposition  
from dreamers  
of coming earthly peace  
will stop its trumpet.**

See "A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism" — p. 317

**Vol. 71, No. 13  
April 1, 1995**

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## In This Issue ...

An effective means of evangelism is that members of the church invite others to attend church with them.

Similarly, if the *Standard Bearer* is to get new readers, especially outside the circle of the present subscribers, those who subscribe must place an issue of the magazine in the hands of a relative, friend, or neighbor. More effectively still, our readers must direct the attention of others to a particular article.

We ask that every subscriber do this with the present issue.

Parents should put the magazine, opened to Rev. Bruinsma's "Yin-Yang" ("Yin-Yang"?), in the hands of their teenage children. The article is another powerful word to Reformed young people from the angel of Holland. Our young people should read it.

Show the question and answer in "The Reader Asks" department to anyone who has some interest in the Protestant Reformed denial that God is gracious to the reprobate ungodly. The column explains the "difficult" texts, Matthew 5:44, 45 and Mark 10:17-22.

Your Christian neighbor at work may appreciate knowing that there are laws protecting his exercise of his religious convictions in the market-place. See James Lanting's "Recent Developments in Church/State Law."

Calvinists with a concern for right Reformed church government, particularly officebearers, will be glad to know of a recent, important book on the subject. Hand them Prof. Decker's review of *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*.

The editorial will be welcome to Reformed Christians who are becoming increasingly uneasy with the message that the earthly future promises mass conversions and a carnal victory of the church over the world.

Friends and relatives in the South, especially any in the Houston, Texas area, would like to know about an evangelism conference — a *Reformed* evangelism conference — in Houston this month (to which he or she is still warmly invited). For information, have your Southern friend or relative turn to the report of our man on top of Protestant Reformed news, Ben Wigger, in "News from Our Churches."

While you are at it, suggest a subscription; 21 issues a year, for a mere \$12 (in the U.S.; elsewhere, \$15).

—DJE



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# That Blessed Promise

*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

II Peter 3:13.

The coming of our Savior Jesus Christ is not mentioned literally in this verse. We do, however, find Him presented literally in the second verse of this chapter. There He is called our Savior. It is plain, then, that when our God speaks of the "new heavens and the new earth" He refers to the day in which Christ Jesus our Savior comes and God's most blessed promise is fulfilled. Christ's most blessed kingdom, which is promised, will come.

What is more, in the verse preceding this statement of the coming of the new heavens and new earth we have God's promise to us that the present heaven and earth will be dissolved, melting away with a fervent heat. For in verse 12 our God, through Peter, states: "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Now here, in verse 13, our God through the apostle Peter presents the awesome truth that the new heavens and the new earth will come into being as a wonderful realm, wherein righteousness will everlast-

ingly dwell. We do have here our God's manifestation of the coming of the blessed glory that He promised us and that is coming to pass in its fullness.

Peter begins this epistle with that truth in mind. For in the first verse of this second epistle he writes that we have with us a "precious faith" through the righteousness of God and of our Savior. Still more, this 13th verse of chapter 3 begins with references to God's promise of what He intends to do, and what He will truly give us, namely, a new life of righteousness in the kingdom of Christ where we will live with Him. And He will bless us, not merely with a life like that comfortable life which Adam and Eve had when they were created. We will have more glory than the highest angels now have in heaven; and we will have it in the new creation of which our text speaks.

Our Savior did not die for any of the angels; and He did not earn for them glory above the glory they already had. We will by God's grace be brought into a far richer glory than that of the angels, and far richer than Adam and Eve had before they fell into sin. The believers are all together members of Christ's body. And He uses the angels for the good of His elect. Of these angels we read in Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

The righteous earth on which Adam and Eve were created was a realm where Satan could come with

unrighteousness, and could tempt man, and cause the whole human race to fall into corruption and guilt. Now, through Christ Jesus our Savior, all those chosen in Christ shall have the fulfillment of that blessed promise of dwelling where righteousness dwells everlastingly.

In the text quoted at the beginning of this article, we are assured that what is coming for us is not merely a place where there will be no sin and punishment. It is the place where all the citizens of the kingdom of heaven shall love God and serve Him constantly and joyfully with their hearts, minds, and strength every minute.

There is so much emphasis in the church-world today on deliverance from punishment. That deliverance is surely a blessed gift from our God. Acts 16:31 clearly makes it part of our salvation. But the basic element of our salvation is deliverance from sin, not merely from that punishment. It is deliverance from the love of sin. It is granting us the desire to walk in love to God, and to serve Him eagerly and thankfully in all our thinking, willing, and acting. Only in that way can there be salvation from punishment. What is more, the basic element of our salvation is being born spiritually. Thus in John 3:3 we read, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We are not saved basically for our own glory. We are saved basically for God's glory. It is good and wonderful that we are by God saved from the punishment which we deserve. But God

*Rev. Heys is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

saves us for His own glory. According to Psalm 149:14, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and therefore we praise Him.

What is more, the righteous earth on which Adam and Eve were created was one on which there was not one sin committed until Satan came to begin it. But in the new heavens and earth there will be for us, as members of Christ's body, no sin. The new heavens and earth will be a holy place where saints shall walk in love toward God with heart, mind, soul, and strength, every minute, by God's promise in His grace.

Still more, in the verse where-with this article begins we read that the elect are by God's grace already looking for the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." We are not merely saved from punishment. Basically our salvation is deliverance from our love of sin, and of sinful deeds. And Christ will come to raise our bodies so that we can, and will, in love of God, desire to do nothing else but serve God with heart, mind, and soul. Very rightfully we sing in God's church: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

All this takes place because of God's promise to bring forth the new heavens and earth, wherein righteousness will eternally dwell. And the text above calls it dwelling in "righteousness," which means dwelling where we will do only what is right in God's eyes. That we will do because of perfect love for Him which He has implanted in our hearts.

The day we fell our God declared that He will make all the elect love Him and hate Satan. And, looking for His return, we are looking for a blessed, beautiful kingdom, where we will by God's grace live forever.

Looking for Christ's return, we are looking for that blessed, beautiful life in a new realm, where we will stay forever. For we will be righteous everlastingly. Satan and all the fallen angels shall everlast-

ingly be in torment in hell. We do well to take note of the fact that the almighty and unchangeable God will have realized what He had in His heart and mind before He even created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain.

Our calling, therefore, is to be concerned with the basic element of our salvation. God promises us that Christ is coming to bring us with body and soul into the blessed life which He eternally decreed to give us. Peter, in the text quoted above, is used by God to bring to us the rich, heavenly blessedness which He realizes through His Son, and for us. It is extremely important for us, through His Son, to keep in mind, and to search with our hearts and minds, the joy that God realized for us, and will fulfill through His Son. Salvation is the blessed gift of God's grace, whereby we will love Him fully and constantly, so that we will never get the slightest desire to commit a sinful thought or desire.

That is why our Savior Himself said, as we find it in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Likewise in Ephesians 4:24 we read: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We do well to take note of the fact that we are created in righteousness. We did not change our own spiritual being. God changed us, making us righteous by His grace. And so correctly we sing: "All that I am I owe to Thee. Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me."

Now, to create is to bring into being that which does not exist. We create absolutely nothing spiritual or physical. We owe all that is physically and spiritually good to God, as the gift of His grace. The awesome fact is that righteousness did not, and cannot, come into any man or angel, except as the gift of God's grace. Sin began in heaven as the work of Satan and of the fallen angels. Sin began in heaven before it came on this earth. And our Savior had to be born without an earthly

father, and be born on this earth, to pay for our guilt, and to ascend up into heaven to save all those who were eternally chosen in Him.

What a blessed and wonderful gift of God's grace do we now see. For it we must be, and by God's grace we are, thankful. What a blessed promise do we have here in this 13th verse of Peter's second epistle. God's promise is going to be fulfilled, for He is the almighty, unchangeable God, whose name is Jehovah, which means I AM. Every one of His promises to His elect is going to be fulfilled, at the exact time that He eternally decided to fulfill it. A new heaven and a new earth are most assuredly coming.

Let us then, by His grace, praise God from whom all blessings flow. We do have such a blessed promise; and we have it given to us by the almighty, unchangeable God, so that we can be, and by His grace are, sure that *all* things work together for our good. Our salvation is absolutely sure. □

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### Faith

"Be not anxious," Jesus says,  
Whatever comes your way  
Is sent by God, then surely He  
Will give you strength each day.

"Consider now the lilies!"  
How beautiful the sight!  
Our God in His great majesty  
Has thus arrayed in white.

"He feeds the little sparrow,"  
And causes birds to sing;  
Will He not bless my pathway  
With every perfect thing?

Indeed my hairs are numbered,  
Such blessings I receive!  
O give me faith, Lord Jesus,  
To trust Thee and believe.

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, Michigan

# A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

Response to the editorial, "Jewish Dreams" (the *Standard Bearer*, Jan. 15, 1995), has made clear how deep and entrenched are the inroads of postmillennialism into Reformed circles. The editorial, written at the beginning of a new year, reminded Reformed Christians that our only hope, according to the Bible, is the second coming of the Lord Jesus. It sketched in broad outline the traditional, creedal Reformed conception of the last days: abounding lawlessness; widespread apostasy; the Antichrist; and great tribulation for the true church. It gave a warning against the false hope that is known as postmillennialism, quoting a Reformed creed that condemned "Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment."

Against this Reformed doctrine of the endtime with its condemnation of postmillennialism have come vehement objections. The objections arise from conservative Reformed and Presbyterian men and churches.

One objector asked for a defense of amillennialism from Scripture. He also confidently asserted that the number of Reformed amillennialists is steadily decreasing, suggesting that the reason for this is the irrefutable arguments of the postmillennialists.

It is true that the postmillennialists are very vocal and aggressive in promoting their theory of the last days. Nor is this true only of those associated with the movement known as "Christian Reconstruction." Also the men of the

influential Banner of Truth publishing group vigorously and incessantly push postmillennialism, usually in connection with their expectation of a coming great revival of Christianity.

It is also true that there is little or no defense of amillennialism in the Reformed press. Exposure and condemnation of postmillennialism as false and dangerous doctrine are unheard of.

Reformed and Presbyterian churches and officebearers have apparently decided to tolerate postmillennialism. This is tacit sanctioning of the error. Postmillennialism is, at the very least, a legitimate option for Reformed Christians. It is, therefore, no wonder that these churches and ministers are unable to respond to the sharp attack on amillennialism by the postmillennialists. Much less can they take the offensive against the error.

Postmillennialism wins by default.

Error carries the day because truth is kept from the field.

The notion of some amillennialists that amillennialism and postmillennialism are two valid options for Reformed Christians and that the silence of the amillennialists will result in amillennialism and postmillennialism dwelling together in blest accord is silly.

The aggressive postmillennialists know better than this and intend, in fact, to wipe amillennialism out, root and branch. They have given the Reformed amillennialists fair warning. Gary North has written:

There are three main rival views of evangelical eschatology — four, considering dispensationalism. Either all are in error, or all but one is. It is always the task of Trinitarian theologians to discover what is biblically correct. When a theologian has concluded that a particular view is correct, he should seek to make his discovery a test of orthodoxy — if not in his own era, if that is premature, then someday. The goal of the Church should always be an increase in confessional precision. A large part of the Church's confession deals with eschatology. Orthodoxy means *straight speaking*. One cannot speak straight with a four-way tongue.

It is time to stop believing in theological pluralism as anything more than a temporary stopgap. It is time to reject the idea of the equal ultimacy of incompatible theological positions. Premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism are theologically incompatible. God cannot be pleased with all three. At least two of them should be discarded as heretical, if not today, then before Christ comes in final judgment.

I contend that two of them will be. This is another implication of postmillennialism: the Church will eventually identify other eschatologies as wrong. Amillennialists and premillennialists believe that such eschatological precision and confidence will never come to the Church in history; therefore, they are formally defenders of eschatological liberty (at least in Presbyterian circles) even though they cannot stand postmillennialism. They believe that today's eschatological confusion is a permanent condition: the equal judicial ultimacy of all

three. We postmillennialists do not agree. We do not hold eschatologies in dialectical ... tension ("Eschatology and Social Theory," *Christianity & Society* 4, no. 2, April 1994: 11).

The delightful Dr. North is wrong on two counts. Protestant Reformed amillennialists *do* believe that eschatological precision and confidence will come to the Church in history. In fact, they believe that this precision has already come to the church in history. It has come to the church as represented by the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is the confession of amillennialism with its corresponding repudiation of premillennialism and postmillennialism as false doctrines. And this, of course, indicates Dr. North's second mistake.

The quotation does serve to show that postmillennialism is not content peacefully to coexist with amillennialism, contrary to the thinking of the Reformed amillennialists who refuse to speak out in defense of amillennialism.

In this and a few subsequent editorials, I like to do my small part in defending and promoting the biblical doctrine of the last days, namely, Reformed amillennialism. This will necessarily involve demonstrating that postmillennialism is a false doctrine, as well as a vain and dangerous hope.

Let us have the positions clearly in our mind.

Both are teachings about the last days. Both instruct the church as to what she can expect in the future before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

They differ radically.

Reformed amillennialism teaches the church, that is, us who believe and our children, to expect increasing lawlessness in the world, apostasy from the truth in the churches, the establishment of the kingdom of

Antichrist over the entire world, and great tribulation for all those who fear God and keep His commandments. To such a world, thus fully developed in sin, will Christ return.

Postmillennialism in Reformed and Presbyterian circles holds out quite a different prospect. Gradually, the gospel will convert the majority of the world's inhabitants. True Christians will possess political power in every nation, controlling all aspects of the life of the nation so that there will be a genuinely Christian culture. This will be the "Christianizing," as they put it, of the world. The human race will obey the law of God, at least outwardly (for many will remain unconverted). There will be earthly peace worldwide. The result will be unprecedented material prosperity. Poverty will disappear. Disease will be checked. Crime will be virtually non-existent.

Coming is a "golden age." It will last at least for a thousand years, perhaps a hundred thousand years.

Christ will get an earthly victory in history.

This earthly victory will be the "Messianic kingdom" in its full splendor.

At this point, the postmillennialists differ among themselves.

Some have Jesus returning to the grand earthly kingdom.

Others, looking hard at the disconcerting testimony of Revelation 20:7ff., that at the very end Satan will unleash an all-out assault on the church, predict that the peaceable earthly kingdom of Christ will suffer revolution at the end from the ungodly who were only submitting outwardly.

In either case, the second coming of Christ will follow hard upon the "golden" millennial age.

Merely to describe the two positions is to squelch the inevitable protest from some, "What difference does it make? Must we argue about such things? Do not both the

amillennialists and the postmillennialists believe in Jesus? Cannot we live together in harmony?"

Postmillennialism tells the Reformed saints that apostasy, Antichrist, and persecution are *past*. It calls them to take power in the world. It assures them of future earthly ease. It leaves the people unprepared for the struggle that lies ahead for the church, the fiercest struggle that the church has ever faced. It renders the people oblivious to the gathering storm at this very moment. The abounding lawlessness in Western society, for example, does not for the postmillennialist herald the "lawless one," the "man of sin," of II Thessalonians 2. It is merely the prelude to the collapse of ungodly society so that the saints can take control.

I heard R. J. Rushdoony for the first time, early in my ministry, in the late 1960s as I recall, in Ft. Collins, Colorado. He described in graphic detail an impending collapse of civilization. His advice to Christians in view of this disaster? "Save your gold and silver." This will empower the saints to reconstruct society. I did not know whether to laugh or cry. The thought of possessing any silver and gold was hilarious. The idea that a Reformed minister would strengthen Christians for their struggle in the last days by financial advice was sad.

In Ezekiel 33, the LORD instructs the watchman to signal the approach of the enemy against His people, warning that the watchman who fails to blow the trumpet of alarm shall be guilty of the blood of the people.

Reformed amillennialism sees the enemy of the church approaching. It sees this in light of the Word of God, Holy Scripture. It is giving the warning. No opposition from dreamers of coming earthly peace will stop its trumpet.

As for those who refuse to heed the warning, their blood will be upon their own heads.

— DJE

## Curious Missive from Wonderland

Probably not many readers of *Christian Renewal* read the *Standard Bearer*, and so I had second thoughts about replying to the articles of Engelsma in the February 1 and February 15 issues of the *SB*. But for the sake of those readers who get both magazines, I believe a brief reply might be helpful, especially since Engelsma goes to great lengths in trying to refute something I wrote in the December 26 issue of *CR*. I will try to be brief.

1. I wrote that the "PR churches informed the Alliance that for them to attend as fraternal delegates they would have to 'lecture us' on common grace and other matters that divide us." Note that although I did not say it in so many words, this presupposes that the Alliance had asked them to attend. That's the way any unbiased reader will understand it. I see very little difference between this and the decision of the PR synod which Engelsma quotes: "That synod authorize the Contact Committee to send observers to the ARC provided that the ARC gives our observers the time to address the real issues between the ARC and the PRC." To me they are one and the same.

2. "Fraternal delegates" (my words, JT) or "observers" (Engelsma). Again, what really is the difference? In the CRC they were called fraternal delegates; at the Alliance I guess we call them "observers." Nothing to get hot and bothered about.

3. "Lecture us." Yes, those are my words, and I purposely used them, and the two articles by Engelsma clearly showed the correctness of that designation. I know my PR brothers longer than yesterday. I have written letters to the *SB* more than once, even in the day when H.H. (Herman Hoeksema) was editor. And I pretty well know what to expect in response. That's why I used this designation, and the response was true to form. No doubt there will be more of the same in response to what I am now writing in *CR*. And it's not that I mind that so much; I'm just saying that "lecture us" is the proper terminology.

4. Engelsma himself admits that the invitation from ARC "involved some desire for 'ecumenical relations,' if not for 'federation.'" That's exactly why I wrote that we can forget about federative relations with the PR's under present conditions. That does not necessarily preclude other forms of contact and co-operation.

(Rev.) Jelle Tuininga  
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

### RESPONSE:

The Rev. Jelle Tuininga writes: "... we can forget about federative relations with the PR's under present conditions."

Not: "we can forget about federative relations with the PR's *until we sit down to discuss our doctrinal differences.*"

Not even: "we can forget about federative relations with the PR's *because of doctrinal differences.*"

But: "... under present conditions."

Whatever might he mean?  
"Under present conditions"! Curious.

— Ed.

■ I dissent with your editorials, "Jelle in Wonderland (*Standard Bearer*, Feb. 1 and 15, 1995). I recognize the errors in the statements made by Rev. Tuininga about the Protestant Reformed Churches, and believe they must be addressed. It is the way in which your article does this that I disagree.

The Bible gives explicit instruction on how we must respond to those who have wronged us. I Thessalonians 5:15 states: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." I do not believe that the spirit of your editorial was one of humility that the Bible commands of us. I saw little, if anything, in the article that affirmed Rev. Tuininga as a brother in Christ (which at least he will acknowledge of us). The article disparaged him using a cynical and disrespectful attitude toward him, which is not necessary to point out his errors.

I believe the attempt to make your article humorous by belittling Rev. Tuininga will discredit the substance the article did have for some that read it. Being correct does not give us the license to flaunt it by ridiculing those who have erroneous beliefs. We must "bear witness to the truth," while remembering that our disagreements with others may only be done in the spirit of humility.

Steve Faber  
Grandville, MI

## The Reader Asks

### "Common Grace" and Difficult Texts

I have subscribed to the *Standard Bearer* for about two years, and

have found the articles edifying and thought-provoking.

I would like your comments on two verses in light of the Protestant Reformed Churches' position on

common grace. As I understand it, your position is that God has no gracious purposes with regard to the non-elect, either in providentially providing them with material ben-

efits, or in permitting them to come under the preaching of the gospel.

This position helps to explain many verses that would otherwise be difficult to interpret, e.g., Matthew 13:10-15. However, two verses mentioned below seem to contradict this position. In Matthew 5:44, Christians are commanded to love their enemies. In verse 45, God the Father is set forth as their example. It states that God provides sunshine and rain on both the evil and the good. The implication is that God loves His enemies (the evil) and demonstrates this by providing them with sunshine and rain. Also, in Mark 10:17-22, Jesus encounters the rich young ruler. It states in verse 21 that Jesus, looking at him, loved him. The young man went away unconverted. As far as we know he was not one of the elect, yet Christ loved him. Both verses seem to be teaching that God loves unbelievers (and thus presumably is graciously disposed toward them).

I am sympathetic with your position on common grace, but it is hard for me to reconcile these verses with it. I will appreciate your comments.

*Kenneth D. Asher*  
Bay Village, OH

#### Response:

It is indeed the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches that God is not gracious toward the reprobate ungodly. He bestows on them good gifts in His providence, but these gifts of providence do not express any love, or favor, of God toward them. God does not give the gifts with His blessing. Nor do the good gifts do the unbeliever any good.

When the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) adopted her doctrine of common grace in 1924, she appealed to Matthew 5:44, 45 in support of her contention that there is a "favorable attitude of God towards humanity in general and not only toward the elect."

Herman Hoeksema refuted the (implied) interpretation of the pas-

sage by the CRC, explaining the passage as follows:

20. But does not Matt. 5:44, 45 prove the point synod made in its first declaration?

If the synod's interpretation of this text were the correct one, it would prove far too much and, besides, it would lead to absurdity. It is deplorable that synod merely quoted without even an attempt at explanation; otherwise synod would have soon realized how untenable the position is, that in these verses we have a proof that God is gracious to all men. The interpretation which, evidently, synod would offer, runs as follows:

a. We must love our enemies.

b. If we do, we will be children of God and reflect His love, for He loves all His enemies, as well as the good, in this present life.

c. This love to all men is manifested in the rain and sunshine on all without distinction.

Of this interpretation we assert that, first, it proves too much and, secondly, it leads to absurdity and is untenable. It proves too much, for, all the Scriptures witness that God does not love, but hates His enemies and purposes to destroy them, except them He chose in Christ Jesus and whom He loves not as His enemies, but as His redeemed people, justified and sanctified in Christ. God does, indeed, love His enemies, but not as such, but as His children in Christ. And it leads to absurdity, for if rain and sunshine are a manifestation of God's love to all men, the just and the unjust, what are floods and droughts, pestilences and earthquakes and all destructive forces and evils sent to all through nature, but manifestations of His hatred for all, the just and the unjust? But it is absurd to say that God hates the just, for He loves them. It is also absurd to say that God changes, now loving the just and the unjust and manifesting this love in rain and sunshine, now hating them and revealing his hatred in upheavals and destruction. Hence, the interpretation that leads to this evident absurdity is itself absurd.

Besides, it must not be over-

looked, that the text does not at all state, that God is gracious to the just and to the unjust, but that He rains and causes His sun to shine on all.

21. How, then, must the text be interpreted?

We must take our starting point from verse 44. The Lord admonishes His people that they shall love their enemies. Now, love is not a sentimental feeling or emotion or affection. It is, according to Scripture, the bond of perfectness. It is therefore, the bond between two parties or persons that are ethically perfect, that seek each other and find delight in each other because of their ethical perfection, and that, in the sphere of ethical perfection seek each other's good. It is in this true sense that God is love.

However, it stands to reason that in the case of loving our enemies that despitefully use us, curse us and persecute us, love must needs be onesided. There cannot be a bond of fellowship between the wicked and the perfect in Christ. To love our enemy, therefore, is not to flatter him, to have fellowship with him, to play games with him and to speak sweetly to him; but rather to rebuke him, to demand that he leave his wicked way and thus to bless him and to pray for him. It is to bestow good things upon him with the demand of true love that he leave his wicked way, walk in the light and thus have fellowship with us. If he heed our love, which will be the cause if he be of God's elect and receive grace, he will turn from darkness into light and our love assumes the nature of a bond of perfectness. If he despise our love, our very act of love will be to his greater damnation. But the cursing and persecution of the wicked may never tempt the child of God to live and act from the principle of hatred, to reward evil for evil, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

As a single illustration from actual life and experience, the Lord points to the fact, that so God rains and causes His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, thus bestowing good things upon them all, demanding that they shall employ them as means to walk in righteousness and light. For with God love

is delight in perfection in the highest sense of the word. If now the wicked receive grace with rain and sunshine, they will walk in the light and have fellowship with God. If they do not receive grace they will employ the rain and the sunshine in the service of sin and receive the greater damnation.

But rain and sunshine is never grace and Matt. 5:44, 45 does not prove the contention of the first point. (*The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, Grand Rapids, 2nd ed., 1947, pp. 325-327.)

However one might explain Mark 10:17-22, the incident of the rich young ruler who asked Jesus about inheriting eternal life and went away grieved, Jesus' love for the rich ruler was a *saving* love, that is, a love that desired his salvation. The context concerns inheriting eternal life (v. 17) and entering the kingdom of God (vv. 23-31). If, then, the rich ruler perished in his sins, it is possible that the Christ of God loves a man with a love that desires his salvation, but that He fails, nevertheless, to accomplish the desired salvation.

This necessarily raises the further question, "Did Christ in His love for and desire to save some persons who yet perish also carry this love and desire to save to the cross?" For Mark 10:32ff. proclaims the cross, especially verse 45: "... the Son of man came ... to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." In this case, Christ died for persons who go lost forever. The doctrine of limited atonement is denied.

Scripture condemns the notion of a universal, ineffectual Messianic love as false. Christ loved "His own," loved them "unto the end," gave Himself to the cross for them alone, and effectually gives eternal life to every one of the (see John 13:1, 18; 17:1ff.).

From the fact that Jesus loved the rich ruler, we may, must, and can only conclude that the rich ruler was one of the elect and that, later, he was converted, gladly selling all he had, giving to the poor, and following Christ. Jesus suggests as much in verses 23-27: what is impossible with men is possible with God, even the salvation of a rich man.

Alfred Edersheim puts us on the right track:

"He loved him" — as He loves those who are His Own.... And, although we hear no more of him, who that day went back to his rich home very poor, because "very sorrowful," we cannot but believe that he, whom Jesus loved, yet found in the poverty of earth the treasure of heaven (*Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, New York: Herrick, 1883, pp. 341, 342).

Some have thought that this rich young ruler was John Mark himself, who wrote the most detailed and vivid account of the incident. Herman Hoeksema suggests that the ruler was Joseph of Arimathea (see his unpublished notes on "New Testament History," p. 30).

The passage makes plain that Jesus does not make the way of discipleship easy for those whom He loves and that one elected by God and loved by the Christ may not in every case be converted at once by the gospel-call.

— Ed. Comm. □

## All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

### ■ WHY I SIGNED IT

This is the title of a lengthy essay which appeared in the December 12 issue of *Christianity Today* by James I. Packer. "It" refers to the document, *Evangelicals Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium* (ECT), which was signed by a number of Roman Catholics as well as a number of evangelical leaders and theologians and concerning which we reported earlier in these columns. The 25-page document originated with evangelical leader Charles Colson

and Richard John Neuhaus, a former Protestant who turned Roman Catholic. This document calls for Catholic and evangelical cooperation on social and cultural issues where both traditions share common goals, one example being the fight against abortion. The document also stresses mutual allegiance to the Apostles' Creed, world evangelism, justification "by grace through faith because of Christ," and encourages "civil" discourse over doctrinal differences.

We are indebted to Dr. Packer, professor of theology at Regent University, Vancouver, Canada, for many of his books. Undersigned, for example, requires his students in Missions to read Packer's excel-

lent book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Thus when we discovered that Dr. Packer had signed ECT we were very disappointed and dismayed. Our disappointment and dismay increase when we read Packer's defense of his signing the document.

Dr. Packer sees the criticism he has received for signing ECT as motivated in part by evangelical love for isolationism, and rivalry fed by mutual suspicion and inflammatory talk. "So," writes Packer, "I ought to have anticipated that some Protestants would say bleak, skewed, fearful, and fear-driven things." Thus in the essay Packer seeks to set the record straight as to his reasons for signing ECT.

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Dr. Packer says,

I could not become a Roman Catholic because of certain basic tenets to which the Roman system, as such, is committed. Rome's claim to be the only institution that can without qualification be called the church of Christ is theologically flawed, for it misconceives the nature of the church as the New Testament explains it. The claim is historically flawed, too, for the papacy, which is supposed to be of the church's essence, was a relatively late development....

Also, developed Roman teaching on the mass and on merit cuts across Paul's doctrine of justification in and through Christ by faith. And all forms of the Mary cult, the invoking of saints and the belief in purgatory, and the disbursing of indulgences (which still goes on) damp down the full assurance to which, according to Scripture, justification should lead through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the infallibility claimed for all concillors and some papal pronouncements, and the insistence that the faithful should take their beliefs from the church as such rather than from the Bible as such, make self-correction, as ordinarily understood, impossible. The assumption that the church is never wrong on basics is very cramping. So I find the Roman communion, as it stands, unacceptable, just as much as more than four-and-a-half centuries of Protestants did before me.

Notice Packer's language. Rome's view of the church is "theologically flawed," and it, "misconceives the nature of the church as the New Testament explains it." Rome's teaching on the mass and merit "cuts across Paul's doctrine of justification in and through Christ by faith." All forms of the Mary cult, the invoking of saints, the belief in purgatory, and the disbursing of indulgences "damp down" the full assurance to which justification should lead. Scripture, the sixteenth century Reformers, and the Reformed Confessions use different language to describe these aberrations:

false doctrine, blasphemy, the lie, an accursed idolatry, pernicious ways, anti-christian. What is more, Scripture calls God's people to rebuke false teachers and to turn away from them and have no fellowship with them (cf. II Thess. 3:14-15; Romans 16:17; I Timothy 4:7, 5:20, 6:20-21; Titus 3:10; II Peter 2:1-3; and 3:17-18).

Packer cites three reasons for his cooperating with Rome: 1. There are Christians in the Roman Catholic Church, 2. "Billy Graham's co-operative evangelism, in which all the churches in an area, of whatever stripe, are invited to share, is well established on today's Christian scene," and 3. "Charismatic get-togethers, some of them one-off, some of them regular, and some of them huge, where the distinction between Protestant and Catholic vanishes in a Christ-centered unity of experience, are well established."

None of these reasons prove anything! All three are beside the point. Reason number 1 is for God alone to judge. Reasons 2 and 3 are denials of true unity in Christ, for how can there be unity except it be unity in the truth of the Word of God?

Another closely related development took place on January 19. On this date several of the signers of ECT and several evangelical critics of ECT met at D. James Kennedy's Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We are told that although the sessions were marked by "sharp exchanges," these men were able to agree on a five-point document designed to "elucidate" the stance of evangelicals who signed ECT. Among other things the document declares their belief in justification by faith *alone*. (The word "alone" is conspicuously absent from the ECT document. And what Roman Catholic will affirm the biblical and Reformation truth of justification by faith *alone*?)

This is not enough! What these men must do, if they wish to be evangelical, is recant. For as John MacArthur, pastor of Grace Com-

munity Church in Sun Valley, California and one of the critics of ECT, said, "Roman Catholicism is 'another religion.'"

*Christianity Today*  
*Evangelical Times*

## ■ LEAKAGE OR HEMORRHAGE?

A few years ago when asked what effect the women in office issue might have on the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Dr. Melvin Hugen, professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, predicted that only a few members would leave the CRC. He called that "leakage."

The facts are that in 1992 the CRC Yearbook listed 316,415 members. The Yearbook of 1995 lists 294,179 members. This represents a loss of over 22,000 members. The 1995 membership total puts the CRC back to 1981 when it had 294,354 members. Besides the loss of all these members, who is to know how many people may have refrained from joining the CRC in the past several years because of this issue and others?

Whether one regards this loss as "leakage" or "hemorrhage," the fact is that a significant number of people have left the CRC in recent years. The CRC has not grown, she has declined in members.

Meanwhile, the 55 independent churches in the Alliance of Reformed Churches (we emphasize independent churches because some of the churches in the Alliance are still in the CRC) now number 10,805 members.

This is history repeating itself. Where liberalism takes hold in a denomination one sees a decline in membership. At the same time, while it may not be spectacular in terms of numbers, where the Word of God is faithfully preached the church grows. She grows in number; but, much more importantly, the church grows in the knowledge and grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (cf. II Pet. 3:17-18 and beware!). □

*Reformed Believers' Press Service*

# The True and False Churches

*Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

Revelation 3:12

As we have noted several times, in the eyes of the Liberated Churches, when the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches adopted the Declaration of Principles it committed a fatal error. With that action the Declaration became "settled and binding" (according to Article 31 of the Church Order), and our churches became guilty — in their eyes — of assigning "more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God" (in the words of Article 29 of the Belgic Confession). And so we became to them a "false church."

This reasoning, however, is extremely strained. The fact is that, according to Article 31 of the Church Order, every action of every major ecclesiastical assembly is to be considered "settled and binding" within the limits of that for which it was adopted (which in the instance of the Declaration was to inform those with whom we were working as to what they could expect to hear from our pulpits concerning common

grace and the doctrine of the covenant). In no sense was it adopted as another creed or confession. Nor, for that matter, is it essentially different from the decisions made by the Liberated Churches; and this their people seem to understand very well, as is particularly evident when it comes to their view of the true and false church. In fact, few things would seem more distinctly characteristic of the Liberated Churches than their conviction that they, and possibly those sympathetic to them, are the "true church," and all others "false."

This is not something new and original with them; behind it is a long history, going back at least to the *Afscheiding* movement of 1934. In fact, it may well have been in development all through the unique history of the Dutch Reformed Church. After the revolution in the late 1500s, it became evident that in the Netherlands alone was there a church which had both the loyalty of nearly a whole nation and official recognition by the government. There were others within the land, of course. A good number of Roman Catholics remained — but they were precisely those designated by the Belgic Confession to be the "false church"; and there were some Baptist extremists, and Arminians too — who were rather easily dismissed as "false church" as well. It was the Reformed (*Hervormde*) Church, recognized as it was by the state, which was generally accepted as that "true church" to which the Confession insisted everyone should be joined.

But God has His way of undermining shallow presumptions; and in the process of time it happened

here too. In the course of Dutch history false teachings eventually arose within the church, but none that really disturbed its sense of validity until in the early nineteenth century (the early 1800s) practically the whole of the Reformed denomination was overwhelmed with a very non-scriptural kind of modernism. This strained the convictions of those sincere Christian people who remained, and presented them with a major problem. To leave and worship outside of the Reformed Church seemed almost unthinkable, and in fact illegal, since the government did not approve of religious assemblies not authorized by them. But this did not negate the fact that "the pure doctrine of the gospel" (Art. 29) was no longer being preached, so that the conviction gradually developed that the State church had become the "false church." Untidily they declared this, and began to organize what we now know as the *Afscheiding* churches. It was difficult, but based on a deep conviction. According to the Confession of Faith they were required to join this new church, and others to do the same.

Nor did it stop with that. Within a half century another, larger group (the *Doleantie* under the leadership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper) felt compelled to leave the State Church for much the same reasons, with the result that these two groups rather naturally soon gave consideration to union with each other. There were differences, some of which were distinctly doctrinal with rather serious implications. But much more important, it soon became evident, was the manner in which they viewed

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the State Church which they had left. Dr. Kuyper and his people were inclined to be far less condemnatory than were the *Afscheiding*; but, in the end, the decisive requirement for union was that the new church should officially declare the State Church to be "false." Without that the *Afscheiding* churches would not enter into the union; and for the sake of the union this was accepted. The importance of doing so very evidently went deep in the hearts of the people of that tradition; they could not recognize the newly formed *Gereformeerde* churches to be the "true church" unless that which they had left was declared to be "false."

It was from this tradition that Schilder and his followers arose. In fact, the separation of 1944 was basically over the very doctrinal differences which had existed already at the union of 1892. These were never really settled; and in 1942 they drove the two sides apart again. And so it was that, when Schilder and his people were put out of the *Gereformeerde* churches, they felt compelled to declare the *Gereformeerde* churches to have become the "false church," just as the fathers had done to the *Hervormde* church in their day. And, when our efforts to work with them failed, they felt the need to declare us "false" as well. It was but a continuation of their tradition, but also quite a misapplication of the Confession as well.

When Guido de Brés wrote the Confession in the early 1560s, he was not in Art. 29 writing anything new. What he set down as the marks of the true church was essentially nothing other than that which Calvin had set forth before in the last Book of his *Institutes*, and which was suggested in the 27th article of the *Gallican Confession*, which is thought to have been composed by Calvin's students under his guidance — the confession upon which de Brés based his confession. Clearly what Calvin had in mind through the whole of his last Book of the *Institutes* was a delineation of the differ-

ences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches, and not as a means of identifying one of the various churches of the Reformation to be "true," and all of the rest "false." Perhaps the clearest statement, although not necessarily the most precise, on this principle is that which is set forth in the Westminster Confession, Chapter 25:46:

IV This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

V The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.

VI There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.

The point is that for any church to pronounce itself the "true" church and all others "false" is a presumption that is far removed from the mentality of the Reformation and its confessions, and a presumption that is fraught with great danger (1 Cor. 10:12; Phil. 2:3).

Nevertheless, in this day when there is such a proliferation of different churches, the principles involved are fraught with dangers on both sides.

To begin with, it is certainly not so that there is one "true" church in this world, so that all others can be called "false." This is, of course, the position of the Roman Catholic Church; but it is also that which the Reformers uniformly rejected. And, insofar as the Liberated Churches

have taken that position, they stand on very dangerous ground.

It is certainly also very unscriptural. In this regard, Rev. Hoeksema often pointed to the seven churches to which the book of Revelation was addressed. Very strikingly these churches vary considerably in their purity, from Smyrna and Philadelphia, for whom the Lord has nothing but commendation, to Sardis and Laodicea which are called dead, and that which the Lord is about to spew out of his mouth. Nevertheless, they are all still called churches of God, to whom He will come again if they repent.

On the other hand, neither does it mean that it does not matter how far a church has departed, as Abraham Kuyper sometimes seemed to suggest with his view of the *pluriformity of the church*. If there is one thing that the record of the seven churches teaches, along with the whole history of the Bible, it is that God is very much concerned with those who depart from the truth and from a holy way of life. Repeatedly, over and over again, the Scriptures admonish the church of God to depart from evil and hold to the truth. This is, after all, one of the marks of the church given in the Belgic Confession, and is brought out in its own way by the Westminster as well. As is pointed out, it is in purity of doctrine and life that the church becomes more clearly visible in distinction from the world. When the truth is not taught and the discipline of godly life is not maintained, the unity of the church with Christ set forth in the sacraments cannot be maintained.

And thus the principle, that one should leave the church which is departing in the way of falsehood and join himself to the true church where the truth is most purely found and most clearly evident, is certainly to be maintained — but only in the way of full Christian responsibility. One must be sure that the departing church has been pointed to its error, and is unwilling to repent and return to the truth. But, when that

has been done without results, the time comes for one to seek a church where the marks are clearly evident and to join himself to it. The Confession certainly does not encourage a quick jumping from church to church; but it does recognize that there come times when the warning of God to Laodicea becomes very real, Rev. 3:16: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold

nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." When one's spiritual life is maintained only by the Lord coming "in to him" who hears His voice, and not through the evident life of the church in which he is found, the time comes that the Christian must seriously consider the need to leave such a church and join himself to one in which the marks of a true church are clearly visible, and to

which the Lord says, Rev. 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." □

*The Strength of Youth*

*Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

## Yin-Yang



What you see above is a Yin-Yang symbol. Along with the peace sign and the symbol of the cross, it has become a popular ornament today. It can be found in most pop jewelry stores. It can be worn around one's neck, on one's ears, or even as a pendant on his clothing. One can sew it on his pants, or buy a shirt with the symbol already on it. The more daring might even choose to have it tattooed on their bodies.

What is this symbol? Where did it come from? What does it mean?

Or, are these questions unimportant and irrelevant?

Perhaps we might think that the design is only a piece of decoration that has no real meaning. We wear it simply for the fun of it. Why, then, make a big deal out of something so minor?

But is what we wear really so minor? People look at what we wear

or display on our bodies and they immediately form a judgment as to what kind of persons we are. Those who display a symbol are making a statement about themselves, whether they mean to or not. They set themselves up for judgment by others. So, before simply wearing a yin-yang symbol for the fun of it, we would do well to know what the symbol means and from whence it comes.

Most of you are probably under the impression that the symbol represents nothing more than a bygone era which we call the "60s." I know that era, because I lived through it. I saw the hippies with their long hair and their peace signs and their yin-yang symbols. I did not give much thought to it then, being a young person, but there was something going on during this period of history. It was a time of rebellion against all the established standards of our society — standards which, by the way, were still greatly influenced by Christianity. A revolution in culture took place. Young people were tired of the stale moralisms of the apostate church, tired of the Cold

War, tired of social injustices — just plain tired of everything! They were especially dissatisfied with the code of ethics that governed Western society.

They were sick and tired of hearing about sin. A large segment of the young felt that our society was far too judgmental and narrow, and that it did not accept a person for who he or she was. The 60s became known as a time of sexual revolution: "free love" was the hippie slogan. Young people rebelled against the institution of marriage and decided that fornication and living together out of wedlock were perfectly acceptable. Disobedience to all in authority, from parents to government, was fostered and advanced. Western religion (actually Christianity) was said to have failed the human race and a new kind of religion was needed. A new spirituality must be encouraged: a spirituality that elevated feelings and emotion above knowledge and reason.

For that reason many young people turned to the ancient mystical religions of the East: Buddhism,

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Hinduism, Zen, and Taoism. Perhaps these names do not mean much to you. After all, they are religions which belong to people on the other side of the world. Do they really have anything to do with us? More than we think! They have touched the very heart of the social mores of our society. During the 60s and 70s many people from the East moved to America and established huge communes to which young people flocked during this time. Besides, many singers and movie stars, who had the wealth to afford it, traveled to India and China to learn the religions of the East. They came back having thoroughly imbibed the principles of these religions. These they then portrayed to the general public in movies and in song without many even realizing it. I know I did not!

The result of all this activity in the 60s and 70s is the present culture in which you as young people are called to live. The hippies of my generation have now grown up. They have cut their hair and taken their place in the adult world, *but their ideas have not changed!* They promote the same godless principles of yesteryear. These are the principles that have given rise to the New Age Movement of our day. No wonder the yin-yang symbol has made a comeback.

The yin-yang symbolizes one of the basic premises of the counter-culture of the 60s and therefore of modern-day society. That premise is: there are no absolutes. There is nothing we can use as a standard to judge something else, since life is nothing more than constant change. This is the teaching, in the main, of Chinese Taoism and Japanese Zen Buddhism. Now, it is not my intention to wax philosophical! I do not want to put you to sleep! But we ought to know what Taoism teaches in order to understand the meaning of the yin-yang symbol. After all, the yin-yang symbol is probably somewhere between 2,000 to 2,500 years old!

The word "Tao" means "the way." In the mind of the Taoist this

word best describes what is ultimate reality. We as Christians would say that God is the ultimate reality. The Taoist, on the other hand, does not look beyond creation. He is a pantheist (believing that creation is god). As he examines creation, he notices that there is a certain *way*, process, or order of nature. This is "Tao." It is the ultimate, undefinable reality of life. It is the ground for all existence. It is truth. It is behind all, beneath all, and the womb out of which all life springs. To it all life also returns. It is the force of nature that gives to everything life and reality.

Nothing can be discovered concerning this "Way" other than one fact: nothing stays the same. The Tao therefore is the continuous flow and change that occurs in life. But this means that, for one to be wise, for one to discover what is true reality, he must never concern himself with absolutes. There are no absolutes. The only way to power is through mystical absorption into the flow of the universe. And this means meditation. One must empty his mind of all self-centered consciousness and concentrate on the flow of nature. He must attempt to harmonize seeming contradiction.

We will not go into Taoism any further than this, though there is much more involved. The point is: everything is relative. There is no objective, changeless truth, no standard according to which we can judge everything. In fact, things which may seem to us as opposites are in fact only different poles of the same reality. Both poles are necessary for the discovery of the way, of the truth, of power.

Huston Smith in his book, *The Religions of Man*, defines the yin-yang symbol thus:

This polarity sums up all life's basic oppositions: good-evil, active-passive, positive-negative, light-dark, summer-winter, male-female, etc. But though its principles are in tension, they are not flatly opposed. They complement and

counter-balance each other. Each invades the other's hemisphere and establishes itself in the very center of its opposite's territory. In the end both are resolved in an all-embracing circle, symbol of the final unity of *Tao*. Constantly turning and interchanging places, the opposites are but phases of a revolving wheel. Life does not move onward and upward towards a fixed pinnacle or pole. It turns and bends back upon itself until the self comes full-circle and knows that at center all things are one.

Let me put it simply. There is no such thing as absolute evil or absolute good. What may seem like evil could in fact be good. And what seems to be good may really be evil. Whatever the case, both are simply opposite poles of the one true reality. To discover truth one must experience the necessary tension or pull between the two. After all, in what we consider the good there is contained the seed of evil (the black dot in the white side of the yin-yang symbol). The opposite is also true: what we consider evil contains at least the seed of good (the white dot in the black side of the yin-yang symbol).

The point is this: our modern society has resurrected not only the yin-yang symbol, but the principle it bears, namely relativism. There is no right or wrong. What may be right for me, may not be right for you. What is wrong for me, may not be wrong for you. There is no objective truth. Result? The pluralism of today. The "anything goes" attitude of our society and church-world. Let me give you a few examples.

RELIGION: We may not condemn anyone else's religion. Everyone is seeking God the way he sees best. We are all going to heaven anyway; we are just getting there in different ways. All religions contain the seed of truth. Especially we as Christians ought to set aside all doctrinal barriers and unite in order to show people the way. The Bible is not infallible, it is not meant to be

objective truth, it is subject to all kinds of interpretations. To condemn what others believe is judgmental, narrow-minded, and bigoted. No one has a corner on the truth.

**MORALS:** What right have we to judge one who refuses to honor the outdated law that sex is to be enjoyed within marriage? Marriage is only an ancient institution of certain people. Sex can be enjoyed and should be enjoyed by everyone, in any way he chooses to carry it out. We have no right either to rise up in judgment over a divorced person or a remarried person. Maybe divorce or remarriage is wrong for us, but not for them. Who sets us up as judges?

**HOMOSEXUALITY:** If a person adopts a homosexual life-style, there is no reason to condemn him for it, though it may not be my thing.

**ABORTION:** It is wrong to force something on someone. If it is a person's choice to end a pregnancy, then let her make that choice. It could be wrong for me, but I may not condemn her on the basis of what I personally think is wrong.

**FEMINISM:** By what law is the man given prominence over the woman? By the law of Tao every man has a feminine side to his nature, and every woman has a masculine side. In order to be a whole

woman the female ought to explore and develop the masculine side of her person. The same goes for the man in discovering the female side of his character. So, we have the men and women of the 90s switching roles. There is no objective rule to say any of this is wrong. A person should be able to decide for himself one way or another.

Against this relativism of yin-yang stands the child of God who believes there is indeed an objective right and wrong. Because we believe in God who transcends creation, we believe there is one changeless norm: God! He never changes! Neither does His Word. There are not many different ways to heaven. There is one way: God's way, through repentance over sin and a conscious faith in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ alone is the door that opens to heaven.

Where do we find the unchanging rule and authority for our lives, young people? In the Bible, because the Bible is the very Word of our God! Doctrine can be judged right or wrong on the basis of what the Bible teaches us. The proper way of walking in holiness can be found, because it is outlined for us in the Bible in detail. When we walk contrary to the Word of God, then we are doing wrong, because we violate God's objective rule of right and

wrong. As Christians we must judge right and wrong — in ourselves, but in others too. How else can the true church bring the good news of salvation from sin?

It is exactly because we are so convicted of this rule of God in our lives that we wish to separate ourselves from the ungodly youth of this wicked world. We want to appear to others as being different from the wicked. This is why our parents placed on us a sign or a symbol very shortly after we were born. It was the symbol of baptism. By this symbol we are distinguished from the children of unbelievers and marked as those who are members of the Christian church and covenant of God. Why then would we wish to bear another sign? Especially is this true if that sign covers over the sign of baptism and makes us appear as if we are, in fact, no different from the heathen of this world?

In what camp do you wish to make your stand in this world, young people? Do you wish to cast your lot with the people of God, or with the wicked? You cannot have both! We are either for God or against Him! Let us cast from us the burden of the sin of the wicked and confess with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" □

John 4:27-42

## The Harvest in Samaria

Our study this time is a sequel to the remarkable conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Two things stand out in the passage. First, Christ uses His labors with the woman as the groundwork for gathering a spiritual harvest among the Samaritans. This is a prefiguration of the spiritual har-

vest that shall be gathered out of all nations in the New Testament era. Second, Christ instructs His disciples in their calling as reapers in this harvest.

We should notice that the fruit of Christ's work in the heart of this woman was that she became zealous in witnessing of Him whom she

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believed was the Christ (see Acts 4:20; Rom. 10:9, 10). By the grace of God this witness led to the Samaritans coming to hear Christ and believing on Him through hearing His own words. The principles clearly taught are, first, that our witness must center in calling others to come and hear Christ themselves in the Word (preaching of the Word), and second, that one comes to faith through hearing Christ Himself in the Word.

Jesus also reveals in this passage something of His holy dedication to do all the work of His Sender. His meat is to do the will of the Father; that is, what alone satisfied Christ was to do God's will concerning our redemption. To perform that will was the hunger of His life. (This total and sacred consecration to the will of the Father is something that is emphasized to us in John — see 5:36; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4; 19:30.)

The will of the Father centers in gathering the harvest of His redeemed. This harvest, Jesus says is now ripe, for upon His death and resurrection the church is to be gathered out of all nations. In this harvest Christ will employ His church in the work of reaping. This will be entirely gracious, for all the labor is performed by the Sower. More, the graciousness of it is that both the Sower and the reaper rejoice together. We are given to rejoice in God's perfect work of gathering a redeemed church "out of the whole human race ... chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith" (Heid. Cat., L.D. 21).

#### Outline of the Passage:

1. The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman comes to an end (vv. 27-30).
  - a. The disciples return, marveling that He talks with this woman.
  - b. The woman departs, leaving her waterpot.
    - 1) The woman's enthusiastic witness to the men of the city.
    - 2) The result of this witness: the Samaritans come out to Jesus.

2. Jesus and the disciples at the well (vv. 31-38).

- a. Jesus tells them that His meat is to do the will of the Father.
  - b. Jesus announces to them that there is an abundant spiritual harvest surrounding them.
  - c. Jesus impresses on them the blessedness of being one who is used to reap this harvest.
3. The ministry of Christ to the Samaritans (vv. 39-42).
- a. The Lord speaks the word there for two days.
  - b. Many believe as the result of hearing His own word and confess that He is the Savior of the world.

#### Questions for Study:

1. How is the providence of God at work in controlling when the disciples return? (Not too soon before Christ has revealed Himself as the Messiah, yet not too late after the woman has left Jesus.) Discuss how the providence of God is beautifully arranged around the work of salvation.
2. Why did the disciples not dare to ask the woman and Jesus the questions that were on their minds?
3. Why did the woman leave her waterpot?
4. In what ways is the Samaritan woman an example of the eager and zealous witness of Christ that is always the result of true conversion? What was the content of her witness?
5. What does verse 31 reveal about the disciples?
6. Explain what Christ meant when He said that doing the will of God provided Him with "meat to eat."
7. What "work" of the Father did Jesus "finish"?
8. What did Christ intend to teach the disciples when He contrasted the proverb "There are yet four months and then cometh harvest" with the fact that

they should look up and see that the harvest was not in the future but was surrounding them?

9. Does Christ refer only to the Samaritans who were making their way across the fields to Him as the "harvest," or does His reference to the ripe field go beyond that to include all the spiritual harvest of the New Testament age?

10. Explain the difference between spiritual sowing and spiritual reaping. Who does the sowing? the reaping? Does Amos 9:13 fit in here? If so, how?

11. In applying what is said in verse 38 to ourselves, explain what should be the true effect upon us?

12. From the words of the Samaritans in verse 42, what may we say as to the relationship between our witness to others of Christ and their actual hearing of Christ themselves?

13. What does the "Savior of the world" signify? □

#### God's Word

God's Word, a Lamp unto my feet,  
A Light upon my way;  
Lest I should stumble on the path  
I travel day by day.

God's Word, a Guide to rule my life,  
A Sword equipping me  
To fight in sin's great battle  
And gain the victory.

God's Word, a Refuge for the soul,  
Hope for the troubled heart;  
Assuring me of blessings  
That His great love imparts.

God's Word, my dearest treasure,  
My Source of power and might;  
I'll ever hide it in my heart  
And heed it day and night.

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, Michigan

# Recent Developments in Church/State Law

## ■ Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) gains visibility

In November of 1993 President Clinton signed into law an important law insuring a significant degree of religious freedom under the First Amendment. Although the law was supported by most religious organizations, it nevertheless took two years of debate and political maneuvering before it passed both houses of Congress.

The RFRA was passed by Congress in response to the notorious 1990 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Employment Division v. Smith*. In that case a bitterly divided court held that a state law was valid even if it interfered with free exercise of religion, so long as the law was "facially neutral."

The RFRA essentially provides that a governmental law or regulation may not "substantially burden" a citizen's free exercise of his religion *unless* the law or regulation is (1) in furtherance of a "compelling governmental interest" and (2) is the "least restrictive means" of achieving the contemplated governmental objective (see box). The RFRA also provides that an aggrieved person may pursue legal remedies when the Act is violated.

Numerous courts in recent months have issued significant rulings interpreting the Act. In California, two Jehovah's Witnesses refused to take an oath demanded by

their employer, a California community college. The college required prospective employees to take an oath swearing to support and defend the U.S. Constitution. The two applicants refused to take the required oath on the grounds their religion prohibited taking oaths of allegiance to any entity other than God. Both applicants filed suit alleging that the college's rejection of their employment based on their refusal to take the required oaths violated the RFRA.

The California court ruled in the employees' favor and issued an injunction prohibiting the college from requiring the Jehovah's Witnesses to swear an oath as a prerequisite to employment.

In another case, a landlord in Alaska refused to rent his apartment

to unmarried cohabiting couples, alleging the practice violated his religious principles. Three couples filed claims of marital status discrimination alleging the landlord's policy violated city and state laws prohibiting housing discrimination.

The Alaska supreme court ruled against the landlord who then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Although the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, Justice Clarence Thomas filed a significant dissent referring to the RFRA. Justice Thomas expressed his skepticism as to whether Alaska had a "compelling interest" in marital status discrimination, stating that if such were a compelling state interest, he was at a loss as to what state interest would not qualify as compelling.

### Religious Freedom Restoration Act

On November 16, 1993, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) became law. This federal statute restores certain religious freedoms arguably lost in a recent Supreme Court decision (see text). The core language of the Act reads as follows:

#### Sec. 3. Free Exercise of Religion Protected.

(a) IN GENERAL. — Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except as provided in subsection (b).

(b) EXCEPTION. — Government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person —

(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and

(2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

(c) JUDICIAL RELIEF. — A person whose religious exercise has been burdened in violation of this section may assert that violation as a claim or defense in a judicial proceeding and obtain appropriate relief against a government. Standing to assert a claim or defense under this section shall be governed by the general rules of standing under article III of the Constitution.

*Mr. Lanting, a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, is a practicing attorney.*

Although the landlord did not prevail in this case, it is noteworthy that even Supreme Court justices are now looking to the RFRA to insure citizens a degree of religious freedom in this country.

#### ■ Religious freedom for employees

In addition to the RFRA, another important guarantee for Christians in the work place is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Under this federal law, an employer must "reasonably accommodate" an employee's religious beliefs unless doing so would cause the employer an "undue hardship." This federal law has been used by employees with sincerely held religious beliefs to avoid union membership in a "closed shop" by payment of an amount equivalent to union dues to a recognized charity. Title VII has also been used by employees to avoid Sunday work assignments. Two recent cases demonstrate, however, that courts may be reluctant to

rule in favor of employees under all circumstances.

In a recent federal appeals court decision a practicing Seventh Day Adventist refused to work on his Sabbath (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). His employer, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Detention Department, had instituted a rotating shift policy. The employee was terminated after failing to report to work on a Friday evening.

The court ruled against the employee, however, because he failed to avail himself of the Department's provisions to advertise for replacement workers on the Department's bulletin board. The court held that the Department's rotating shift policy was reasonable since it contained built-in provisions for employees to advertise for shift changes.

In another case, a federal court in Nebraska ruled against a Roman Catholic employee who insisted on

wearing an anti-abortion button which depicted a fetus of 20 weeks. The employee was terminated after she refused to cover the button at work, which allegedly caused conflicts among employees who claimed to be disturbed by the picture of the fetus.

The court held that her employer's request that she cover the button at work was a "reasonable accommodation" of faith commitment to wear the button until abortion was ended.

Although the decision is clearly wrong, the case illustrates that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act nonetheless requires that employers reasonably accommodate employees' religious beliefs. Reformed Christians, and not only Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics, should be appealing to this significant federal law to avoid compulsory union membership, Sunday assignments, and other work activities that violate an employee's religious faith. □

*Decency and Order*

*Rev. Ronald Cammenga*

## The General Synod

*The general synod shall ordinarily meet once every two years unless there be urgent need to shorten the time.*

*To this synod three ministers and three elders out of every classis shall be delegated. If it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least three classes to call a meeting of synod within two years, the local church designated for this purpose shall determine time and place.*

*Church Order, Article 50*

#### Frequency of meetings

Article 50 of our *Church Order* concerns itself with the formal matters connected to the convening of the general synod of the churches. It deals especially with the frequency and consistency of these meetings.

The article calls for the general synod to meet biennially, that is, every other year. Our practice is to meet annually: "Synod shall meet on the first Wednesday of June *each year* (unless otherwise designated by the preceding synod)" ("Rules of Order for the Synod of the Protestant

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Reformed Churches in America," I, A.). For the past several years synod has been convened on the second Tuesday of June.

For several reasons it is to be preferred that the general synod meet annually rather than biennially. The *Church Order* itself favors frequent meetings of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Article 37 calls for a weekly meeting of the consistory; Article 41 calls for the classes to meet every three months. The general rule ought to be that the assemblies meet as often as is practically feasible.

The requirement of Article 50 that the general synod meet every other year takes for granted that there are particular synods that are meeting annually (*Church Order*, Articles 47-49). But since our churches do not have particular synods, it is important that our general synod meet every year.

Neither is this a great hardship, as was often the case in the early history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Social and political conditions often made it difficult — at times impossible — for the synods to convene. With conditions what they are in our land, and with the efficiency of the modern means of transportation, our churches have held an annual synod since our first synod was convened in 1940.

The annual meetings of synod also serve as a needed safeguard. First of all, they safeguard the quality of the work performed by the synod. Biennial meetings of synod would result in a considerably lengthier agenda, with the potential for too much work to be done in too short a time. Work done in haste does not usually serve the churches well.

Besides, annual meetings of synod safeguard the churches from the danger of "boardism," that is, the running of the church by boards and committees. If the synod meets only every two years, it will necessarily be the case that more responsibility will be shifted to the stand-

ing committees of synod. It is much better that synod meet every year so that there may be an annual review and approval of the work of the committees of synod.

Although our synod meets usually once each year, it is possible that a special synod be called. Article 50 provides for a special synod when "it becomes necessary in the opinion of at least three classes." Since our churches are divided into only two classes, we have adopted the following rule: "When a classis desires an early synod, it shall apply to the convening church, whose consistory in turn shall seek the approval of the other classis" ("Rules of Order for the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America," I, B.).

### Calling Church

Article 50 makes mention of a "local church" designated to convene the general synod. This has always been the practice of the Reformed churches. In harmony with this provision of Article 50, the "Rules of Order for the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America" state:

Each synod shall appoint a convening consistory whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod to the churches in a synodically designated publication at least one month before the date of meeting. It shall also provide all facilities needed for the synodical meetings, make arrangements for the lodging of delegates, etc. Expenses thus incurred shall be paid by the synodical treasurer. I, C.

Although not specifically mentioned in Article 50, one of the most important duties of the calling church is to take charge of the pre-synodical worship service. This is a custom of long-standing in the Reformed churches. Already in 1578, the Synod of Middelburg decided:

But it is deemed good that hereafter those who have come together

at the National Synod before all other activities should give themselves to fasting and prayer and the minister of the place deliver an exhortation from God's Word that is fitting for the forthcoming agenda.

Our "Rules of Order" state:

On the ... evening preceding the opening of synod a prayer service, in charge of the convening consistory, shall be held in the city in which synod is to meet. The members of synod are expected to attend this service in a body. I, D.

It is the custom that the president of the previous synod conduct this worship service and deliver the pre-synodical sermon. This sermon is then also included in the printed "Acts."

Since the pre-synodical service is an official worship service, the members of the convening church ought to be in attendance. Besides, all who are able are invited and ought to make an effort to attend. There have been times recently that the pre-synodical service was not very well attended. This is a shame! Is this an indication that we have begun to lose our denominational consciousness and that we are not as grateful to God as we ought to be for the work of our broadest assembly?

### Synodical Delegates

Article 50 mandates that three ministers and three elders from every classis be delegated to the general synod. Our "Rules of Order," which had required four ministers and four elder delegates from our two classes, were revised by the Synod of 1992 so that at present five ministers and five elders from each classis are delegated each year to synod.

Significantly, the same number of ministers and elders serve as synodical delegates. Not only is this a practical safeguard against hierarchy, but this derives from the Reformed principle of parity of officebearers.

The method of selecting synodical delegates is not spelled out in Article 50. In the past there were, in the Reformed churches, instances of classes appointing delegates by rotation, so that the ministers took turns serving as synodical delegates.

Much to be preferred is the method of selecting synodical delegates by secret ballot. It may even be argued that this is implied in Article 41 which speaks of the work of the classis. "And, finally, at one but the last meeting and, if necessary, at the last meeting before the synod, delegates shall be *chosen* to attend said synod." The article speaks of *choosing* synodical delegates, which can hardly be done if the rotary method of selecting delegates is followed.

Because of concern over the use of the rotary method, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of 1938 issued the warning to the classes of that denomination that "... with a view to the welfare of the Churches, it advises against the rotary method of selecting synodical delegates" *Acts of Synod of the CRC, 1938*, pp. 80, 81).

Although there may be a danger that the same men are continu-

ally delegated to the synods, so that year after year decisions involving the churches in common are made by the same few, still the method of voting for synodical delegates does more to insure that the most capable ministers will be involved in the most important work of the churches in common. The best qualified ought to represent the classes at the major assembly, without regard to the distance they must travel or the frequency of previous attendance.

Elder delegates are chosen from those presently serving in the office. Usually the elder delegates available to serve at synod are mentioned on a consistory's credentials or presented from the floor by the delegates of that consistory. Some consistories ask who of their elders is willing to be nominated to serve as a synodical delegate. Other consistories have the general policy that all the elders are to be willing to be placed on nomination unless they are able to present good reason to the consistory as to why they cannot be considered for nomination.

We ought to be very thankful to God for the number of qualified elders who have served as delegates

to the synods of our churches over the years. What a great blessing that this is true today. The Lord has certainly used the elders in significant ways in the many important decisions that our synods have taken.

In addition to the synodical delegates, there are those who automatically have advisory vote at synod. Not only does this mean that they have the privilege of the floor, but also that they are available to serve as advisors to the committees of pre-advice. The "Rules of Order" (IV) specify that advisory members of synod include: the seminary professors; the missionaries, although only on matters directly concerning their labors; reporters of standing or special committees; the Synodical Stated Clerk; and the Synodical Treasurer.

The advisory members of synod, especially our seminary professors and denominational missionaries, have also played an important part in the deliberations of our broadest assembly over the years. It is with good reason that they are granted advisory vote and expected by the churches to attend the meetings of the general synod. □

## Book Reviews

*Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, by David W. Hall, Joseph H. Hall, editors. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994. pp. xiii-621. \$29.99. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

This book ought to be in every minister's library. The two introductory essays by the editors are must reading especially in our day. David Hall writes,

As most quickly recognize, unfortunately many of us are led to our positions in church government not with forethought but in a posture of reaction. We often learn gov-

ernment only when threatened. It would be much better if we would study the Word of God and come to our values in biblical conclusions not as reactionaries but as positive Protestants seeking to hold forth the whole counsel of God in matters of government as well. James Henley Thornwell is helpful again. Responding to those who allege that church government and restraint is an unlawful imposition, Thornwell wrote, "Is the law of God tyranny? And does man become a slave by being bound to obey it? Is not obedience to God the very essence of liberty, and is not the Church most divinely free when she most perfectly fulfills His will? What is it that has made this 'free, exultant Church of ours,' but the sublime determination to hear

no voice, but the voice of the Master? And what made the mummied forms of medieval Christianity, but the very principle ... that the Church has a large discretion? She claimed the right to command where God had not spoken; she made void His law, and substituted her own authority and inventions.... It is because we love the liberty where-with Christ has made us free, that we renounce and abhor the detestable principle of Prelatists, Popes, and loose Presbyterians, that whatever is not forbidden is lawful. The Church may be very wise, but God is wiser" (p. 33, 34).

A paradigm is an outstandingly clear example or pattern of something. The bulk of the book (pp. 55-

602) consists of an anthology of what the editors consider to be the best writings of the church fathers, as well as excerpts from the confessions on the subject of church polity or government. Each of these is preceded by a brief, very helpful biographical/historical introduction. The editors believe, and rightly so, that these writings are paradigms of what a Reformed/Presbyterian church polity ought to be. They urge us not to, "... 'reinvent the wheel.' The biblical aspects of government need not be ignored by each successive generation, nor rediscovered by the alternating generations. We could profit much by studying the 'ancient paths' (Jer. 6:16; 18:15) and attempting to mold our inchoate governments after the progress of our spiritual ancestors. That, far from being a pharisaic expression of traditionalism, is the better part of wisdom, as we seek to rule out those inefficacious modes of governing" (p. 20). If nothing else, this anthology will guide the serious student of Reformed/Presbyterian church polity to the primary sources. The anthology is divided into five sections treating "The Historical Foundation of Church Polity," "Continental Europe and Reformation Politics," "Dutch Reformed Politics," "Scottish and British Politics," and "North American Politics."

The anthology is introduced by two excellent essays by the editors. Joseph Hall writes on the "History and Character of Church Government"; and David Hall's essay is entitled "The Pastoral and Theological Significance of Church Government."

Joseph Hall's thesis is that the marks of the church (pure preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and biblical discipline) are the "essential ingredients of true church government" (pp. 3-4). Moreover, both editors insist that church polity ought to be biblical in its origin. Joseph Hall sees congregational/independent churches and the prelatic (Anglican and Roman Catholic systems of church govern-

ment) as "aberrational forms of government" denying one or more of the fundamental characteristics of the church. The former denies her catholicity and the latter her scriptural foundation (p. 4).

Hall contends that the main principles of the presbyterian form of government derived from Scripture are: "the rule of a plurality of elders in the local church, the submission of the local governing body to a higher governing body, and the unity of churches finding its most concrete representation in the connection of the churches and their elders in regional bodies, sometimes called 'courts' when discipline is undertaken" (p. 5). Both editors assert that these fundamental principles are evident from Acts 15 — the "Jerusalem Council," which dealt with the question of circumcision (pp. 5, 17-19). The decisions of the elders and apostles at that council in Jerusalem applied to all the churches. "Strangely absent from this record is the thought that each church, on this question, would do just as it pleased. These (the decisions of the council in Jerusalem) were standards by the whole church for the whole church. It was one church with the same beliefs and practices, not just a consortium of loosely affiliated churches. The decision of the Assembly of Jerusalem was for all churches" (p. 17). According to Acts 16:4 these decisions ("decrees," according to the Greek) were delivered by Paul and Silas to the churches and received by them with joy!

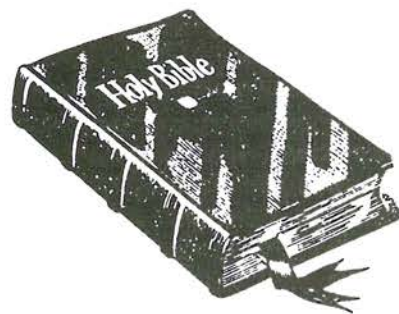
Both editors are convinced that the biblical principles of church government as enunciated by the apostles and early post-apostolic church, and as restored by the Reformers of the sixteenth century (notably Calvin) are the principles of Reformed/Presbyterian church polity. This reviewer agrees! What is missing, however, is a recognition of and an explanation of the important and fundamental principle of the autonomy of the local church as so beautifully woven into the Church

Order of Dordt. In addition to this, David Hall's position that "All government is necessitated by human depravity and the Fall and, as such, is necessarily a mechanism of response to that fallen condition" simply is not true. Government finds its origin in the will of the Sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth. Adam had dominion, rule, in paradise. Christ is God's King and will certainly rule in the New Creation.

Both introductory essays, but especially is this true of the second by David Hall, are characterized by highly technical, unfamiliar, and obscure terminology which makes them difficult for anyone lacking a college or seminary education. Among these are terms like "repristinator of presbyterianism," "recrudescence of the presbyterian system," "praxis," "harmartiology," and "heuristic value." But if one has a dictionary at his elbow he should be able to make his way through the essays.

Joseph Hall was formerly professor of church history and librarian at Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and currently teaches at Mid-America Seminary. His son, David Hall, is pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The book is greatly enhanced by a "Bibliographical Essay" by David Hall and an index. □



March 1, 1995 in Loveland, CO

The March meeting of Classis West was held in Loveland, CO on Wednesday, March 1. The customary Officebearers' Conference was held the day before. The theme of the Conference was "The Truth of God's Gracious Covenant." The keynote address was given by Rev. Russ Dykstra, who spoke on "God's Gracious Covenant: A Glorious Truth, A Blessed Experience." Sectionals were led by Rev. Mitchell Dick, "Setting the Record Straight on Pre-Supposed Regeneration"; Rev. Thomas Miersma, "A Critique of the Conditional Covenant"; and Rev. Arie den Hartog, "Covenant Breakers." Healthy discussion followed each paper, showing unity of thought among our officebearers concerning this significant truth.

Tuesday evening the delegates and members of Loveland's congregation gathered for a slide presentation by Rev. Richard Moore, a member of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Rev. Moore, together with Elder Don VerMeer, recently spent several weeks in Ghana, Africa, investigating further the possibility of the PRC doing mission work in that country. For further information concerning this investigatory work, confer the March 1, 1995 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Our congregations would be well served by having Rev. Moore come and show his slides.

Rev. Michael DeVries began the session of Classis with devotions based on John 13:14, 15. Rev. Dick then chaired the Classis meeting.

The agenda of Classis was brief. There were regular reports from the Classical Committee, the Stated Clerk, and the Reading Sermon Committee. At the March meetings of Classis West, the Church Visitors annually give their report. The Church Visitors noted with gratitude

to God that all the churches in Classis West are experiencing unity, peace, and love, and that the consistories are faithfully caring for the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. They stated, "We must not take this blessing for granted, but we must continue to seek this blessing earnestly before God's face. Of particular interest to the Classis was a report by the Church Visitors of their visit to the Trinity PRC in Houston, Texas. It was especially encouraging to hear of the extensive evangelism efforts of that small congregation, and of the Lord's evident blessing upon their labors and those of Pastor Mahtani. God has graciously added to their number, but also has given them much opportunity to spread God's truth. This they have done not only among the general population, but also in the Sindhi Indian community in Houston, most of whom are Hindu. Classis will report to Synod 1995 that although the congregation in Houston is small, "the churches can enthusiastically continue to support Trinity PRC according to her need." We pray that God will continue to bless their efforts to proclaim the gospel, and also those evangelism labors of all the churches.

The Classis also considered an overture which asks Synod 1995 "to investigate through its committee for contact the possibility of having our sister church in New Zealand join one of the Classes in our Protestant Reformed Churches in America." Classis West decided to send the overture on to synod with disapproval. The grounds for disapproving were three: 1) Past synods have had the opportunity to face these matters when they formed sister-church relationships with the PRC of New Zealand and the ERCS, when they renewed the support of the PRC of N.Z., and when they es-

tablished the "Principles for Assistance in Discipline"; 2) No evidence is presented that the current arrangements involved in our sister-church relationships do not serve the spiritual well-being of the PRC of N.Z.; 3) Such a request of a congregation/denomination joining another denomination ought to arise from the congregation/denomination itself.

Classis granted classical appointments as follows: Edmonton PRC — Rev. Houck (April 23 and 30); Edgerton PRC — Revs. DeVries (May 21, 28), Dykstra (Aug. 13, 20), Bekkering (Sept. 10, 17); Lynden PRC — Revs. Moore (April 23, 30), Dick (May 14, 21), Key (July 23, 30), Terpstra (Aug. 13, 20), Haak (Sept. 10, 17). Classis instructed the vacant church to seek supply from seminary students or candidates from Mid-June through July.

Classis approved subsidy requests as follows and forwarded them to Synod: Bethel PRC — \$20,300; Edgerton PRC — \$14,000; Edmonton PRC — \$32,378; Lacombe PRC — \$15,221; Pella PRC — \$22,500; Trinity PRC — \$32,000.

Voting for synodical delegates resulted in the following: **Ministers:** *Primi:* W. Bekkering, R. Dykstra, C. Haak, C. Terpstra, G. VanBaren; *Secundi:* A. denHartog, M. Dick, S. Houck, S. Key, R. Moore. **Elders:** *Primi:* Ed Gritters (Redlands), Henry Hoekstra (Hull), Chester Hunter, Jr. (Doon), David Poortinga (Loveland), Ed VanGinkel (Doon); *Secundi:* Gary Buteyn, Henry Ferguson, Tim Kooima, Herman Molenkamp, Michael VanBaren.

Rev. R. Moore was elected to serve a three-year term and Elder Ed VanGinkel a one-year term on the Classical Committee. Rev. C. Haak was elected to serve a three-year *primus* term and Rev. S. Key was re-elected to a two-year term as Synodical Deputies, with Rev. G.

VanBaren elected to a three-year *secundus* term. Revs. G. Lanting and G. VanBaren were elected to be church visitors, with Revs. W.

Bekkering and A. denHartog as alternates.

The next meeting of Classis will be in South Holland, IL on Septem-

ber 20, 1995, the Lord willing. □

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Steven Key,  
Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Minister Activities

Rev. S. Houck, pastor of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL, had a recurrence of his heart problems. At first it looked as though he would have to have bypass surgery again. However, it now looks as though doctors may be able to treat him simply with medication. Let us remember Rev. Houck, along with all our pastors, either active or retired, in prayer.

The congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC has extended a call to Rev. R. Dykstra to serve as their next pastor. And the Lynden, WA congregation has extended a call to Rev. M. Joostens, with the prayer that in harmony with God's will he will hear and accept their call to serve as their next pastor.

### Evangelism Activities

Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, was asked to bring the Word at the evening service of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Randolph on January 8. Rev. Key preached from Luke 16:27-31 on the theme "The Sufficiency of the Word."

Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, was interviewed on three different occasions by radio station KHCB 105.7 FM in Houston concerning information about Trinity, the upcoming Reformed Evangelism Conference, and the Christian SINDHI outreach to the

Indian community of Houston. Reportedly, Trinity received dozens of phone calls enquiring about their church as well as their upcoming conference. Rev. Mahtani was also able to bring the Word at a recent Christian SINDHI conference. One of their meetings was held in the sanctuary of Trinity, and Rev. Mahtani spoke on the subject "Train up a Child."

We can also mention here that, as many of you undoubtedly know, the congregation of Trinity has been busy for the better part of a year now planning for this month's Reformed Evangelism Spring Conference. From all accounts, registration for this conference has far exceeded expectations. God has greatly blessed the efforts of Trinity with more than 180 registered so far. Since original plans called for a conference to bring together PRs from all over this country, as well as guests from the Houston area, it was necessary to close registration in order to accommodate local interest in attending the meetings. The Lord willing, this conference will start on April 3, and run through April 5th. Let us remember Trinity and all those who gather there this first week in April in our prayers, that God will use all this for His glory.

The newly organized Evangelism Society of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI has decided to purchase a new recording system to use during their weekly worship services.

### Congregational Activities

Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, began the new

year by introducing a series of sermons dealing with the subject of worship. This series was entitled "Reformed Worship: Fellowship with the Holy One." Over the weeks, D.V., Rev. Key will use passages of Scripture to explain the various elements of our worship. He also hoped to show why we include in our worship such elements as: singing (exclusively Psalms), preaching, offerings, and prayer.

### Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Hull, IA PRC hosted a winter singspiration at their church. Through song and special numbers they developed the theme "Praise Ye the Lord."

On February 11, the young people of the Grandville, MI PRC hosted a formal candlelight valentine dinner at Hope School. There were three seatings from 4:45-9:00 p.m. with couples having a choice of chicken or prime rib. Proceeds will go for this year's convention.

The young people of the South Holland, IL PRC set a new record back in January when they made 406 sub-sandwiches as part of a fund-raiser for this year's convention.

The sanctuary of the Grandville, MI PRC was the site of a Young People's Society Mass Meeting held on February 19. Rev. A. Spriensma, Grandville's pastor, spoke on "Personal Devotions of a Young Person."

Young people from many west Michigan PR churches got together on Saturday, March 4 at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville to make apple pies. This fund-raiser, sponsored by the Federation Board

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*Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

of Young People's Societies, has turned into an annual event. This year the young people made 1,021 pies, starting at 7:30 a.m. and finishing around noon, after which the

unbaked pies were delivered to area churches for pickup that afternoon, followed, no doubt, by consumption that night.

#### **Food for Thought**

"He that would walk aright must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ and another inward to the corruption of his own nature."

— Thomas Boston □

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan, wishes to express sincerest sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Terry Elzinga and family in the loss of Mrs. Elzinga's mother,

#### **GLADYS SANTORA.**

May they find comfort in these words: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).

Cornelius Doezeema, President  
Wilma Kamstra, Secretary

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Adult Bible Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to David and Beverly Reitsma in the loss of David's brother,

#### **JONATHAN REITSMA.**

We rejoice with them in the words of Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Rev. R. Cammenga, President  
Deb Kuiper, Secretary

#### **NOTICE!!!**

The Board of the Reformed Heritage Christian School Association is inviting applications for a full-time teacher position (grades 1-4) which will begin in August of 1995. Successful applicants must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical inerrancy, 6-day creation, male headship, the antithesis between Christianity and the world, and covenantal theology. Applicants should send a letter of application and résumé to:

David Kloosterman  
5630 Powderhorn

Kalamazoo, MI 49009.

For more information phone: (616) 375-5751.

#### **NOTICE!!!**

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 1995 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by April 12, 1995.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

#### **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

The Lord willing on April 10, 1995, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

#### **MR. and MRS.**

#### **GERRIT LUBBERS,**

celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents. We thank the Lord for the years they have shared, and for the constant love, the covenant instruction, and the guidance they have given us through the years. May the Lord continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Bernie and Ruth Lubbers
  - ✿ Jay and Donna Lubbers
  - ✿ Carolyn Schipper
  - ✿ Glenn Lubbers
  - ✿ Ted and Gloria Miedema
  - ✿ David and Marcia Doezeema
- 26 grandchildren  
50 great grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan