



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

We do not see Him.
But although we do not see Him,
He comes to us,
as He came to Mary,
and He calls to us,
He calls our name,
and we have
direct fellowship with Him.
That we have today.
O, the blessedness of hearing
Jesus call our name.
That was the blessedness
of Mary.

See "The Manifestation of Jesus to Mary" — p. 291

*Vol. 72, No. 13
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In This Issue ...

On April 7, the Protestant Reformed Churches observe Easter, in compliance with the rule of Article 67 of the Church Order of Dordt.

In keeping with this observance, we publish the sermon by Herman Hoeksema on John 20:11-18, "The Manifestation of Jesus to Mary," as the meditation in this issue.

The sermon is vintage Hoeksema.

The story behind the publication of this sermon is intriguing.

In the days when Hoeksema was at the height of his powers as an exegete and homiletician, that is to say, a preacher, his sermons were not recorded. But a member of Hoeksema's huge First Church congregation, Mr. Martin Swart, took down the sermons in his own system of shorthand. Immediately after the service, when the sermon was still fresh in his mind, Mr. Swart transcribed his shorthand version, writing the sermon out in full in his legible, lovely handwriting. He filled notebook after notebook with HH's sermons.

This treasure exists. It belongs to the scribe's son, James Swart, member with his wife of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids. With his permission, we publish this sermon. We plan to publish many more. I have edited the manuscript with regard to punctuation, paragraphing, and incidental sentence structure.

This meditation, as well as the rest of the content of the *SB*, ought to be distributed widely outside the sphere of the PRC.

In this issue, we ask your help. Use the enclosed card to inform us of friends, relatives, and acquaintances to whom we can send 6 free issues of the *SB*. Or, send in subscriptions for them.

You can help in spreading the witness to the Reformed faith.

See our unusual "Help Wanted" notice.

And respond, if you please.

— DJE



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The Manifestation of Jesus to Mary*

... Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

John 20:11-18

The fact of the resurrection of Christ on the morning of the third day, and all that is connected with it, is viewed in the gospel of John from the viewpoint of Mary Magdalene. It is Mary Magdalene, according to the gospel of John, who went to the sepulchre. The other women are not even mentioned. Although we know that there were others that accompanied Mary, they are not even mentioned by John. Yes, even though we know that Mary did not really reach the sepulchre, but when she saw that the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, something which had been a matter of concern for them while they were on the way, she immediately returned and told the disciples.

That John looks at the resurrection from the viewpoint of the activities and movements of Mary is easily explained. It was Mary who brought the report of the resurrection to him and Peter. Mary came and told Peter and John about the open sepulchre, and also her conclusion. Upon the report of Mary, John and Peter run to the sepulchre. It is because of the marvel of that grave, and especially of the linen clothes which lay in the grave, not neatly folded up, as it is usually explained, but just as Jesus lay in them, that John believed. Not because of the report of Mary, but because of the marvel of the grave, John believed. It seems that Mary followed John and Peter. But the disciples had run. Mary came to the sepulchre when the disciples had returned, so that we find Mary here alone. We find her here with a very foolish question. But it is a question born of love.

Jesus hides Himself from her

You understand that it is not our calling and purpose to preach on Mary. That is beside the point. It is not that a study of the character of Mary Magdalene would not be interesting. But it is not the purpose of the text to bring the figure of Mary before us. To the contrary, it is the purpose of the text to bring our attention upon the resurrection of the Lord. There is here a manifestation of the risen Lord. Him we want to see. It is only in as far as the resurrection of the Lord is re-

flected in Mary, and determined by it, that we wish to consider Mary. In other words, we wish to see the resurrection of Jesus through Mary.

Then we see two things. In the first place, on that third day none of the disciples believed or expected the fact of the resurrection. Surely they had been told, and they had been told plainly. If we look at the words which Jesus spoke before His death, it is almost unbelievable that the disciples could be so in the dark. They had been plainly told that the Lord must suffer and die, and be raised again the third day. Yet none expected the resurrection. This shows how impossible it is, if our heart and mind are filled with our own notions, to receive the things of the kingdom of God. That is true today. You can sometimes instruct children in things which men will not receive. The reason is that when the hearts are filled with notions of our own we cannot receive the things of the kingdom of God. That was the trouble with the disciples. Surely they had an earthly conception of the kingdom. All did. But not only did they have an earthly conception, they also had set their hearts on that conception. They did not want another conception, and they could not receive it. Though Jesus tells them that He must suffer and die, and on the third day rise again; and though Jesus told them to go to Galilee and that He would see them there, they stayed in Jerusalem and paid no attention to it. We must not look at the love of

* This is an Easter sermon of Herman Hoeksema, preached to the congregation of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. It has never before appeared in print.

the women going to the grave. That they were not on the way to Galilee, but to the grave, was an act of unbelief.

In the second place, the idea of the resurrection was not understood by them. They believed in the resurrection on the last day. They had seen the resurrection of Lazarus and others. They had some conception of the resurrection of Jesus as they had seen it typically. But of the resurrection, a resurrection that would be wholly different, that they did not understand. That they could not understand. Therefore Jesus must do two things. In the first place, He must convince them of the fact of the resurrection, He must instruct them in the resurrection. And He must teach them that His resurrection was not a return to this life. Of these two things He must convince the disciples.

How? There are especially five elements that enter into that work of Jesus by which He convinces the disciples of His resurrection. There is, in the first place, the marvel of the resurrection itself. The resurrection of Jesus was a marvelous thing. No one was there when it took place. We do not even know the exact moment when it took place. Jesus was raised before the stone was removed. The resurrection was not witnessed by anyone. Why not? Because it could not have been witnessed by earthly eyes. It could have been witnessed if the resurrection of Jesus had been like that of Lazarus. You could see the resurrection of Lazarus. You could see him rise and come out of the grave. But that is not the case with Jesus. Jesus arose with a spiritual body. That does not mean that it was not material. But it does mean that it differed materially from our present body. Our body belongs to the sphere of the earthly things, so that we cannot enter into the sphere of the heavenly with our present body.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Jesus arose with a spiritual, a heavenly body. If Jesus had not appeared, if He had not shown Himself, He would never have been seen. If the disciples had seen Jesus come out of the grave, it would have given them a wrong impression. They would have looked at the resurrection in a natural way. That is one element.

The second element is the open grave. The purpose of the angels at that grave was to keep that grave undisturbed. The open grave proved two things. It proved in the first place that Jesus was not there. In the second place it proved that He had left in a remarkable way. That was plain from the place where he lay. It was plain from the linen clothes, which lay in the grave just as Jesus had lain in them. They lay in the grave just as they had been wrapped around His body. Jesus had risen out of them without even disturbing them. If we consider this, we see what a marvelous testimony that open grave was for the disciples.

In the third place, there was the preaching of the angels. The angels preached. They brought the message of the resurrection of Jesus to the disciples.

In the fourth place, after the resurrection, Jesus did not have the former communion with the disciples. He came occasionally, and then left again. That left an impression with the disciples.

Finally, there are these manifestations of Jesus, ten of which are recorded in the Scriptures. One of them was to Mary Magdalene. You must remember that these manifestations of Jesus were not all alike. We see that He manifests Himself in a different way to Mary from the way in which He manifests Himself to the sojourners to Emmaus, or to Thomas. He appeared to the sojourners to Emmaus, also by holding their eyes, so that they could not recognize Him, but in their case

Jesus appeals to Scripture. He instructs them in the Scriptures. When they see the Scriptures, they see Him for a moment, and then He disappears again. That is a different manifestation from the manifestation to Mary, or to Thomas. To the sojourners to Emmaus, Jesus shows Himself as the fulfillment of Scripture. To Thomas, He appeared differently. He comes to Thomas' senses. He comes to Thomas so that Thomas can see Him.

So also He appears differently to Mary. Jesus appears to her in the garden. But Mary did not see Him. That does not mean that Mary was so filled with sorrow that she could not see Jesus. But Jesus so appeared to Mary, that she could not see Him. Jesus appeared to Mary, not by sight, not by reasoning, but by striking a road straight to her heart. We know very little of Mary. We know that Jesus had cast seven devils out of her. We know that from that moment Mary had followed Jesus. From that moment Mary's life had been bound up with Jesus' earthly form. To follow Him, to minister unto Him, to give Him drink and food, to tend to His clothes, that was Mary's life.

It is from that point of view that we must look at Mary here in the garden. What did Mary want? She wanted the body of Jesus. You say that is but natural. It is but natural that she should go to the sepulchre, expecting to find a body. The others did that too. But not as Mary. When Mary does not find the body of Jesus, she is filled with grief. Why? Because she cannot do that last service to that body. Mary is looking for a dead body. Notice, that dead body she calls her Lord. Notice too, that her mind is so concentrated upon the body of Jesus that she does not see anything else. She is not amazed, as the other women had been, when she sees two angels sitting there by the sepulchre. For when they address her, she answers them as though it were a common thing to see angels, and to hear them speak. When the gardener, as

That they were not on the way to Galilee, but to the grave, was an act of unbelief.

she supposed, asked her why she wept, and whom she sought, she answered him as if the gardener knew all about it. If thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him.

Finally, notice that Mary's mind is so concentrated on her search for the body that she says: if you will show me where you laid Him, I will take Him away. Just imagine Mary carrying the body of Jesus away. So that it comes down to this: Mary had placed all the love of her heart on the Lord, as she had known Him in His earthly form. She revealed that love of her heart by following Jesus and ministering to His earthly needs. You must understand, Mary was not a woman like, for example, Salome. None of the disciples had a clear conception of the kingdom of heaven. But that was especially true of Mary. Mary cared nothing about conceptions. There are such people. Mary liked to hear Jesus speak, she liked to sit near Him and listen to His sermons. But for the rest, Mary liked to serve and wait on Jesus.

Jesus reveals Himself to Mary

To that Mary, Jesus reveals Himself. Mary had to learn three things. In the first place, that Jesus is alive. In the second place, that she must keep away from Him. She will never be able to follow, to serve, to wait on Jesus again. In the third place, Mary must learn to know Jesus in a higher fellowship than the former fellowship. If Jesus had appeared to Mary as He had been before, she would never have understood the reality of the resurrection. Therefore, Jesus withdraws in order that Mary may be instructed.

First, the angels address Mary. They say unto her: woman, why weepest thou. Then she hears something behind her, and turning she sees a man. That man was Jesus. But Mary did not know Him. Not because sorrow so beclouded her

eyes that she could not recognize Jesus. But because Jesus appeared, intentionally, in a form that Mary would not recognize. Jesus said, before He said anything else, I am not the same, Mary. He addresses her in a different voice. He does not speak to Mary in His old voice. If He had, Mary would have recognized him. But Jesus addresses Mary in a different voice. Whom seekest thou?

Now we would expect that Mary would say: I seek the old Jesus. But she does not. She says: if thou hast taken Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Notice, after Jesus has plainly shown that the old fellowship is gone, He shows that there was a new fellowship, in the name "Mary." In that name Jesus addresses Mary in her heart. In that name, Jesus said to Mary: although thou canst not come to Me, I, from My sphere, will come to thee.

That is the fellowship which we have with Him. We do not see Him. But although we do not see Him, He comes to us, as He came to Mary, and He calls to us, He calls our name, and we have direct fellowship with Him.

*I
have come
to seek
a dead Lord,
and I find
a living
Lord.*

That we have today. O, the blessedness of hearing Jesus call our name. That was the blessedness of Mary. When she heard it, Mary turns around and says, Rabboni.

This means that Mary had not yet changed. She still wants the old Jesus. When Mary says, Rabboni, she means to say: I have come to seek a dead Lord, and I find a living Lord.

Jesus instructs Mary in His resurrection

Jesus says, touch Me not. Why?

That is the comfort.

Jesus says, I am not yet ascended to My Father. Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father. That means, in the first place, that Mary can no more minister unto Jesus, as she had done

before. In the second place, it means that she shall touch Him again. Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended unto My Father. But go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.

That means two things. In the first place, My Father is your Father, and My God is your God. There is a new fellowship.

In the second place, it means, when I am ascended to My Father and your Father, then I will let you touch Me. Then I will let you touch Me, in a more blessed, spiritual, heavenly, eternal way. For when Jesus ascended, He received of the Father the Spirit. When He had received the Spirit, He fulfilled the promise of letting His people touch Him, by coming to them and dwelling in them, in the Spirit. We have fellowship with Jesus in a far more blessed sense than Mary had before the resurrection. In a far more blessed sense do we respond to the calling of our name, and say, Rabboni.

If we have heard Jesus call our name, and we have responded, then we will go and walk as disciples of that Lord. We will expect the day when we shall touch Him. For we shall touch Him, and see Him face to face. Not because He shall come to us, but because we shall be drawn to Him. And then we shall have fellowship with Him, for ever and ever. □



A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

4. Matthew 24 (Again)

The risk that an editor takes when he launches a series of editorials is that the series will be interrupted. Reasons for the interruption are varied — and sometimes compelling.

The danger includes that the interruption will be extended for some time and several issues of the magazine.

By the time the editor resumes the series, the reader has forgotten the earlier articles in the series.

This danger with all its fullness has overtaken the editor of the *Standard Bearer*.

In the January 15, 1995 *SB* appeared an editorial, "Jewish Dreams," rejecting the earthly kingdom of postmillennialism as the hope of the Christian. The March 1, 1995 issue of the magazine contained two letters critical of the editorial, as well as a defense of the editorial by the editor ("A Letter and Response on 'Jewish Dreams'").

The March 15, 1995 *SB* also contained a letter that was sharply critical of "Jewish Dreams." The author of this letter was Gary DeMar, leading advocate of the postmillennialism of the Christian Reconstruction movement. The heart of the letter was a defense of postmillennialism on the basis of Question 191 of the Westminster Larger Catechism. To this letter also, the editor responded ("Another Letter and Response on 'Jewish Dreams'").

DeMar's letter, bristling with challenge, became the occasion for the series of editorials on "A De-

fense of (Reformed) Amillennialism."

Lest I be guilty of failing to do what little I can to stop the decline from the truth of amillennialism, I intend to devote future editorials to a biblical, confessional defense of amillennialism against the erroneous doctrine of postmillennialism. These will have the "Christian Reconstruction" movement especially in view (*SB*, March 15, 1995, p. 296).

The series, therefore, concerns the biblical doctrine of the last things, a prominent and vital subject in our day. It is also controversial as the recent exchange with Dr. Gary North indicated.

The first installment appeared in the April 1, 1995 issue of the *SB* (pp. 317, 318). That editorial showed the radical differences between amillennialism and postmillennialism. It quoted with approval the declaration by the Christian Reconstructionist Gary North that

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 (p. 317).

The editorial charged postmillennialism with the sin of leaving "the people (of God) 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" (p. 318).

The second installment ran in the April 15, 1995 *SB* (pp. 341-343). This editorial dealt with one of the biblical passages that are fundamental in the controversy, Revelation 20, the only passage that mentions the "millennium." The editorial took note of the explanation of Revelation 20 by Presbyterian exegete J. Marcellus Kik and by the Christian Reconstructionist David Chilton. It demonstrated that the phrase, "thousand years," is a figurative description of the entire age of the new covenant during which particularly the martyred saints are raised in their souls at the moment of death to live and reign with Christ in heaven.

Revelation 20 is no support to postmillennialism, but rather a refutation of that error. The saints do not gain earthly victory in the world; rather, they suffer and are beheaded. History does not come to its end with the earthly triumph of the church; rather, Satan is loosed, and the hordes of the ungodly attack the church and the saints. The hope held before the people of God is not a carnal kingdom on earth; rather, it is our living and reigning with Christ in heaven at death (p. 343).

The third installment is found in the May 1, 1995 *SB* (pp. 365-367). The topic of this editorial was "Apostasy and Persecution." With reference to Gary DeMar's *Last*

Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church (American Vision, 1994), it pointed out that postmillennialism, especially the Christian Reconstructionist brand, puts the great apostasy and great tribulation of the New Testament Scriptures in the past. Against this false and dangerous teaching, the editorial argued from Scripture and the confessions that the apostasy of II Thessalonians 2:3 and the great tribulation of Matthew 24:21 are still to be expected by the church, although both are also present realities. It quoted the powerful statement in chapter 11 of the Second Helvetic Confession (1566):

And from heaven the same Christ will return in judgment, when wickedness will then be at its greatest in the world and when the Antichrist, having corrupted true religion, will fill up all things with superstition and impiety and will cruelly lay waste the Church with bloodshed and flames (Dan., ch. 11).

The fourth installment appeared, in sequence, in the May 15, 1995 *SB* (pp. 389, 390). The title was, "A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism (4): Matthew 24." So far the hazard that threatens editorial series was avoided. It was after this installment that disaster struck.

As for the content of that fourth installment, its subject is so important to the controversy, and so closely related to the article that must follow, that, rather than summarize it, I must reprint it in part. What follows then is the last part of the fourth editorial in the series. This concerns the postmillennial interpretation of Matthew 24.

*** **

The happy predictions of postmillennialism for the church in the world are overthrown by 2,000 years of history.

Postmillennialism's denial of apostasy, antichrist, and persecution is refuted by historical events.

Amillennialism, on the other

hand, rings true to history, past and present. To refer only to this one vital element in the controversy, the true church has always been and is today the remnant according to the election of grace. When and where has the true church ever been the majority? It was the remnant in apostolic times; it was the remnant at the time of the Reformation; it is the remnant today. Why, even in Israel/Judah, it was the remnant.

Awareness of developments in the world in light of the prophecy of the Holy Scriptures is not, however, the main reason for the astonishment of the Reformed Christian at the dream-world of postmillennialism. His amazement at postmillennialism's rosy forecast of the earthly future is mainly due to the contrary testimony of the Bible.

What of the apostles' prediction of departure from the faith in the last days in II Thessalonians 2:3; II Timothy 3, 4; II Peter 2; and I John 2:18, 19?

What of the apostle's warning of a coming Antichrist in II Thessalonians 2?

What of the apostle's alerting the saints to an impending tribulation as an element of those things that must shortly come to pass before the coming of the Lord, in the book of Revelation, e.g., 3:10; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:1-12; 12:17; 13; 14:9-13; 15:2; 16; 17; 19:2, 19-21; and 20:4, 7-10?

The answer given by the postmillennialist, particularly the "Christian Reconstructionist" (such as Gary DeMar, who asked for this biblical defense of amillennialism), to all of these astonished questions by the Reformed Christian is that all of the prophecies of apostasy, Antichrist, and tribulation have already been completely fulfilled. They are *past* events. The church of A. D. 1995 does not need to concern herself with them. Nothing of them is yet future. All was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

Postmillennialist Gary DeMar writes, "It is unbiblical to use the

term 'Antichrist' for a present-day or future political ruler. The proper context is theological and pre-A. D. 70" (*Last Days Madness*, p. 204).

The same author has written that the church must "recognize that the Great Tribulation is a past event." For "the tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea." It was "the destruction of Jerusalem" (*Last Days*, pp. 119, 110).

The exegetical basis of "Christian Reconstruction's" grand vision of a "Christianized" world — the victory of the gospel in history — is largely the interpretation of Matthew 24 by J. Marcellus Kik. The Presbyterian's interpretation of Jesus' eschatological discourse has been reprinted in a book titled, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 53-173.

Kik explains the chapter in such a way that verses 4-31 refer exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A. D. 70. Nothing in these verses refers at all to Jesus' second coming and the events that immediately precede His coming. The abomination of desolation in verse 15 refers only to the desecration of the temple by the "idolatrous ensigns" of the invading Roman army (p. 104). The "great tribulation" of verse 21 refers only to the suffering of the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The false Christs and false prophets of verse 24 refer only to the pretender-Messiahs and false teachers among the Jews at that time.

The "coming of the Son of man" in verses 27 and 30 is not the visible, bodily return of Christ, but His revelation in the preaching of the gospel by the apostles. The gathering of the elect by the angels in verse 31 is the spiritual saving of the elect through the gospel. "Angels" are human preachers.

The preliminary signs in the heavens of verse 29 are not the literal darkening of the sun and moon, prior to Jesus' second coming, but the going out of the figurative light of the Jews as a nation in A. D. 70.

"The sun of Judaism has been darkened" (p. 128). The shaking of the powers of the heavens in verse 29 "refers to Satan and his angels" (p. 133).

The basis for this understanding of Matthew 24:4-31 according to Kik and his "Christian Reconstruction" disciples is Jesus' word in verse 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Kik explains this word as meaning, very simply, that every single prophecy of Christ in verses 4-31 was fulfilled, exhaustively, in the lifetime of the generation that was alive at the time of Jesus' instruction. All was exhaustively fulfilled in A. D. 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing foretold in verses 4-31 pertains to the second coming.

The key to Matthew Twenty-four is verse 34.... Every thing mentioned in the previous verses were (*sic*) to be fulfilled before the contemporary generation would pass away.... The first thirty-four verses of Matthew 24, along with verse 35 . . . deal with the destruction of Jerusalem (pp. 59, 60, 67).

Gary DeMar agrees:

The events rehearsed in the Olivet Discourse are signs leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. These chapters have nothing to do with when Jesus will return at the final judgment. There are no observable signs leading up to His bodily return (*Last Days*, p. 151).

This interpretation of Matthew 24 is basic to the postmillennial de-

nial of apostasy, Antichrist, and great tribulation for the church in the future. For in the light of this explanation of Matthew 24, the postmillennialist goes through the entire New Testament rigorously applying all prediction of such things to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Fundamental to this interpretation of Matthew 24 is Kik's explanation of verse 34, the "key" to the chapter. If Kik is wrong here, his whole postmillennial conception of the earthly future collapses like a house of cards.

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Does Christ teach that every last particular in the preceding verses was fulfilled exhaustively in A. D. 70?

We shall see. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Psalm-Singing in the Consciousness of the Congregations

Because the hymn/psalm question is larger by far than a mere difference of opinion between two writers of letters to the editor, please allow me to respond briefly to the letter of Mr. Gerald Kuiper ("Correction and Comment") in the February 15, 1996 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

It seems to me that to argue, in defense of hymns, as Mr. Kuiper does, that some hymns are better versifications of the Scripture than are "many of the songs in our *Psalter*," and that hymns based on "other parts of the God-breathed Scriptures" are no less appropriate for singing in our homes, schools, wedding, funerals, etc., than the psalms is to miss the point.

May we sing hymns? Of course! But when hymns virtually *displace* the psalms in many of our homes, school programs, weddings, and funerals — "in times of distress and joy, as well as during special sea-

sons" — then something is not right.

I refer Mr. Kuiper to the lengthy study committee report ("Acts of Synod," PRC, 1960, pp. 87-116) on the basis of which our churches eventually rejected a recommendation that Article 69 of the Church Order be changed to allow in our worship services the singing of hymns "which are faithful versifications of Scripture." In it he will discover that what I wrote concerning Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 is not just my "opinion." It is the explanation upheld by Clement, Jerome, Beza, Owen, and a "host of other able and accepted Reformed Bible expositors" (pp. 105-108). Clearly, it is the psalms of David which are here prescribed by Paul for the people of God. That's the point.

"The psalms are dictated by the Holy Ghost. When we sing them, we are sure that God lays His words in our mouth, as though He Himself sings them in us in order to exalt His honor" (p. 108, from John Calvin, who "gave back to the

church the psalms as the spiritual song of the people"). One of the conclusions of the study committee: "The hymn cannot and may not be compared to the Psalm. The former is the work of man, the latter the work of God."

On page 111 Herman Hoeksema is quoted as having offered the CRC synod of 1928 this bit of advice relative to the hymn-question: that synod "admonish the leaders and the consistories especially to cooperate in reviving the psalms in the consciousness of the congregations." That's it. It takes a *concerted effort* to assure that the psalms are not lost "in the consciousness of the congregations." How can we expect our children to come to know and to understand and to love the psalms if, though they sing them in church on Sunday, it is hymns, either primarily or exclusively, that they memorize in school and hear at home? We ought *all* to work harder at it. That was my point. □

John VanBaren
Grandville, MI

News from Seminary Hill

By this time we are well into the second semester at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. Prof. Engelsma taught the interim course this year on "Contemporary Theology." In eight successive mornings right after the Christmas/New Year break, the class covered the development of liberal Protestant theology from Schleiermacher to Barth.

In addition to their other course work, seven of the eight full-time students are presently involved in practice preaching. By the end of the semester, each will have preached twice before the faculty and student body on assigned passages of Scripture or Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism. Only the first-year student is exempt from these rigors.

Four seminarians are regularly speaking a word of edification in the churches, helping in filling vacant pulpits. Five are assisting area pastors in teaching catechism classes. These activities are good experience for the students. The professors also preach regularly.

Four students from the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregations are taking two courses for credit. A graduate student at Calvin Theological Seminary is sitting in on one class. A pre-seminary student who plans to begin seminary this fall is taking one course. Several members of the PRC are auditing courses.

A number of ministers have contributed to the spiritual life of the seminary community by leading in our weekly chapel devotions. We thank them for this.

The faculty has just put out the spring, 1996 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. This 84-page journal contains several articles on various aspects of the Reformed faith and life, as well as reviews of significant theological books. The journal is published twice each year.

Senior seminarian Richard Smit will be examined before synod this June, God willing. If the examination is successful, he will graduate and be declared eligible for a call in the PRC.

Special student Cheah Fook Meng is completing a special three-year course. Soon after the graduation exercises during the meeting of synod in June, he and his wife Lee Choo will return to Singapore. There he will be examined by the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore with a view to his entrance into the ministry in those churches.

Internships have been arranged for third-year seminarians Daniel Kleyn and James Laning. Mr. Kleyn will do his internship in the South Holland PRC in South Holland, IL. The internship of Mr. Laning will be supervised by the Council of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. The internships will run from July to the end of this year.


Third-year, diploma non-licentiate (he does not intend to enter the ministry in the PRC) seminarian Darren Thole plans to do an internship during the same time under the auspices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The synod of 1996 must appoint a new professor to replace Professor Hanko. This is required by the rule that "a new professor shall be appointed when any of the active professors reaches the age of 65." Prof. Hanko has served the churches in the seminary since 1965. The rules permit the professor who has reached the age of 65 to continue to teach on a yearly basis until he is 70. The churches should make this important change at the seminary a matter of prayer.

The student body, faculty, and support staff are using and enjoying the new addition to the seminary building. Recently, a couple donated a lovely grandfather clock to the seminary. It stands in the lounge area, impressively visible from the entrance to the seminary. Such interest in the school is encouraging. Especially those who may not yet have seen the new addition are warmly invited to stop in and see it — and us.

We ask for the continued prayers of the churches, as of all the supporters of the seminary, that the Lord Jesus Christ by this means will give able, faithful pastors and teachers to His church.

For the faculty,
Cordially in Christ,


Prof. David J. Engelsma, Rector

■ The Inclusive Bible

You have doubtlessly read of the "Inclusive Bible." It is man's attempt to improve on the revelation of God to us given in Holy Scripture. It seems that in the minds of some the old Bible is no longer suitable for our current day and age. Nor is this merely a matter of translation — this is deliberate revision of the Word of Holy Scripture. We quote part of an article appearing in *The Christian News*, January 29, 1996.

Christians have always believed that God is omnipotent and omniscient. Well, the divine attributes have been expanded: He is now inclusive, too. In fact He is no longer "He."

"Our Father-Mother in heaven, hallowed be your name," goes the Lord's Prayer ... in *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, published by Oxford University Press. This new version is not really a translation, but an attempt, based on the New Revised Standard Version, to correct earlier translations.

According to the editors' introduction, it not only reflects but also "attempts to anticipate developments in the English language with regard to specificity about a number of issues such as gender, race, and physical disability" (emphasis in original).

... Masculine pronouns for the Deity have been pruned away. "In this version," the editors announce proudly, "God is never referred to by a masculine pronoun, or by any pronoun at all." Often this means "changing the syntax of a sentence so as to avoid using a pronoun."

Sometimes it means repeating "God" incessantly:

"God is my shepherd, I shall not want. God makes me lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside still waters; God restores my soul. God leads me in paths of righteousness for the sake of God's name."

St. Paul doesn't address "brethren," but "brothers and sisters" and "sisters and brothers" alternately. Even the Devil's sex is carefully unspecified, so there is some comfort for men....

The new version avoids offense at all costs — even imaginary offense. "The blind" become "blind people." "Lepers" become "people with leprosy." "Slaves" become "enslaved people." "Dark" and "darkness" have been edited out to avoid aspersions against "dark-skinned people." St. John's critical references to "the Jews" have been tactfully altered, though St. John himself (like all the central figures in the Gospel) was a Jew. (Hey — what about the Romans?) Even "right hand" has been deleted in deference to southpaws....

Well!!

Will there be no end of attacks on Holy Scripture? If the devil can not destroy the Bible, he will see to it that it is so altered as to lose all reliability and infallibility. Surely none who value the inspired Scriptures will even consider using such a tainted paraphrase (it is not a "version" or "translation"). This type of work can only come from those who deny the inspiration of the Word of God.

■ Promise Keepers Again

The Religious News Service reports (Feb. 2, 1996):

The Promise Keepers men's

movement has started unveiling its plans for more than 20 men's conferences at sports arenas this year, and two of the events already have sold out.

The movement, which encourages men to be more committed to their families and their Christian faith, held conferences in 13 cities last year. A total of more than 720,000 men attended.

A 1996 conference planned for Indianapolis sold out in eight days. An event in Minneapolis sold out shortly after the Indianapolis conference.

"Some of them sold out relatively quickly last year, but eight days is pretty quick," said Promise Keepers spokesman Roger Chapman.

The theme of this year's conferences is "Break Down the Walls."

"There are centuries-old walls built of pain, hurt, neglect and abuse," said Promise Keepers' President Randy Phillips. "Our desire is to exalt the person of Christ and power of the cross in a way that breaks down the walls that exist brother-to-brother, brother-to-sister, and church-to-church."

Bill McCartney writes in his *Men of Action* Newsletter of January 1996,

We must learn what it is to be broken and emptied before the Lord. A broken man can be used by God to break down walls. This means to forfeit all of our self-interests, all of our suspicions about others, all of our negative attitudes and all of our unforgiveness and condemnation of others. Can anything less qualify us as a disciple of Jesus Christ (I John 4:19-20; James 5:6-10)?

...Men, let us begin to break down the walls — by laying down our lives and hungering for God's will.

And an invitation was sent to area churches near Ft. Collins, Colorado to attend a local rally with the

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Promise Keepers' theme: "Break Down the Walls." The invitation included the plea, "Please plan to attend this evening of fellowship, praise and worship. Join us in 'uniting' as the Body of Christ!"

The intent of the movement becomes ever clearer. This year the emphasis is upon "Breaking down the walls." These "walls" are not only such as exist within families, but also those which exist between denominations of churches as Roman Catholic, Protestant, and even Mormon (though the latter can by no stretch of the imagination be included in "church"). Clearly the walls are to be broken down not by resolving differences on the basis of Scripture, but ignoring them. Could this work be one more way of establishing that one world church — the church of antichrist?

■ SIGNS OF THE TIMES: "A Record-setter for Disasters"

We have been reading of various and serious disasters occurring across our country. A short article pointing this out was in the *Denver Post* of February 15, 1996:

Floods, snow, winds and ice have contributed to making 1996 — only six weeks old — a record year for disasters.

The government already has issued 27 disaster declarations, the largest number so early that "anyone can recall," said Phil Cogan of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; 21 states are involved.

FEMA, which provides equipment, loans and grants to affected communities, has staff working on all 27.

"We have not had a moment that we could at least catch our breath and catch up," said FEMA chief James Lee Witt.

Vermont, suffering from flood-

ing that began Jan. 19, became No. 27 on Tuesday.

The most recent calamity has left Washington, Oregon and Idaho drying out from floods that began a week ago. These states estimate damage will top \$620 million.

The 27 declarations are close to the full-year average since 1991: 37.6 declared disasters.

Also among 1996's disasters are January's storms and floods in the East.

The Eastern storms caused \$585 million in insured losses, while Pennsylvania alone estimated flood damage at \$700 million.

Meanwhile, growers in the Southeast have requested a declaration because of freezing weather earlier this month, and Montanans are waiting for one as a result of floods.

FEMA also has people deployed to work in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Florida and Georgia, which were struck by hurricanes last year [and in] California, which is recovering from the Northridge earthquake in 1994.

The theory is that the El Niño current in the Pacific Ocean is the cause of this increase in disastrous storms. And perhaps scientists can come up with some reasonable explanations for every disaster that strikes.

But does not Jesus indicate (Matt. 24:7), "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places"? In fact, we have here a strong reminder of the testimony of Revelation which speaks of the seven trumpets in which one third of the earth is destroyed — an increase from the normal one fourth. Do we hear the beginning of the sounding of the trumpets? We may not know yet for sure. It is remarkable, however, that the secular press points out the startling increase in disasters. If this continues, what will happen to the insurance companies? If it continues, what will happen with the country's "balanced budget"? What will happen with the stock market?

We can but watch and pray. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. It is the time for diligence and faithfulness on the part of the church.

■ Development of the Computer

Revelation 13:15, "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

From the *Denver Post*:

Would you believe that fifty years ago this month (February), scientists in Philadelphia unveiled the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer, ENIAC? The first electronic computer weighed 30 tons and filled a room.

A few years later, experts were predicting that computers might someday weigh as little as 1.5 tons, and that dozens of them might be installed around the world.

Today, computers weigh far less than 1.5 tons. Tens of millions of them go into service each year, ranging from massively parallel computation engines that simulate weather patterns to humble little chips in wrist watches and dolls and automobile dashboards.

What about 50 years from now?

Even the experts know it is reckless to forecast computer technology more than five years out. Bill Gates once said that 640 kilobytes of RAM ought to be enough for anyone.

So — what once seemed impossible is now taking place. Within fifty years we have computers which are vastly superior to that original one, in schools, in the workplace, and in many homes. It would then seem very possible that Revelation 13 is near fulfillment as well. □

The Gifts Necessary for the Office of Elder

Of the several passages which speak to this subject, I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are the most comprehensive. These passages present the following qualifying gifts: blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to or lover of hospitality, apt to teach ("able to exhort and convince the gainsayers," Tit. 1:9), not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, patient, not a brawler ("not given to riot," Tit. 1:6), not covetous, rules his house well, not a novice, has a good report of them that are without, not soon angry, lover of good men, just, holy, temperate.

The first group of these is largely positive. The list is headed by "blameless." Literally this word means "not open to censure, irreproachable." In all of his life there must be nothing worthy of censure, not even a hint of anything. The elder must be a man of unquestionable morality and uprightness.

He must be "the husband of one wife." This does not mean that the elder must be a married man. Paul as an apostle was also an elder, and he was a bachelor. The point is that the elder must be beyond reproach in his marriage. He must be a good and faithful husband, married in the Lord. He must not be a fornicator

or an adulterer. Rather, he must be chaste.

In addition the elder must be "vigilant, sober, and of good behavior." Vigilant means the elder must be serious minded. He must as well be alert to the dangers which threaten God's people. The elder must be aware of the temptations God's people face from the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh. Sober means of sound mind. The elder must not be swayed by sudden impulses. He must be discreet. The elder must always be ready and willing to listen to the people of God in order to form sound judgments. He must be of good behavior. This refers to orderliness, a well ordered life. The elder must live with decorum and modesty. His life's affairs, his work, family, and finances must be in order.

Given to hospitality is another necessary gift for the elder. "A lover of strangers" is the literal meaning of this word. This does not mean merely that the elder's house must be open to all, or that he must be willing to provide food, shelter, and fellowship to the needy. It means this too, but there is much more. A hospitable elder is one whose heart is open to the needy, the poor, the lonely widow or widower, the little lambs of the flock, the young man or woman in the church who has no friends, the sick, the sorrowing, the anxious, despairing, and fearful. Hospitality refers to a willingness to spend oneself and be spent for the saints. It is to be truly sym-

pathetic, to "feel with" God's people in their needs after the example of our merciful High Priest, Jesus (Heb. 4:15-16).

The elder must be apt to teach. He must be skillful in teaching, qualified to teach. This certainly implies that the elder has a calling to teach. He is a "pastor-teacher," according to Ephesians 4:11 and I Thessalonians 5:12-15. The reference here is not merely to teaching catechism classes or leading Bible Study Societies, but in all his spiritual oversight of his fellow officebearers and the congregation the elder is busy teaching from the Word of God. Family visiting, sick visiting, comforting the sorrowing, counseling those with problems, ruling, governing the congregation, admonishing the wayward, exercising discipline — all of these functions involve teaching. God's Word must be brought to bear in all these circumstances and to all of these needs. The elder needs teaching skills. The elder must develop this gift of teaching first by prayerful study of the Word of God itself, by a study of the doctrines of Holy Scripture as set forth in the Reformed confessions, and by a study of good, sound books.

The second group of qualifications is largely negative. The elder must not be "given to wine." Literally the text reads, "not one who sits long at his wine." He must not be a drunkard, one addicted to alcohol. Scripture does not forbid the moderate use of alcohol. Jesus made and drank wine. Paul in this

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same letter tells Timothy to "use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23). But drunkenness is everywhere condemned by Scripture. Certainly one who is enslaved by this sin is not fit for the office of elder.

The elder must be "no striker." A striker is a bruiser, always ready with a blow, contentious, pugnacious, or quarrelsome. Closely related to this is the "brawler" mentioned in the same verse. This latter was added no doubt for emphasis. It refers to a hardheadedness, unreasonableness, one who is always fighting. We ought to note that most brawling in the church is done with words. Samuel Miller comments in this connection, "... of all characters in a congregation, an indiscreet, meddling, garrulous, gossiping, tattling Elder, is one of the most pestiferous."¹ Such men do not seek the peace of Jerusalem, but in pride they seek themselves. The result is that the congregation is torn by schism and strife, confusion, and all kinds of evil. God's people cannot grow in the knowledge of the truth and in the grace of the Lord Jesus in such an environment. Strikers and brawlers scatter the sheep and are not fit to rule and care for God's precious flock.

The elder must also be patient. Here is the sharp contrast. The elder must be no striker or brawler, but he must be patient. The word itself means "seemly, suitable, equitable, fair, mild, gentle." This kind of man is fair minded, willing to listen to all sides of a dispute. When convinced by the Word of God he stands without compromise, but when convinced by the Word that his position is in error, he readily admits he is wrong. Gently and with the longsuffering of Christ he leads and guides the sheep. Patiently he bears with the weak.

Neither must an elder be covetous, i.e., a lover of money. The love of money is the root of all evil.² Riches and money in themselves are not sinful. To love money and to

seek wealth is indeed very sinful. We are called to be good stewards of the Lord's gifts. Our earthly goods must be used for God's Kingdom. Certainly a covetous lover of money is unfit to oversee God's church.

Verses 4-7 of I Timothy 2 list the last three qualifications. An elder must rule well his own house. He must be not a tyrant, but a faithful husband and father. He must be one who has his children in subjection with all gravity. An elder must not have unruly, disobedient children. The reason for this is that if one does not know how to rule his own house, he cannot take care of the church.

The elder must not be a novice. A novice is one newly planted in the faith, a recent convert. These are often full of zeal initially, but they have not yet been tested, proved in the battle of faith. They need experience. The danger of electing a novice is that he will become proud and fall into the condemnation of the devil. This is no doubt why Paul and Barnabas

waited one year before ordaining elders in the churches established on their first missionary journey.³ Some churches have a rule that new converts or people coming from other denominations must attend services and participate in the life of the church for one year before becoming members.

Finally, the elder must have a good report from those who are outside of the church. "Good report" means a good testimony. An elder must not have a bad reputation in the work place or community. He must be known as a sincere, honest, and irreproachable Christian. If he does not have this testimony he falls into reproach and the snare (trap) of the devil. And this brings shame to the name of Christ and His body, the church. □

¹ Samuel Miller, *The Ruling Elder*, p. 254.

² I Timothy 6:6-19.

³ Acts 14:21-23 and I Timothy 5:22.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

Life is worth living,
If lived to Him
Who paid my penalty.

All is worth giving,
If given for Him
Who gave Himself for me.

Life's not worth living
If lived for self,
'Tis hollow mockery.

'Tis not worth living,
'Tis wasted time,
And ends in misery.

Life is worth living
If but for this,
To praise Him for His grace.

And then the giving
Of His blest Word,
That some may seek His face.

There's no real living
Apart from Him
Who gave Himself for us.

The joy of giving
Is known to those
Who bow at Jesus' cross.

—H. McD.

from the April, 1926
Standard Bearer

William Ames: Puritan in the Netherlands

Introduction

Almost from the beginning of the history of the Reformation in the Netherlands a Puritan strain could be found in the Dutch Reformed Churches. This Puritan influence was to continue for many years and it made an indelible mark on Dutch thought. Some even speak of "Dutch Puritanism."

The reason why a Puritan influence could be found among the Dutch was the close contact, throughout the centuries, between the Dutch and the English. The English came to the help of the Dutch in the War for Dutch Independence under William the Silent. The English sent representatives to the Synod of Dort (although it is a matter of debate whether they were of any assistance in the battle against Arminianism). During the time of Spanish persecution in the Netherlands, many fled to England and found refuge there; and during the efforts of the Stuart kings in England to impose prelacy on all the churches, many refugees found a haven in the Netherlands. One need only think of the Pilgrims who, after fleeing England, lived for a time in and near Leyden before sailing for America. English scholars were recognized for their learning and were invited to Dutch universities to teach, and Dutch scholars found positions in English universities.

Dutch ministers preached in English churches and English preachers found many years of enjoyable labor in Dutch churches. The contacts were of many kinds, very close, and frequent.

All this brought into the Netherlands a Dutch Puritanism which remains in the Dutch churches today.

William Ames was one of the Dutch Puritans.

Life in England

Almost nothing is known of the early life of William Ames; not any of the details of his early life have come down to us. He was born in 1576 in Ipswich, Suffolk, Co. Norfolk. This means that he was born in a town a short distance north of London near the Sea. And he was born when Queen Elizabeth sat on the throne of England as the last of the Tudors. She had already seen to it that Parliament passed the Act of Conformity, which required that all churches follow the pattern of the Church of England both in worship and church government.

These circumstances of Ames' birth are so important that his entire life was controlled by them. And so we shall have to say a few things about the struggle which went on in England as a result of Elizabeth's rule.

The Church of England was, at least officially, quite Calvinistic, as expressed in the 39 Articles of the Church of England — the official creed of the church. In government, the church was strictly hierarchical

and had the same structure of archbishops, bishops, and priests (along with a multitude of other offices) as Rome had — except for cardinals and a pope. In worship most of the trappings, ceremonies, robes, liturgies, and symbols which were a part of Romish worship could be found in the Anglican church as well — and can still be found there today.

Within the Anglican Church was a large group of clergy and people who wanted more complete reformation, not only in doctrine, but also in church polity and worship. They made every effort to change the Anglican Church but were blocked in their efforts by Elizabeth, who insisted on conformity throughout her realm. Most clergy when forced to sign the Act of Conformity, did so. Some did not. They became known as Puritans because they wanted to purify the church beyond what had so far been accomplished. They were also known as Non-conformists, a name which stuck for many years.

For the most part the Non-conformists, though continuing to promote their non-conformity and though refusing to sign any Acts of Conformity, stayed in the church. Where else could they go? It was not until the Great Ejection that non-conformists were expelled from the Anglican Church and Non-conformist Churches sprang up throughout England.

William Ames was a Puritan in the Anglican Church, outspoken and vocal, and one who refused to bow before the dictates of Elizabeth. Nor

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could Archbishop Bancroft's most strenuous opposition to non-conformity move him. I suppose that if Ames had been content to moderate his protests and keep his objections to himself he would have survived within the Anglican Church and would have been able to keep his post in Cambridge. But that was not in his nature. He believed deeply that prelacy, hierarchy, and all the remnants of Rome that remained in the Anglican Church dishonored God and made the church a wicked institution. His deep commitment to these principles came to expression in his strong opposition to the established church's practices and made him a passionate defender of Puritan goals.

Ames received the bulk of his education at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he studied under the famous Puritan supralapsarian William Perkins. Being an ardent Puritan he could hope for no advancement within Anglican circles. Hence, when an opportunity to become chaplain of Cambridge University opened up, he took it.

His stay in Cambridge did not last long. The very nature of an established State Church was conducive in England to careless and profane living. The students in Cambridge were no exceptions. And so, when Ames preached a sermon against various evil practices among the students, such as card-playing and gambling, his enemies took the opportunity to work for his censure. Hating him for his non-conformity, they used Ames' sermon as an excuse to get rid of him.

Ames quite clearly saw that he would be expelled from the University if he fought his case; and so he left the university and made his way to the Netherlands. After a brief stay in Leyden, he went to the Hague.

An interesting anecdote describing an event which took place prior to Ames' departure from the university shows how clearly the issue was really one of non-conformity. While the storm over his sermon

was still raging, Ames was called before Dr. Carey, the master of the college, and told he should wear a surplice, which was a robe worn by clerics to add to the dignity of their office. The Puritans had rejected the use of such "papal" garments, but the Anglicans were then and are now favorable to such clothing. Dr. Carey insisted that Scripture required him to wear it, and when Ames, rather astonished, asked for the text where such a command was found, Carey quoted the passage: "Put on the armour of light," which, Carey insisted, referred to a white surplice. Ames' refusal to be swayed by such exegesis infuriated the master.

Ames' Labors in the Netherlands

It was in the Hague that Ames found employment as chaplain to Sir Horace Vere, the commander of the English troops in the Netherlands, and at the same time served as minister of the English church in the Hague.

But the long arm of Ames' enemies in England reached across the channel. The archbishop of Canterbury wrote a letter to Sir Ralph Winwood, the English ambassador to Netherlands, to see to it that Ames was removed from his position. His letter ended with these words: "I wish the removing of him to be as *privately* and as *cleanly carried* as the matter will permit. We are also acquainted what *English preachers* are entertained in Zeeland, whereunto in convenient time we hope to give a redress."

But his persecutors could not finally keep him from finding employment in the land where he had chosen to make his home — although they tried desperately. Because of his vast learning and great ability Ames was called to be divinity professor at Franeker in Friesland in 1622. Twelve years he served in this prestigious school, and his fame spread throughout all Europe. Students came from remote parts of the continent to study under him, and the school itself, in recognition

of his contributions to the university, made him rector in 1626. During this time he had the privilege and pleasure of serving with Maccovius, of whom we spoke in our last article.

Sadly, though, his abilities were not recognized by his countrymen, and the adage mentioned even in Scripture that a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, was true of Ames.

During the twelve years of his stay in Franeker, Ames served the Dutch Reformed Churches well. He did battle against the high church prelates in England and continued to write against their superstitious ceremonies and Romish practices, while defending vigorously the regulative principle of worship. Richard Baxter, famous for his still popular book, *The Reformed Pastor*, left Anglicanism to join the Non-conformist movement because of the writings of William Ames.

Ames also wrote extensively against Roman Catholic error and took on the great Bellarmine, perhaps the greatest of all Roman Catholic theologians since the time of the Reformation.

But his chief enemies were always the Arminians, whose theology he detested as rationalistic and humanistic — which it truly is. Not only were they subjected to his scathing attacks in print, but Ames was chosen to attend the Synod of Dort, where he participated in their trial and condemnation. He was, in fact, paid four florins a day to attend the Synod, and he served with distinction as assistant and private secretary to the president, the fiery Johannes Bogerman. Ames' work was chiefly behind the scenes.

But William Ames always loved above all the pastoral ministry and wanted to return to it. Added to this was a severe case of asthma, which made it difficult for him to breathe in the winter months. He was in fact so stricken that he feared every winter would be his last in the cold and damp northern provinces.

Thinking perhaps that the southern part of the Netherlands would be better for his health, Ames took a call to the church in Rotterdam, where he served the Lord for a brief time. But the climate here did not make much difference in his asthma, and Ames made plans to move to America to settle among the Dutch churches in New York or New Jersey. He died, however, before he could make the move, and finished his work on earth on November 14, 1633 at the age of 57.

His wife and family did move to the new world after Ames' death and took his extremely valuable library with them. This library was an extraordinarily valuable legacy in America, for he had one of the finest libraries in the country, and America, at this time in her history, was almost entirely without books.

Ames' son William returned from America to England and was vocal in the Non-conformist movement in England until he, along with so many others, was ejected from

the Anglican Church and suffered the awful persecution which was the lot of the ejected ministers.

Although Ames was by no means well known, the Dutch Reformed Churches owe him a great debt for his unwavering and uncompromising stand against Arminianism; and the Puritanism for which he fought in England was to be his legacy in the Netherlands as it lived on in various branches of the Reformed churches. □

Contending for the Faith

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

To Keep the Record Straight (1)

We recently received a copy of an article (which has by this time probably appeared in print) written by Dr. J. DeJong, editor of the *Clarion* magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Canadian wing of the Liberated Churches. I was happy to receive it; for, if we are to gain a full understanding of this important chapter of our history, it is important that we understand also how those on the Liberated side of these issues perceive the matters with which we have been concerned. His article read as follows:

Just for the record

Readers of *Clarion* will recall that on more than one occasion various writers, including myself, have interacted with church leaders in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Repeated attempts to promote a meaningful discussion have not had promising results. Except for the occasional letter to the editor, there

is little room for Canadian Reformed writers to defend their position in the *Standard Bearer*, the official publication of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

I would not willingly return to these points were it not for another series of remarkable allegations published recently in *Christian Renewal* by Rev. B. Woudenberg.¹ Somehow the issue of the PRC's relationship to those whom they call "the Liberated" just does not want to go away. In fact, Rev. Woudenberg had a lengthy series of articles dealing with the 'Liberated' in the *Standard Bearer* in which many issues previously discussed in the pages of *Clarion* were again brought forward.² His remarks in *Christian Renewal* only summarize what he had said earlier in these articles.

Some aspects of Rev. Woudenberg's comments in *Christian Renewal* merit a response. I prefer to focus this time not primarily on doctrinal questions but questions of church history. If there is to be any progress in ecumenical discussions, we must at least have a proper view of what actually happened. My re-

marks should be seen in the light of seeking to promote understanding and unity in the relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches. In many ways we share a common history and common concerns! We can appreciate their warnings against the theory of common grace, and against the dangers of Arminianism! But to understand each other's position, we need to cover a good deal of ground, also in the exact sequence of events surrounding the early immigration.

The immigration situation

In his response to Rev. J. Tuininga of Lethbridge, Rev. Woudenberg reviews the early history of the immigration in Canada, and the effects this had on the Prot-

¹ This concerns a response of Rev. Woudenberg to Rev. Jelle Tuininga of Lethbridge, see *Christian Renewal* October 13, 1995, p. 3 (Reader's Forum). The same article appeared in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Nov. 15, 1995), 89-91

² I refer to the series of articles "Taking Heed to Doctrine" as published intermittently in the *Standard Bearer* from May, 1992

Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

estant Reformed Churches. He says that the Protestant Reformed Churches first welcomed the new immigrants with open arms. While Rev. H. Hoeksema had said that he did not agree with Schilder's concept of the covenant, he was willing to give Schilder and the Liberated a fair hearing. New immigrants coming from the Liberated churches in Holland were assured that they were welcome in the PRC. As Woudenberg says, "... although we had no hesitancy about receiving their members, we were careful to inform them that, while they were free to believe about the covenant what they would, they could expect a different view to be preached from our pulpits."³

So far there is little disagreement about the course of events. There is no doubt that the early 'Liberated' immigrants had a view of the covenant which differed from the one promoted by the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff. But the PRC had other ministers with different views, and there was sufficient room for various views on the covenant. The only requirement was that all be bound to God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.

The letter of Prof. Holwerda

All this changed, according to Rev. Woudenberg, when a letter was written by Prof. B. Holwerda to one of the new immigrants concerning the course of action they ought to follow. As Woudenberg puts it: "But then it was discovered that Prof. Holwerda was privately advising those same immigrants ('Liberated', JD) to join the Protestant Reformed, but to ignore Hoeksema's covenant view and work their own into our churches — and even more, that certain of our ministers had privately expressed their approval of this. That, and not Schilder's ignorance of our differences was what brought about the breakdown of relationships between us and the Liberated, as well as causing a major disruption in our own denomination."⁴

I will bypass the remarks made about Prof. K. Schilder. Earlier in his article Woudenberg says that Schilder was not inclined to give definite answers on the differences between himself and Hoeksema. I would only ask where this information comes from; articles in *De Reformatie* appear to tell a different story. Yet my real concern is the letter of Holwerda. For in Woudenberg's view, this letter was the occasion for the rift between "Liberated" immigrants and the Protestant Reformed Churches. Is this true?

A look at the letter

Perhaps it should be noted first of all that Prof. Holwerda's letter was published without his consent, and in complete disregard of its stated intent. In this letter, written to brother J. Koster of Chatham, Prof. Holwerda only states that, in accordance with what he had learned from the PRC ministers Kok and DeJong, there was no binding to the opinions of the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff.⁵ In the letter Holwerda expresses his disagreements with the hesitancy of the Synod of Amersfoort 1948 to enter into correspondence with the Protestant Reformed Churches, and he also states, "The Protestant Reformed Church is the true church". He then expresses the hope that Liberated immigrants, having joined the PRC, might assist in a "deepening of insight." He quotes Rev. Kok who had said, "We can learn from each other." And Holwerda expresses the wish that the doctrinal riches of the Netherlands might be passed on to the Protestant Reformed Churches.

It is clear from the letter itself that there is no substance to the rather coloured allegations of Rev. Woudenberg. For he reads Prof. Holwerda's letter as a distinct plan of attack against the Protestant Reformed Churches, a pre-arranged strategy of infiltration.⁶ But that is entirely misconstrued, for Holwerda promoted mutual upbuilding and

mutual correction. He wanted to give equal room to both views, and so let matters resolve themselves through process of learning, study, debate and interaction. If necessary, this would lead to a new ecclesiastical consensus through discussion at the various ecclesiastical assemblies — although it should be noted that Holwerda himself does not mention this possibility. Holwerda simply followed the norms of Scripture regarding the gathering of the church as applied to the concrete situation facing the immigrants.

The later history

Was this letter the occasion for the rift? That appears to me as an inaccurate rendition of the facts. For this advice of Holwerda was followed by the early immigrants both in the Hamilton and in the Chatham area. Chatham was first instituted as a Protestant Reformed Church, and Hamilton also opened its pulpit to ministers from the Protestant Reformed Church. Much appreciation was expressed for PRC workers such as Rev. Cammenga and Rev. Petter. Thus, while the immigrants did not want to adopt the PRC view of the covenant they remained open to fellowship with these churches, and willingly accepted PRC ministers.

How did the rift come? It came through the adoption of the infa-

³. *Christian Renewal*, October 23, 1995, page 3.

⁴. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵. The text of the original letter can be found in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 25, #20, (Aug 1, 1949), p. 469. Rev. Woudenberg gives a (rather poor) translation of the same in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 68, #15, (May 1, 1992), 355-356.

⁶. This is clear from what he wrote in 1992: "...Prof. Holwerda, rather than contacting our churches openly and discussing our differences, was secretly instructing the immigrants to infiltrate our churches and take them over for their view." The *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 68, No. 15 (May 1, 1992), 356. Nothing of this can be found in Holwerda's letter.

mous Declaration of Principles by the PRC Synod of 1951. Before that time, that is, for two years (!) after the letter of Prof. Holwerda, there was ongoing fellowship with the PRC. Only when the Synod adopted the Declaration as a binding statement for the institution of new churches, only then did the breach come. At this point Chatham could no longer remain in the fellowship of PRC churches. The rift came not from a personal letter, but from the very public Declaration of Principles.⁷

If the thesis of Rev. Woudenberg was correct, there would not have been a two-year interval before the schism with the Protestant Reformed Churches actually took place. If the personal and private letter of Prof. Holwerda had the kind of effects as suggested by Rev. Van Woudenberg the rift would have taken place immediately, or at least shortly after the letter itself was written. Not only do we have the clear mark of the two-year interval, we also have the official declaration of the consistory of Chatham confirming the exact reasons for their secession.

I write these lines not to needlessly provoke conflicts or to open old wounds. My only point is: should we not first be sure of the

facts? We can always debate the issues, but the sequence of events should not be hopelessly skewed and misrepresented in favour of vindicating our theological perspectives on the covenant. How can we ever make progress in Reformed ecumenicity if we do not accurately recount the past?

Even a neutral reader can see that the Hoeksema-Ophoff maneuvers in 1949 and 1950 were an overblown and highly charged reactionary attempt to shore up Hoeksema's view of the covenant. Had the brothers been more cautious and less stringent in their approach, they would not have lost so many people to the CRC and the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Prof. K. Schilder repeatedly said to Rev. Hoeksema: we have no special view of the covenant. Indeed, there were many different views on the covenant going right back to the early days of the Secession. It is true that the Liberation produced a crystallization of Reformed understanding regarding the covenant. But no one view was ever adopted as confessionally binding. In fact "Liberated" means that binding to one particular view on the covenant was explicitly rejected.

Since we have so much in common, we can only strive to keep

channels of discussion open, and hope and pray that through continued study, prayer and dialogue, we may witness the growing unity of those who according to the norms of the word belong together in the Lord.

J. DeJong

This then constitutes the article of Dr. DeJong. As you may note, he focuses most of his attention on the letter of Prof. Holwerda, which from a historical point of view is certainly appropriate. In fact, how one understands this difficult but important juncture in our history will be reflected in how one interprets the various nuances found in that letter. In order to try to make our viewpoint clear, we will deal with that letter in terms of the history that led up to it in our next articles. □

⁷ The decision of the consistory of Chatham is found in *De Reformatie* Vol. 27, No. 9 (December 1, 1951), 79. The decision and further elucidation is signed by the brothers J. Koster, president, and J. Van Dieren, clerk. For more on the content of the Declaration of Principles and the decision of the consistory of Chatham, see W.W.J. VanOene, *Inheritance Preserved. The Canadian Reformed Churches in Historical Perspective* (Premier, Winnipeg, 1975), 64-67.

In His Fear

Rev. Arie denHartog

The Calling of the Young Women to Marry and to Bear Children (2)

Rev. denHartog is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

We return in this article to the three exhortations that Paul, the inspired apostle of the Lord, gives to young women in the church in I Timothy 5:14. He exhorts them to: 1) Marry in the Lord. 2) Bear cov-

enant children. 3) Guide the house. We saw in our last article how these three are related.

Young women in the church must realize what a tremendous calling it is to bear covenant chil-

dren. God has given you this calling in His grand and wonderful covenant purpose. It is His purpose to gather His church from the beginning to the end of the world from the generations of believers.

We conceive and bring forth our children in sin. From birth they are just as wicked and depraved and damn-worthy as we are. Not one of them could possibly by his physical birth have any claim to the kingdom of God. If it were not for the grace of God, we with our children would be condemned forever with the ungodly world. But God, by His sovereign grace, is pleased to save us and also those He has ordained among our children. He is sovereignly pleased to continue His covenant with them from generation to generation.

In every age new lines of the covenant are begun. By the power of the preaching of the gospel to the nations, God's elect are brought unto salvation and into His church. Sometimes whole families are saved at once, as we find to have been true several times in the book of Acts. The church of God is continued with these new generations and with those who have for many generations been members of God's covenant. What a wonder it is that many of us can trace God's covenant lines back for many generations. This is all because of the faithfulness and mercy of God and not because of our own efforts. It is not something inherited on account of our natural relationships to our parents and grandparents on the one side and to our children on the other. God saves each new generation by His amazing grace in Christ Jesus and through repentance and faith in Him.

Among the greatest of God's wonders is that He uses us, and particularly you godly young women, to bring forth the children of the covenant. Stop and think of the astounding wonder of this! What could be more wonderful than that our children will some day be among the company of the re-

deemed eternally in heaven praising and glorifying God? What earthly achievement or career could possibly compare with this? The God-fearing woman properly desires to serve her Lord in this manner. She says with Mary, the mother of the Lord, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

The calling of the young woman in the church, however, does not end when she has given birth to covenant children. She must for the sake of these covenant children, and also for the continuation of God's purpose for her marriage, "guide her house." Covenant children must be nurtured, cared for, protected, trained, and disciplined in the covenant home. God ordained it that way. The godly woman has a very great role in this also. Except for those children whom the Lord is pleased to take out of this life in infancy, God will have His covenant children trained from childhood on in the way of the Lord. For this He is pleased to use God-fearing women. This role for the godly woman requires great responsibility, years of faithful labors, and tremendous self-sacrifice. But this is pleasing unto the Lord and will be greatly rewarded.

No other institution in the world, only the covenant home, can nurture covenant children. Not even the church without the home can really do that. Certainly not an ungodly "day-care institution." How can any thinking, godly woman imagine such a thing? For this reason God has called you young women to "guide your house." Mrs. Hillary Clinton is advocating in her newly publicized book that society in general must nurture children. This is all terribly hypocritical when she is a leading advocate of feminist philosophy that promotes the great evil of abortion and does everything in its power to "liberate" the woman from the home and to demean the role of the women in the home. We

can be absolutely sure that all the urging for a supposed societal role in caring for children is going to fall flat in helping to improve the way America raises its youth, as long as women everywhere are being encouraged to forsake their God-ordained responsibility to "guide their house."

The word that is translated in the KJV as "guide the house" is a compound word. The compound word is a combination of a word that means house and another that is, literally, "despot." The godly young woman is to be a "despot" in her home. That of course does not mean that she is to be a cruel, unloving tyrant in her home. Neither does it mean that the young woman is to usurp the authority of her husband in marriage and in the home. Such an interpretation would contradict other Scriptures. Rather the wife and mother is a "despot" in her home when she takes charge in the covenant home. She must manage her home. She must bear

the responsibility that God has given her. She must manage her home well, to be "on top of things," have things under control for the purpose of raising her children in the fear of the Lord. This requires her constant presence in the home. This requires hard and diligent work on her part. This requires great talents and great skill and great wisdom on her part. It requires wholehearted and complete devotion. There are in fact hardly any God-given talents that cannot be employed for this purpose to the fullest extent. There is hardly any earthly occupation that requires more self-sacrifice than the role of being a godly mother. Loving self-sacrifice is one of the most glorious of all Christian virtues.

Children need a lot of love and care and discipline, especially in their early lives. They are very impressionable. They are greatly influenced by what goes on in the home, or, in some instances, what

There is hardly any earthly occupation that requires more self-sacrifice than the role of being a godly mother.

does not go on in the home. They need to be molded and directed in their young lives. The world is full of great evils that have tremendous potential to corrupt our children and to harden the sinful nature that they were born with. The world can easily lead our children totally astray, through books they read and television they watch and all the other many influences of the world that come into their lives almost from birth on. The devil wants our children, especially those born of covenant parents. If he can get them already when they are young, they will follow him all their life. The wicked world wants to make its own impact on our children, to mold them according to its own evil and godless philosophy. The godly woman is called to do all in her power to prevent this from happening.

Chiefly, covenant children need to be nurtured and instructed in the great principles of the Word of God and the fear of His name. They must from childhood be told the blessed truths of the gospel. It takes a lot of time and effort and sacrifice to do this. There is no such thing as quality time versus quantity time in this matter. It takes a lot of quality time and effort. The godly mother in her God-ordained sphere in the home must diligently and faithfully teach her children the truths of God's Word, as these little children eat from her hands and sit on her knees. Mother must each day give her children a balanced measure of love, care, and compassion, with firm and consistent discipline. A woman who is totally exhausted by a career outside of the home is hardly fit to do this. She does not have the emotional and psychological energy that is needed for this role.

The godly woman in the covenant home must be a daily example before her growing, impressionable

children. She must be a role model for them. She must be a model of self-sacrifice and tender and compassionate Christian love. Children, especially covenant children who have the Spirit of God in their hearts, will notice this. They will be greatly influenced by this. They will by the grace of God in their hearts follow this role model. This will be to the credit of their godly mothers, and to the rightful and godly praise of these great women in the church.

Paul concludes his admonition to the godly young woman by telling her that she must be careful that the adversary does not speak reproachfully of her. The positive implication of that statement is of course that the great concern of the God-fearing woman must be that she glorifies God. To do that she must avoid as much as possible a life-style that will bring reproach to the name of God. The world follows the devil. It praises its own. It

The godly woman in the covenant home must be a daily example before her growing, impressionable children.

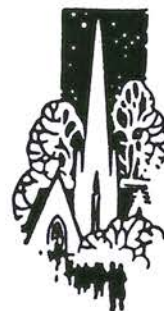
glamorizes the most wicked women of the world. The heroines of the world are the Marilyn Monroes, the Elizabeth Taylors, the Murphy Browns, and all the other wicked, vain, and adulterous movie stars that are so famous in the media. The wicked world knows very well that God's Word demands a radically different life on the part of those who profess the Christian faith. Therefore when those who profess the Christian faith live just like the rest of the world, the adversary will speak reproachfully.

The adversary loves nothing more than ridiculing God's people. By doing this the devil blasphemes God and those who confess to be His children. The God-fearing woman strives by God's grace as much as possible to avoid this, because she loves God and seeks in all things the glory of His name. Certainly the world, especially today, mocks the godly woman in the role that God has given her. But

when this woman faithfully serves God, all that mockery will be put to silence, because God will exalt her.

Paul laments that already in his day many had turned aside unto the devil. Many more today in the sphere of the church who profess to be Christians have "turned aside unto the devil." They have done this because they have forsaken their responsibility in the home in order to go out into the world.

The role of the God-fearing young woman in the home is an honorable role. It is one of greatest significance. It is one that when faithfully carried out will bring the greatest reward from the Lord. Proverbs 31 describes the virtuous woman. She is very obviously the woman who "guides her house" well for the sake of her husband and family. She is no modern-day, glamorous career-woman great in the world of the ungodly. She is a woman who fears God. The inspired writer of Proverbs says: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." The godly woman who has been a guide of her house will be praised. She will not in our modern world have the praise of men. But who cares about that anyway? All such worldly praise is vain. The godly woman who has been faithful to serve in her God-ordained sphere in the home shall finally be praised by God. And an added blessing of no small account which God gives as her reward already in this life is that her children shall rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he shall praise her. □



Chapter 6

The Fall of Our First Parents

The Tempter (1)

We now turn to Scripture's record concerning the temptation and fall of our first parents in Paradise the First, and in particular to the record of Scripture concerning the tempter, the agent in that temptation and fall. He is described in the opening words of Genesis 3: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

The first fact which must be emphasized in this connection is that the tempter was a *real serpent*.

There are many modern theologians and teachers who in one devious manner or another want to deny this and want to maintain that this narrative of the Fall is a bit of mythology. They point to what they claim is the obvious impossibility of a narrative like this, and they go on to assert that it does not really matter whether you believe in those wonderful stories literally. The important thing is that you retain the kernel of truth that is conveyed by the stories. What is that so-called kernel of truth? This, that *somehow* man was tempted to sin.

But we call your attention to this, that the fact of sin is "somehow" not a bit of mythology, but a *terrible and real fact*. That *fact* of sin certainly took place. It certainly has its origin in *fact*, not in a bit of my-

thology. It consisted in some *deed*; it involved an actual *temptation*. If this is not true, then there is no such thing as the *fact* of sin. If it is true, then why is it not literally as Scripture informs us?

Moreover, we call attention to the fact that there is absolutely nothing in the simple and matter-of-fact narrative which leaves the impression that Scripture intends to relate myths or to put forth parables or allegories. The Bible indeed uses parables and allegories, and even fables, but when it does so, it leaves no doubt about the fact that it is doing so. Here in Genesis there is not even so much as a hint of this. There is only one possibility open, and that is to accept what is written here literally.

Moreover, it must be emphasized that this is a very serious thing, not a matter of theological hair-splitting and something about which the church ought not to concern itself. We must not be deceived about this in this age of alleged tolerance. The truth comes to the parting of the ways with the lie at this point. Those who deny the literal character of the narrative and the factualness of what is related are denying the reality of the fall into sin. They are denying sin. When you deny sin, you must needs deny salvation also: for there is no room for salvation where there is no sin.

In addition, they are doing the very thing that the devil did according to this narrative. God had said, "Thou shalt surely die." The devil said, "Ye shall not surely die," contradicting God. Thus it is with the question under consideration. God

says — for the Bible is the Word of God — that the serpent was the tempter, and that the serpent spoke to Eve. Men say, "No, this is myth; there was no serpent, and there was no speech of the serpent," contradicting God. This is the seriousness of the matter. A theory like this is the lie of the devil over against the truth of God.

There are others who attempt to explain that the name "serpent" here is a mere symbolical name for the devil. Certainly, they say, the "serpent" spoke, but, they say, all the rest of Scripture plainly tells us that the serpent is the devil.

Now it is certainly true that the Bible elsewhere alludes to the serpent and his poison figuratively, as symbolizing the power of evil and the influence of the devil. Thus, you read in Psalm 140:3, a passage which is quoted in Romans 3:13, where the apostle is describing the depravity of the natural man: "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips." The Lord Jesus addresses the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees in the following language, according to Matthew 23:33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" But references of this kind do not prove the point. For, in the first place, these very figurative references are only possible because of the fact that the serpent, the real serpent, was the instrument of the devil in the first temptation. In the second place, it is obvious from the text in Genesis that this serpent was not a symbolical serpent. According to verse 1, he is classed with the beasts

The late Homer Hoeksema was professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

of the field, "He was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." According to the curse pronounced upon him in verse 14, this serpent is the same creature that we now know as going on his belly in the dust of the ground.

Hence, there can be no question about it, that the Word of God here is speaking of a real serpent.

However, we must remember that it was the serpent not as we know the snake today. We know him as he has been humiliated and cursed because of his speaking against God and against man, as he is described in 3:14: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

This does not mean that we are able to determine in detail the former appearance of this creature. Nor is this necessary. There may, in fact, be many questions which we cannot answer, but also which we need not answer, except for curiosity's sake.

On the other hand, we may well take note of some significant points in the light of Scripture.

1) The Bible tells us that the serpent was the most subtle of the animals. We must not understand the term "subtle" in the evil sense, but in the favorable sense. This points to the fact that the serpent was endowed originally with a high degree of animal intelligence. Although we can hardly imagine this today, after the radical change which was wrought through the curse, it is not impossible that originally the serpent was closest to man among the animals and somehow represented the animal world with man.

2) It is evident that the serpent possessed some form of speech. If you ask whether the serpent had the power of human language, we would have to answer that this is obviously limited to human beings.

If you ask whether the serpent spoke, whether he was able to communicate with man, the answer must needs be: yes, for the Bible tells us this. If you then ask whether this is not impossible, then the counter-question is in order: why should it be impossible, when God Himself tells us that he spoke to Eve? Is the fact that the serpent does not now so speak a reason why he should not have had some power to communicate with man originally, or a reason why the devil could not have used that power for his end? For while we must remember that the devil was the moral, rational subject speaking through the serpent in Paradise, yet we must also remember that the devil could not give to the serpent the power of speech. The devil is not God! Besides, the narrative certainly does not leave the impression that Eve was taken by surprise, that she considered it extraordinary that the serpent spoke to her. At least, the narrative tells us very matter-of-factly that Eve replied to him.

3) As we already pointed out, later in the chapter we learn that originally the serpent did not belong to the "creeping things," but that the curse pronounced upon him reversed his status from the most subtle among the beasts to that of the lowliest. Again, if you inquire whether originally the serpent had wings or legs, there is no answer. But surely, Scripture leaves the impression that the serpent was originally among the higher animals, those which would be classed as most nearly akin to man, and that he was originally noble in form and stature, not lowly and crawling on his belly in the dust of the ground.

All this brings us to the question: why did the devil employ the serpent in the temptation of our first parents?

In answer to this question, we should note, in the first place, that the devil had need of some external form and some external instrument in order to approach Adam and Eve with his temptation. With sinful

man this is different. The devil has access to our hearts and minds. He has an ally in man's sinful nature. This is also true of the Christian in this life, even though he is regenerated and is principally a new man. The foe is within the gate, in the Christian's flesh, his old nature. Because of this situation, the devil can tempt us from within. But that was not the case with Adam. Adam was perfect, even though he was fallible. He was filled with the knowledge of God and righteousness and holiness. There was no corruption and no inclination toward corruption in his nature. The avenues of his mind and heart were closed toward the devil. Hence, he could only be approached from without. For this, the devil, who is a spirit, had need of an outward form, of an instrument, an agency, from the realm of man's earthly sense-experience.

This meant, of course, that the devil was limited to some *created* form. The devil cannot create a form for himself; he is but a creature himself, and does not have the power to create. Certainly, God does not create special forms suitable for the devil's nature: for the devil is the enemy of God. Satan was, therefore, limited to some created form. Then he would naturally choose the animal. For this was the creature nearest to man. It was through this creature that he could most easily approach man and the subject of the forbidden tree. If then we remember that the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field, and that the serpent had the power of communication with man, and was perhaps of all the animals nearest to man originally, then we can somewhat understand that Satan saw in the serpent the instrument most fit to serve him in his wicked purpose. □



Sister-Church Activities

The Covenant and First Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, through their Evangelical Reformed Bible School, recently sponsored a new Bible study class. Rev. Lau Chin Kwee, pastor at Covenant, set the course direction for this three-month course. The course title was "Spiritual Gifts." It was designed to address spiritual gifts in the church, treating I Corinthians 12, and applying it to the unique situation faced by those two congregations in Singapore. The course was to include also some workshops for practical applications as well. This class was to meet every week at the First E.R.C. beginning February 6 and running through April 30.

Mission Activities

Our Home Missionary, Rev. T. Miersma, was in Florence, KY for three weeks in mid-February to investigate the possibility of a field in this area. The request to investigate this area came from the Council of the South Holland, IL PRC to the Mission Committee last fall. It was South Holland's belief that this area was worthy of being investigated and that they (South Holland) had gone as far as they could in this work. Rev. Miersma also planned to make a trip to Pittsburgh, PA during that three-week period to visit some families there who have expressed interest in the Reformed faith and our churches.

In the most recent issue of "The Closer Look," a monthly newsletter of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, Rev. B. Gritters, Hudsonville's pastor,

provided an interesting report of his and Mr. Tom Bodbyl's recently concluded visit with our missionary, Rev. R. Hanko, his family, and the Covenant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Gritters writes that the "CRF is eager to organize. And that was the work that Tom and he discussed with them throughout the stay there. They met with all the men of the Fellowship and tried to lay out the questions the Consistory of Hudsonville and the Mission Committee had asked to be discussed. Then, throughout the stay, they had dinner ('tea') with each family, family visitation with the family, and then lengthy discussion with the adult family members about organization. They also met with the whole group the Sunday evening before they left, summarized for them what they had found, and left them with their very favorable impressions of the group and our missionary's work.

"They also tried to meet with Rev. Hanko daily to discuss his work as missionary. They were very encouraged by the diligence he shows in his work. He spends day and night preparing for sermons and speeches, Bible studies and visits. He writes letters to people all over the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) answering questions that are raised from their bi-weekly Newsletter. Many of their visitors, as well as isolated groups of believers, have come to them through the Newsletter that he writes and mails out to over 500 addresses. The members of the CRF receive his ministry with great joy and enthusiasm. We are thankful that God gives them a faithful missionary and pastor."

Rev. Gritters concludes his report by writing, "Seek God's blessing on the CRF, which hopes to be-

come, God willing, the C PRC in Northern Ireland. May God grant them the desires of their heart."

Congregational Activities

The Reformed Fellowship of the South Holland, IL PRC invited all those in their congregation interested in hearing a lecture on the doctrine of the last things to join them on Sunday, February 25, in the assembly room at South Holland PR School, to hear Prof. D. Engelsma, of our seminary, speak on that topic. A coffee pot was also promised to be on.

Evangelism Activities

This past year the Evangelism Committee of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI has tried something a little different, in that they have advertised in the Traverse City paper, Cadillac paper, and Muskegon Chronicle, offering a one-year free subscription to the *Standard Bearer*. These three cities are all between one and two hours north of the Jenison area and represent smaller areas that may have been overlooked in the past. Faith has also been encouraged by the results, a total of seven families so far have requested this subscription.

The Evangelism Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC is experimenting with video taping their worship services for possible broadcasting at a later date.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Randolph, WI PRC again invited the young people of the South Holland, Peace, Bethel, and Pella congregations to a skiing outing at Cascade Mt. in Portage, WI. This was to be an overnight trip with a gym-night scheduled for Friday night, February 2, and skiing on Saturday, February 3. The expected 70 young

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

people were to stay with members of our Randolph church.

Minister Activities

Rev. W. Bruinsma declined the call he had been extended from our Doon, IA PRC.

Rev. M. Dick, of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, has accepted the call he had been extended from the Grace PRC in Standale, MI

Food for Thought

"The true Christian will maintain firmly that nothing can be right which God says is wrong"

— J.C. Ryle □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 23, 1996, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. HOWARD
KRAKER,**

celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents and for the covenant instruction we received from them. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them for many years to come.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- ☼ Dale and Ruth Kraker
Ryan, Lauren, and Lisa
- ☼ David and Sharon Kraker
- ☼ Dave and Denise Overweg
Danae

Allendale, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to Mr. Paul Griess in the death of his sister,

MRS. CONNIE TROUTMAN.

It is our prayer that God may graciously provide in the knowledge that He works all things together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Rev. G. VanBaren, Pres.
Robert Brands, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First PRC of Holland, Michigan expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to Cornelius and Frances Doezeema in the death of her brother,

JAMES DYKSTRA.

May they find comfort in God's Word, "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Alan Elzinga, Pres.
Shirley Casemier, Sec'y

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 1996 at the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by April 10, 1996.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, MI expresses their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lubbers in the death of his sister,

HERMINA JELSEMA.

"... whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

Alan Elzinga, President
Mrs. LaVern Casemier, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 5, 1996, we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

**VERNON and BARBARA
KLAMER.**

We thank our heavenly Father for the faithfulness He has shown us through their love, guidance, and prayers. May our gracious God continue to bless and preserve them. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ☼ Tom and Vicky VanOverloop
Brandon, Heidi, Heather,
Hillary
- ☼ Rev. Chuck and Verna Terpstra
Corey, Amber, Kimberly,
Thad, Kyle, Justin
- ☼ John G. and Valerie VanBaren
Jennifer, Jordan, Jill, Jared
- ☼ Bruce and JoAnn Klamer
Alyssa, Jaycen, Deanna,
Zachary
- ☼ David and Vonda Jessup
Nathan, Katelyn, Chad
- ☼ Steven and Brenda Langerak
Daniel, Tyler, Brianna
- ☼ Brent and Shelli Klamer
Jessica

Byron Center, Michigan

