



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The reality is this: if you do not confess and believe the election of God, which means that salvation was determined not by man's own will and choice but by the eternal selecting will of God from before the foundation of the world, you cannot address the church. It's who she is made up of, the elect of God.

See "The Enduring Apostolic Address" — page 339

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In This Issue ...

Exposition of Scripture?

There is Rev. Kenneth Koole's meditation on I Peter 1:1, 2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." "One's election is not unknown to the child of God." There is also Rev. Arie denHartog's explanation and application of Psalm 2, "He that Sitteth in the Heavens Shall Laugh." "It is consummate folly ... to make a tumult against the Holy One."

Instruction in the Reformed Christian life of church and believer?

Prof. Robert Decker points out the gifts that the church's elders must have. One gift is "boldness": "to hold fast the truth ... to insist on obedience ... to insist on good, expository preaching which presents the truth antithetically...." Rev. Ron VanOverloop confronts the husband with that responsibility that comprehends all the others: "love your wife." Rev. Steven Key calls the members of the churches to "try the spirits," an urgent matter since we are constantly "being confronted with 'new' teachings ... religious movements ... (and) ways of doing things."

Church history?

"Johannes Cocceius: Biblical Theologian" is the latest offering in Prof. Herman Hanko's series on "A Cloud of Witnesses." This theologian has been called "the father of covenant theology." The visit to the Protestant Reformed Churches by the Dutch theologian Dr. K. Schilder in the 1940s is the subject of Rev. Bernard Woudenberg in the article, "To Keep the Record Straight." This bears on "our relationship with the Liberated Churches." Rev. Gise VanBaren comments on contemporary history: the "many members who (are) leaving the Christian Reformed Church," and the legalizing of homosexual connection as "marriage" in the United States, with the approval of the false church. Benjamin Wigger contributes "News From Our Churches."

All, in this issue.

— DJE

The Enduring Apostolic Address

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered..., Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit...: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

I Peter 1:1, 2

Peter addresses the church universal in a most significant and timeless way. He greets them as "elect strangers." The true believer and faithful church always confess this to be their true identity. Those in the church today who have no desire for these names, especially the first, have divorced their identity from the name of Christ and the apostolic church.

The times in which the apostle wrote were strikingly similar to our own.

First, they were days of an astonishing deterioration in the whole moral fabric of Roman society. The pagan writers themselves decried the loss of all regard for virtue and honorable behavior. There was loose and insatiable appetite for entertainment. The coliseums were full. And the only thing that satisfied was violence and blood. In the theatres of that day, as in ours, that is what received two thumbs up.

Second, there was a growing

hatred for the true name of Christ Jesus, the Nazarene. Things were building towards those "fiery trials," a regular bloodbath for the early Christians. Peter writes to prepare the church for that day.

Today it might be argued that the name of Jesus is popular, never more so. But preach the Christ of Calvinism (and of Augustine and Paul); preach the predestinating God and a Christ who does not love every man, but who died for his own — and that spirit of tolerance changes markedly. Calvinism as Christianity? It is much out of favor in religious society today. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you..." (I Pet. 4:12).

Those who bear the reproach of Christ need much encouragement. To that end Peter writes. We need encouragement to live in such a way that it is apparent where our loyalty lies, regardless of the animosity and threats. We are to be Christians, and not in name only.

The apostle greets the church and blesses them. "Grace ... be multiplied unto you..."

What a wonderful thing grace is. Not only for what it forgives, great sins, but for what it makes of a man!

I give you exhibit A — Peter an apostle. *Petros!* What a name,

the Rock! — the name Christ gave to him. The name of a man who made a rock-solid confession and was bold in the faith.

But that is not who Peter was in himself. He had been Simon, Simon the boaster, with as much natural courage as you could find in any man. Witness Gethsemane's garden and who it was who had swept out a sword and gone head-hunting. But when Christ disarmed him it was another matter.

It was Simon who on the night of Christ's betrayal had, in the courtyard, denied his Lord with vigorous swearing. Spiritual courage forsook him. He was embarrassed at being identified with the Galilean. Bearing Christ's reproach had been beyond him.

It is now this Simon Peter who writes, knowing full well the difficulty of discipleship and of confessing the Christ in a godless world, facing its animosity. He knew what it meant to cave in. He sympathized.

Still, this Simon Peter was, in the end, willing to bear the reproach of Christ, even to martyrdom if need be. He became rock-solid in his confession and in courage.

Peter is himself therefore a living testimony of the power of grace and what it can make of a

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man. Grace has a way of making boasters meek, to the astonishment of all, and making of the most timid souls men and women of remarkable conviction and strength. Satan himself finally asks, "What possesses these people!"; to which there is but one answer, "Christ does. They are Spirit possessed." Grace puts brute strength to shame time and again. It conquers.

Now we must notice to whom Peter addresses this epistle, namely, the *elect* sojourners or strangers. In the Greek, the word "elect" is first. In the interests of smoothness of translation the King James has had to sacrifice something of the power of the original. That the word "elect" is first is not without significance.

Striking, is it not, that election is the first thing the Spirit puts into Peter's mind when the apostle addresses the saints of God; yet today it is the last thing mentioned, if it is mentioned at all. Reformed pulpits, silent on the truth of God's electing love, assure us it cannot be preached, it has no real practical value. Election is one of those great mysteries best left to God, it has no relevancy to the Christian faith and life.

Really! How simpleminded the apostle was, not to have known this. He must have attended the wrong seminary.

The simple fact is that no less an authority than the apostle not only mentions it, but opens by addressing the saints of God as the elect. And we are to understand that one's personal election cannot be known? That those to whom Peter wrote could not be sure they were being addressed or not? And there is little practical value to this fundamental truth?

Preposterous!

The reality is this: if you do not confess and believe the election of God, which means that salvation was determined not by man's own will and choice but by the eternal selecting will of God from before the foundation of the

world, you cannot address the church. It's who she is made up of, the elect of God.

One's election is not unknown to the child of God. It is something known and cherished. This the apostle himself declares in II Peter 1:10. "... give diligence to make your calling and election sure...." Be sure of your own election. Not make yourself elect, but give diligence to be sure of it. It is knowable. It is knowable in the pursuit of godliness.

This knowledge does not hinge on some mystical vision and sign, nor does it come via some extraordinary experiences in life that only the elite receive. Peter addresses common children of God. It becomes known by the testimony of the Spirit in one's heart, and in the way of godliness and spiritual interests. That is why mention is made in verse 2 of the "sanctification of the Spirit." Do not expect this testimony if you live carelessly in sin. Then you quench the Spirit. But by the Spirit's fruits one may know himself elect, loved by God from before the foundation of the world.

The truth of election is a practical truth. This is why when Peter addresses the church he chose this word and not some other.

First, Peter's purpose is to remind the saints that the source and fountain of all our salvation is of God. We refer not just to the plan of salvation, to the way in which God will save men, but we refer to the personal salvation of each person who shall be saved. Why have you been saved? Why have you been awakened unto salvation and the confession of Christ? Because God so willed. Not your wisdom, but God's deep, gracious will is the origin.

This is why Peter says, "Elect according to the *foreknowledge* of God the Father." This demonstrates that one's salvation finds its source in God's choice.

God's foreknowledge is not simply "foresight" or "foreseen faith." This emasculates election. Then Peter could better have written, "Elect according to your faith foreseen" or "according to your choosing," or "as you have shown yourself worthy." Nothing of the kind. "Elect according to foreknowledge."

Foreknowledge is God's determining before time who would be His children, and who would come to know Him in love. That this is the meaning of foreknowledge is plain from what Peter says a few verses later (v. 20): "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world..." (i.e., Christ as sacrificial lamb). The word translated in verse 20 as "foreordained" is the same word translated "fore-knowledge" in verse 1. Certainly Christ's death was not simply something God was able to predict. Such a view is unworthy of God's wisdom. The heart of history was merely foreseen and predicted? Nor was your salvation. Give the glory to God's electing love, not to your imagined wise choice.

Secondly, election means God determined everything about us. Why are you who you are, what you are, where you are, and when you are? Why were you born in the latter part of the 20th century and not in the 1st century with the apostle Peter? That you were born in the 20th century is not by chance or biological quirk, some genetic coincidence. It was God's foreknowledge. Some were formed to bear witness to Christ back in the 1st century.

But you and I have been chosen to bear witness over against this present age's immorality and apostasy. We have been appointed to stand rock-solid against these great evils. It is no little honor to have been chosen and formed to bear the name of Christ in the close of the New Testament age. As the

Our faith is not simply in election, our faith is in the electing God!

elect of God, let us not become faint of heart.

And, finally, the practical value of election is found in its comfort and encouragement.

Consider whom Peter addressed as elect. He was addressing those who were going to endure a bitter persecution, a great trial of their faith. They were going to be required to pass through fires for Christ's sake. What would see them through? What hope had they?

This! They were the elect of

God. The electing God would see them through.

How well Peter knew this.

Peter had denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. Yet he had not been disowned. He had been kept and restored.

Why? Because he deserved it? No! His Lord's electing love. "You are mine, given to me, bought by my blood. I will never let you go." So the risen Lord sought him out and restored him again.

Election, beloved, electing love

is the basis of our confidence in times of greatest trial. God's love is rock-solid, eternal. Though we falter and fall, the Father will bring us through.

And election is of no practical value, and cannot be preached? Be not deceived. There is no other gospel.

Remember, our faith is not simply in election, our faith is in the electing God! He is a Father who knows His own from eternity. His enduring love is what makes all the difference. □

Editorial

A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

6. Matthew 24 (cont.)

Matthew 24, 25 is Jesus' answer to the question of His disciples in 24:3. The question was, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The question combined the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the end of the world at Jesus' second coming. Jesus' answer likewise combines these two events. The reason for the combination of these two events in the great discourse by our Lord on the last things (eschatology) is that the destruction of Jerusalem was a historical type of the end of the world.

Throughout Matthew 24:4-31, Jesus gives instruction to His church concerning the end of the world, and the things which the church must expect before the end of the world, under the figure, or type, of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Inasmuch as the destruction of Jerusalem was the type of the end, everything that Jesus has taught in the preceding verses can be said in verse 34 to "be fulfilled," that is, happen, in A.D. 70. "All these things," happen *typically* in A.D. 70. But these things do not happen in A.D. 70 *exhaustively*. They do by no means happen *in reality* in A.D. 70. The reality of all these things will happen when Jesus comes in the body at the end of the world.

It is the same with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world as it is with the fulfillment of the other great prophecies of the Scriptures. Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:12-25 of the king out of Jacob was fulfilled historically in David, the son of Jesse. The mention of the various heathen nations that the king would subdue shows this. All the things of Balaam's prophecy happened in

the life and reign of King David.

But only typically. Not exhaustively. Not as to the reality.

The real happening of these things — the fulfillment — is in the kingship of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, the promise to Abram that his seed would receive the land from the Nile to the Euphrates was typically fulfilled in the glorious kingdom of Solomon (Gen. 15:18; II Chron. 9:26).

But not in reality.

The reality is the present extent of the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, which worldwide kingdom is yet expanding and will be perfected in all the universe at the coming of the Christ.

The peaceful kingdom of Psalm 72 is, throughout the Psalm, both the earthly kingdom under Solomon and the spiritual kingdom of Jesus the Messiah. More precisely, it is the spiritual kingdom of Messiah foreshadowed in

the earthly kingdom under Solomon.

The Reformed Tradition: Ridderbos and Calvin

This explanation of Matthew 24:1-35 in terms of type/antitype, or figure/reality, is that of the solid Reformed tradition.

Exactly concerning the difficulty, how Jesus could say in Matthew 24:34 that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled," the Dutch Reformed exegete Herman Ridderbos wrote:

By "all these things" (rendered by Ridderbos as "*dit alles*," 'all this' — DJE) ... (is) to be understood ... the entire complex of the happening of the last time, including the coming of the Son of Man. In this connection one must again take into consideration the combining character of the representation of the future set forth here.... The startingpoint of this whole discourse is in the destruction of the temple. And because this, according to the nature of prophecy, is seen in one and the same realm ("*in een vlak*") with the great future of the Lord, it can be said that the generation which would be witness of this destruction shall not pass "till all these things be fulfilled." Here, therefore, the great future is again designated in a complex, undifferentiated way. In the light of the fulfillment it is evident that "all these things" ("*dit alles*," according to Ridderbos — DJE) do not come all at once and, therefore, would be seen merely in part by the then living generation.... The exegesis (of Matt. 24 — DJE) must also here adopt the historical viewpoint, that is, must proceed from the prophetic form of eschatology. See also the commentary on 24:14 (*The Gospel according to*

Matthew, vol. 2, Kok, 1954, pp. 157, 158, in *Korte Verklaring*; the translation of the Dutch is mine).

This was also Calvin's interpretation of Matthew 24:34. Because Calvin's interpretation is both clear and compelling; because it represents the Reformed tradition, indeed, the tradition of the Reformation; and because it destroys the novel interpretation by Kik and the Christian Reconstructionists, it deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

Though Christ employs a general expression, yet he does not extend the discourses to all the miseries which would befall the Church, but merely informs them, that before a single *generation* shall have been completed, they will learn by experience the truth of what he has said. For within fifty years the city was destroyed and the temple was rased, the whole country was reduced to a hideous desert, and the obstinacy of the world rose up against God. Nay more, their rage was inflamed to exterminate the doctrine of salvation, false teachers arose to corrupt the pure gospel by their impostures, religion sustained amazing shocks, and the whole company of the godly was miserably distressed. Now though the same evils were perpetrated in uninterrupted succession for many ages afterwards, yet what Christ said was true, that, before the close of a single *generation*, believers would feel in reality, and by undoubted experience, the truth of his prediction; for the apostles endured the same things which we see in the present day. And yet it was not the design of Christ to promise to his followers that their calamities would be terminated within a short time, (for then he would

have contradicted himself, having previously warned them that *the end was not yet*;) but, in order to encourage them to perseverance, he expressly foretold that those things related to their own age. The meaning therefore is: "This prophecy does not relate to evils that are distant, and which posterity will see after the lapse of many centuries, but which are now hanging over you, and ready to fall in one mass, so that there is no part of it which the present *generation* will not experience." So then, while our Lord heaps upon a single *generation* every kind of calamities, he does not by any means exempt future ages from the same kind of sufferings, but only enjoins the disciples to be prepared for enduring them all with firmness (*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 3, tr. William Pringle, Eerdmans, 1949, pp. 151, 152).

Calvin's explanation of the related 14th verse of the chapter ("And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come") is the same. Calvin flatly denies that the reference to the end is exhaustively and exclusively a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, as is the contention of Kik and the Christian Reconstructionists. Calvin points to the obvious fact that is basic to the right understanding of the entire passage, namely, Jesus' "blending" of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world as figure and reality.

This is improperly restricted by some to the destruction of the temple, and the abolition of the service of the Law; for it ought to be understood as referring to *the end* and renovation of the world. Those two

things having been blended by the disciples, as if the temple could not be overthrown without the destruction of the whole world, Christ, in replying to the whole question which had been put to him, reminded them that a long and melancholy succession of calamities was at hand, and that they must not hasten to seize the

prize, before they had passed through many contests and dangers. In this manner, therefore, we ought to explain this latter clause: "The end of the world will not come before I have tried my Church, for a long period, by severe and painful temptations" (pp. 129, 130).

The interpretation of Matthew 24:34 by J. Marcellus Kik and the Christian Reconstructionists as demanding that everything set forth in Matthew 24:4-31 took place exhaustively and really in the destruction of Jerusalem is a radical departure from the historic Reformed explanation of the passage. □

— DJE

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "Leakage or Hemorrhage?"

The *Standard Bearer* in Vol. 68, p. 422 ("All Around Us," Prof. R. Decker), July 1, 1992, reported on an interview by the *Grand Rapids Press* of a Calvin Seminary professor who was questioned about the many members who were leaving the Christian Reformed Church. This professor "downplayed the exodus from the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), calling it 'leakage,' a normal occurrence in most, if not all denominations."

That comment must surely be one of the greater understatements ever made.

Darrell Todd Maurina, Press Officer of the United Reformed News Service, presented a report concerning the seriousness of this "leakage."

When the conservative movement warned that a move toward ordaining women would prompt massive secessions from the Christian Reformed denomination, one denominational leader dismissed the possibility of secessions by commenting that "all denominations have leakage." Nobody is calling the precipitous Christian Reformed membership decline "leakage" now that it has

cost the CRC 24,619 members in four years — a loss greater than the total membership of many denominations with which the CRC maintains fraternal relations.

According to official statistics in the 1996 CRC yearbook, the denominational decline has now reached 9.2% of the CRC's high-water mark of 316,415 members in the 1992 denominational yearbook — a statistic representing denominational membership six months before Synod 1992's decision to allow women to do most work of the ministry without ordination. Prior to 1992, the CRC had never had two consecutive years of decline. However, one bright spot in the numbers is that this year's loss of 2383 members wasn't as bad as the three previous years in which the CRC lost between five and ten thousand members annually.

At least part of the reduction in the annual decline is due to the decision of the Interclassical Conference, a gathering last November attended by conservative members from 110 Christian Reformed congregations, to ask Synod 1996 to revise Synod 1995's decision allowing women's ordination rather than calling for an immediate secession....

The attempt still is to put the "best face" on the situation. States Maurina:

According to CRC General Secretary Dr. David Engelhard, some of the change in the reported

numbers stems from the fact that the CRC is moving toward assessing financial contributions based on the number of members rather than on the number of families in the congregation. "Churches are saying to themselves and to their classes and to the denomination that we have 'x' number of students who are college students or who never attend, so our reporting system, while never perfect, is now undergoing some fairly significant alternation directly related to the ministry share," said Engelhard....

According to Engelhard, the denomination has not yet drafted a plan to deal with its declining membership. "The Christian Reformed Church as far as I know has made no particular decision to stem the decline," said Engelhard....

However, Engelhard saw reason for hope in the fact that the Christian Reformed denomination has more local congregations even if it has fewer members. In 1996, the CRC reported 991 local congregations, 136 of which are emerging mission churches or specialized ministries — a net increase of ten churches during the same period that the denomination lost nearly ten percent of its membership...."

Shocking though the 9.2% decline is, that really does not represent the true seriousness of the situation. One would think that only with internal growth (not even now taking into account the

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

mission labors), there should be conservatively speaking about a 2% annual *growth*. If such growth were estimated from 1992 and the 316,415 members, there is in fact about 50,700 less than what one would anticipate — or about a 14% decline. A few years ago, the CRC Synod set a membership goal of 400,000 by the year 2000. If that were indeed a realistic goal, the decline assumes an even more serious character.

Numbers, of course, do not mean anything in themselves. There were, after all, only eight who were saved in the ark. One expects some to leave the church because they refuse to heed the preaching or godly admonitions. Here, the sad situation is that it is the “conservatives” who are leaving. A sizable segment still in the CRC have threatened to leave if the Synod of 1996 does not alter its stand on women in office. What is left in the CRC? It is a church seriously weakened by such loss in numbers, but even more seriously weakened when the more conservative, Reformed, traditionally CRC people leave. One can only anticipate an ever increasing descent into apostasy. But the cry for repentance and return to the “old paths” continues to fall on deaf ears.

■ Same-sex Marriage

There is a growing outcry against “same-sex” marriage. However, even within the churches there is the claim that as long as there is lifelong “commitment,” one’s “life-style” ought not to be a hindrance to “marriage.”

The problem which faces many of the states today is that Hawaii has legalized “same-sex” marriage. The states have agreed to recognize the “marriages” performed in any of the other states. So, what if a “same-sex” couple moves to Colorado? Is this state compelled to recognize such a “marriage”?

The subject has been debated widely in the press. The *Denver*

Post, February 29, 1996, reported:

The Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Conference yesterday vowed to fight a bill that would ban same-sex marriages in the state.

The measure ... won final approval in the Colorado House yesterday by the narrowest of margins, 33-31, after the second day of emotional debate.

It now goes to the state Senate, where it faces an uncertain fate. The Senate has a smaller, more moderate Republican majority than the House.

The interfaith organization, which includes Catholics, Protestants and Jews, voted to oppose the bill shortly before the House voted yesterday morning.

“It’s a clearly vicious attack on a particular group of people, it’s mean-spirited and wrong-headed,” said the Rev. Gilbert Horn, a co-pastor at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church. He also believes the bill is unconstitutional.

Legislative opponents of the bill called it unnecessary and “a slap at gay and lesbian people.”

An update on the above report: the Colorado House and Senate did pass the above bill, refusing to recognize “same-sex” marriages, but the Colorado governor vetoed the bill.

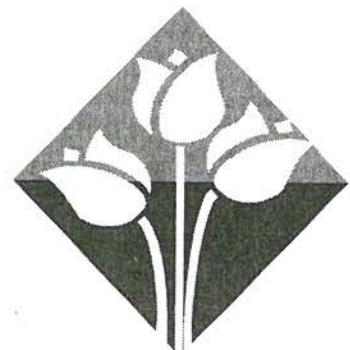
It is one more step towards the gross immorality which finally destroyed Sodom and Gemorrah. It is another of the marks of the end of the age in which gross immorality abounds. It is an immorality increasingly being promoted also on TV dramas. The AFA Journal, April 1996, includes this observation:

As the research of the late Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin reveals, no society has loosened sexual morality outside marriage and survived. Analyzing studies of cultures spanning several thousand years on several continents, Sorokin found that virtually all political revolutions that brought about societal col-

lapse were preceded by sexual revolutions in which marriage and family were no longer accorded premiere status. To put it another way, as marriage and family ties disintegrated, the social restraints learned in families also disintegrated. Societal chaos ushers in tyrants who promise to restore order by any means.

Self-governing people require a robust culture founded on marriage and family, which nurture the qualities that permit self-rule: deferred gratification, self-sacrifice, respect for kinship and law, and property rights. These qualities are founded upon sexual restraint, which permits people to pursue long-term interests, such as procreating and raising the next generation, and securing benefits for one’s children.

But the Word of God states it infallibly and more clearly, “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.... Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1: 24, 26, 27, 32). □



Johannes Cocceius: Biblical Theologian

Introduction

A few issues back we talked about one of the great theologians in the Netherlands during and shortly after the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-'19. His name was, as our readers will recall, Gijsbert Voetius.

In that article we mentioned the fact that Voetius engaged in a very bitter quarrel with Johannes Cocceius, a quarrel that continued beyond their lives and nearly tore apart the Dutch Reformed Churches.

In this article we want to talk a bit about that quarrel.

Early Life and Education

Cocceius was not even born in the Netherlands, but in Germany. It was probably for this reason that he never felt quite at home among the Dutchmen, although he spent a large part of his adult life with them. He was born in Bremen, Germany on either August 9, 1603 or July 30 of the same year. The records contain both dates.

He was the son of the municipal secretary in Bremen, Timann Coch. When he finally Latinized his name, as so many did in those days, he did not change it much. Johannes had one brother, and from their early youth they were together known as "Cocceii," or,

as we would say, "the Cochs." So all Johannes did was change this Latin plural into a singular and come up with Cocceius (pronounced: coc-say'-us).

Bremen, though a part of Germany, was solidly in the Reformed camp. In fact, it had sent delegates to the Synod of Dort, although the delegates from Bremen were known by all at the Synod as being the weakest in their convictions and the most sympathetic to the Arminians.

The Coch family was an ancient and honorable family that had a tradition of service to church and state, many of Coch's ancestors holding high political and ecclesiastical offices.

Coch's upbringing was very strict in moral and religious matters. The lessons he learned apparently made a great impression on him. Later in life he began an autobiography which he never finished, but in which he tells us of two incidents from his childhood which illustrated the point.

On one occasion, he was chastised at school for some boyish falsehood; he tells us that after that incident he despised lying so completely that he gained such reputation for truthfulness that no oath was ever required of him. At another time he used God's name irreverently at mealtime. His father hit him on the mouth with a spoon, and he never again took God's name in vain.

From the early days of his education he showed a remarkable

ability to learn and a special aptitude for languages. Although he studied theology, he also so completely mastered Greek that he could read widely in Greek literature for pure enjoyment though he was only a lad. Fascinated by ancient languages, he learned Hebrew, Chaldee, and Arabic, mostly on his own. While still a student he wrote a Greek oration on the religion of the Turks and read the Koran in preparation for it.

In 1625, at 22 years of age, Cocceius went to Hamburg in Germany for Greek and Rabbinic studies under learned Jews. But he was most unhappy with university life in Germany, chiefly, as he tells us, because of the dissolute life of the students.

In 1629 he left Germany and went to the University of Franeker in the Netherlands. Here he studied under Maccovius and William Ames, two men of whom we spoke in earlier articles. He also studied under a man by the name of Sixtinus Amana, a world-renowned Orientalist. Under him the object of his studies was especially the Jewish Talmud.

The learning of many of these Dutch theologians is quite beyond our comprehension. They devoted their lives entirely to studies and the discipline of learning and had time for nothing else. The result was learning beyond anything one could imagine possible in our day.

His Academic Life

From Cocceius' 27th year his

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life was completed devoted to teaching.

His first teaching post was back in his native city of Bremen, where he was professor of Biblical Theology and Philosophy for about six years. But the Netherlands soon beckoned him, and he returned to Franeker, where he taught Hebrew and Theology. He stayed in Franeker for 14 years, after which he moved to Leyden. In Leyden, after serving the churches in that University for several years, he died at the age of 66 on November 4, 1669, at the height of his powers. He was suddenly struck by a fever, and after only 19 days of illness he departed this life to be with God.

Cocceius spent all his life in academia and never knew the hurly-burly of the life of the pastorate with its incessant demands, crowded schedules, and bitter struggles in the forward trenches of the spiritual warfare of the church. But in the sheltered life of academia he drove himself relentlessly and produced an abundance of work which was to be of benefit to the church in subsequent years.

Cocceius was of the old German Pietistic tradition and reflected that tradition in his life. He was not only himself a godly and pious man, acknowledged by all to be such, but he also gave a practical and experiential bent to all his writings.

He did extensive work in the field of biblical interpretation and developed such important principles as: the organic unity of sacred Scripture; interpretation of Scripture according to the analogy of faith; the importance of interpreting Scripture's passages in the light of their context; and the relation between the Old and New Testaments expressed in the rhyme: "The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New revealed."

His piety manifested itself also in his insistence that the interpreter

of Scripture must be a man who never imposes his own ideas on God's Word, but is willing, in a spirit of meekness and humility, to bow before the Word of God.

His studies of Scripture ranged over the whole of the Bible, and he wrote commentaries on almost all the books. One biographer speaks of his exegetical abilities, in an unforgettable phrase, as being of "penetrating insight and robust judgment."

The greatest contribution of Cocceius lies, however, in his work on God's covenant. Although much had been written on covenant theology prior to his lifetime, nevertheless, his contributions are so respected that he is sometimes called the father of covenant theology.

I recently had opportunity to hear a professor from the Netherlands, an expert in the theology of Cocceius, speak on this aspect of Cocceius' work. This professor, without being aware apparently of our own Protestant Reformed position on the covenant, made clear that though Cocceius never completely escaped from the idea of the covenant as a pact or agreement, he nevertheless spoke of it as primarily a bond of fellowship. For that reason alone we owe him a debt of gratitude.

His Controversy

Nevertheless, in spite of all his accomplishments, Cocceius will be mostly remembered for his bitter quarrel with Voetius; and we now turn to that quarrel.

Strangely enough, the controversy centered in the question of Sabbath observance. Cocceius was charged with being weak on the question of the Sabbath. This was surprising if we consider that Cocceius was a godly and pious man and probably observed the Sabbath scrupulously. But the difficulty was in his theology, not in his practice. Cocceius taught that the Sabbath was Jewish, a part of Jewish law, abolished with the

coming of Christ, and without any force in the new dispensation. He was not opposed to Sabbath observance and the worship of God on the Sabbath, but he claimed it was a matter of expediency, not principle. For this he was charged with Antinomianism, i.e., with denying that the law of God was valid for saints in the new dispensation as well as the old.

But a story lay behind this position which Cocceius took. And some description of that story will be interesting to our readers.

Up to the time of Cocceius, the theologians in Europe and in the Netherlands were systematic theologians. That is, they worked hard to arrange all the doctrines of Scripture in a system of doctrine in which all the relationships between various doctrines were set forth clearly. They did work much like the *Reformed Dogmatics* of Herman Hoeksema.

In the systematizing of doctrine, however, some theologians were guilty of some exaggerations of this method. Instead of searching the Scriptures and working at careful exegesis so that the doctrines of the Reformed faith could be developed and enriched, they were content to systematize, to analyze what was already known, to pick apart and dissect by means of endless distinctions, and to raise objections against doctrines only then to show the error of the objections.

While this description is probably an exaggeration, the danger was indeed that doctrines became cold and sterile and lacked the warmth and passion of confession and life. And, when texts were referred to, it was often by way of mere "proof-texting"; i.e., without any solid exegesis, texts were simply used to "prove" points.

Cocceius objected to this kind of work in theology and wanted something more warm, experiential, personal, practical. And he wanted to attain this by way of exegesis. He was concerned that

the proof-texting that was often used did not do justice to the historical development of God's revelation in the four centuries of the Old Testament time of shadows, which development culminated in Christ. For example, theologians would quote a text from the time of Abraham without taking into account that God's revelation then was not as full as in later Old Testament times and in the new dispensation. Cocceius wanted exegesis to be honest with the text in the sense that it was explained as it was meant in the time it was given to Israel.

To accomplish this end Cocceius did not write a "Systematic Theology" but a "Biblical Theology." That is, he started at Genesis 1:1 and worked his way through the Bible from beginning to end in such a way that his theology followed the order of biblical books.

Some of his objections to the theology that was written at that time certainly were valid. But Cocceius did not really solve any problems. Such a method of working at theology as Cocceius employed, though still practiced today by some and though used in some seminaries, has serious weaknesses. We cannot go into all of them here, but, for one thing,

such a method of doing things loses the unity of the truth. Systematic theology shows how all the truth is one because God is one and the truth is of God. Biblical theology does not do that.

But, more seriously, such a way of doing things really divides the Old Testament from the New and makes a separation between the two. This is what Cocceius did. And, especially when he was busy developing the doctrine of the covenant in the way he did, he made such separation between the two dispensations that he became a dispensationalist of sorts. And because he was a dispensationalist of sorts, he denied the validity of the Sabbath for New Testament times.

The quarrel was prolonged and bitter and did not end with the death of Cocceius and Voetius. In fact, after their death it only increased in intensity and became, at last, so bitter that it nearly tore the church apart. At times, if Cocceians were in the majority in a University, all the Voetians were expelled. And if Voetians gained control, Cocceians were driven out. It got so bad that the government forced the universities to appoint an equal number from the Voetian and Cocceian parties as professors in the schools.

Perhaps the most serious of all, the real weak spot in Cocceian theology, but something which flowed directly from Cocceius' position, was Cocceius' teaching that the justification of the Old Testament saints was imperfect, for it was by way of promise, administered through the sacrifices, and was not the perfect justification of the new dispensational saints.

The controversy actually died out of itself after many years. And it only died out because, for one thing, the combatants wearied of the battle, and for another thing, the church became so liberal that it didn't really care any more for such problems.

But the question is still on the agenda of the church, though mostly fought out in seminaries. We may be thankful that our churches, under the leadership of our spiritual fathers, have a systematic theology given to us as our heritage which does justice to exegesis in both Testaments, and which is warm and vibrant. And the warmth and vibrancy of our theology is surely due to the place which the doctrine of the covenant holds among us, a doctrine which was developed so fully by Herman Hoeksema, but which came, in part, from Johannes Cocceius. □

Contending for the Faith

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

To Keep the Record Straight (2)

As our last article we published an editorial by Dr. J. DeJong from the *Clarion* magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches, reflecting on what I had written in the *Christian Renewal*. In this editorial Dr. DeJong focused on the historical aspect of our studies, and especially on what I had said about the centrally important 1949

letter of Prof. B. Holwerda. This is well; but, if we are to gain a correct perspective on this letter, I believe it is necessary to review the history behind it, which I will try to do as briefly as I can.

To begin, it is important to understand that the Protestant Reformed denomination originated

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out of the Christian Reformed Church as a result of the common grace controversy of 1924, and thus with a specific commitment to the principle that grace is always particular, which position therefore has the weight of constituting our first and formative ecclesiastical decision, which, according to Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort, is therefore "settled and binding" among us, even as is every final decision of a Reformed ecclesiastical church body. This does not mean that everyone belonging to a Reformed denomination is required to believe or agree with each decision, or that they may not discuss or question its wisdom or propriety, for that would constitute the kind of "implicit faith" against which Calvin so often railed. Rather, inasmuch as an ecclesiastical decision is only to concern ecclesiastical matters, and is always to be in conformity with the Word of God (which is what Article 30 implies when it says, "In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only are to be transacted, and that in an ecclesiastical manner"), the members of a denomination by common consent agree to act in conformity with what is decided, and not to militate against it "unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order," in which case, of course, it is to be changed. It is these two articles, 30 & 31, which constitute the heart of Reformed church polity, inasmuch as it is through them that the unity of the church can be maintained.

Now, beyond this, our relationship with the Liberated Churches had its roots in the visit of Dr. Klaas Schilder to America in 1939. At that time Dr. Schilder met Rev. Hoeksema and was invited to speak in the large auditorium of the First Protestant Reformed Church on the subject of common grace. This he did; and Hoeksema, always a believer in the importance of open and free dis-

cussion, later summarized his introduction of this lecture by pointing out that this invitation:

was not at all based on the supposition that he (Schilder — BW) was in agreement with our conception of the matter.... Nor did Dr. Schilder's acceptance of our invitation put him under any moral obligation to cater to our view. He was perfectly free to express his own views, free even to give the *Standard Bearer* a thrashing, if he were of a mind to do so. And he [Hoeksema — BW] invited the audience to give the speaker their honest attention and not to listen with the question in their heart and uppermost in their mind whether the speaker's views were in agreement with their own (Vol. 15, p. 244).

And, in fact, when everything was said and done, Schilder did in his lecture set forth a view of common grace in nature, somewhat akin to that which Abraham Kuyper saw in culture, but distinctly different from the Three Points of the CRC, which alone saw it in salvation as well. That, however, was not the point. Hoeksema, with his desire to promote free and open discussion, was only too pleased to have someone of stature willing to discuss these matters with him; and the result was a friendship between the two of them that continued for over a decade — although, sadly, not quite to the end.

Shortly after Dr. Schilder returned to the Netherlands, the Second World War began, cutting off not just correspondence, but all news from the Netherlands. In fact, in the fall of 1944, when a rumor came through that Dr. Schilder had been deposed by the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, Hoeksema chided the editor of the *Banner* for speculating that it must have been over common grace and Schilder's friendship with men such as Hoeksema: and it was not until nearly a year later, in the late summer of

1945, that the real reason was learned to be Schilder's view of the covenant, nearly identical with that which Prof. W. Heyns had taught for years at Calvin Seminary, and which lay at the root of what we considered to be the most objectionable part of the CRC view of common grace. Still Hoeksema defended Schilder vigorously, if not for his doctrinal position, because of the unjust way he had been treated by the synod.

For the next year the pages of the *Standard Bearer* were filled with reports and analyses of every aspect of this conflict, including the similarity between the views of Schilder and Heyns, and of our objections to them. All was said kindly and with concern and clearly in the hope that eventually a serious theological discussion of these matters might be aroused, especially with Dr. Schilder. But little was heard on this level until it was learned indirectly that Prof. Schilder had actually made a speech in Kampen repudiating the theory of common grace. This was gratifying in its way, but also perplexing, as Hoeksema went on to say:

We wonder in how far the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) in general digest and accept the views now propounded by Dr. Schilder as in the above mentioned speech; and also how they will ultimately harmonize this with the Heynsian conception of the covenant so generally adopted by them. To me it seems that the two are diametrically opposed (*SB*, Jan. 15, 1947).

And so he concluded with a plea for further discussion on these matters, and particularly with an invitation for Dr. Schilder to come and visit us once again for this.

This time, however, his plea did not go unheeded. On the one hand, the Rev. L. Doekes began a series of articles in *De Reformatie* with the purpose of evaluating our view of the covenant — which ar-

ticles Hoeksema published in both Dutch and English in the *Standard Bearer* with the intent of responding to them once the series was ended; but that never happened due to the intervention of a massive stroke with which Hoeksema was struck that summer. Before that happened, however, Schilder also replied with an acceptance of his invitation to come again to America, at which point Hoeksema remarked:

Dr. Schilder ... knows that we do not agree with their covenant conception, and that we take the same stand as they, church politically. He is assured too that, in spite of our differences, our churches will give him a hearing. He trusts that we still love him, and that we will give him a warm reception. In this, I think he will not be disappointed (*SB*, Vol. 23, p. 243).

This visit, of course, did take place, but only after Hoeksema's stroke prevented him from taking an active part in it, that is, until the very end. It was this visit, however, that undoubtedly constituted the pivot point in the whole of our relationship with the Liberated Churches.

To begin with, one can hardly overestimate the significance of Hoeksema's stroke, less than two months prior to Dr. Schilder's arrival. For twenty years Hoeksema had been the dominating figure within our small denomination, and its leading theologian. He had waged the battle for particular grace which had given birth to it, had edited the *Standard Bearer* which spoke for it, had taught all of the young pastors who ministered within it, organized nearly every congregation which belonged to it, and in general had given wise and discerning direction at every point along its way. He was its father figure, loved and respected by all. And so it was to be expected that, on Schilder's arrival, he would have met him and

traveled with him all through the denomination, giving him a full and free opportunity to speak as he would, but also then providing an analysis of our problems with what he said. It was something to which everyone had been looking forward with eager anticipation. But now, as by the hand of God, Hoeksema's trumpet-like voice was silenced, perhaps never to be heard again; and Schilder traveled among us alone.

Still, the event itself was far too significant not to engender excitement. Schilder went from one end of our denomination to the other, preaching, lecturing, and teaching with all his amazing thetic powers, that is, his amazing ability to take any subject, almost without notice, and expound upon it with poetic flourishes and insights which held every audience in rapt attention literally to the last word. But perhaps even more important were the private visits which took place in nearly every pastor's manse. These were men with little higher education beyond that which Hoeksema and Ophoff had provided them; and they were being privileged to host and hold private theological discussions with one of the most learned and profound thinkers in all of modern Europe. And, even as they did so, Schilder had that ability to engender within all of them the feeling that their thoughts and their opinions were as valuable and valid as those of anyone else, after which he would respond with another of those soaring rhetorical flourishes which left everyone breathless and without further answer. This was for many of them the experience of a lifetime; and it had its effect. Carefully, almost gingerly, each would lay out the problems he thought Hoeksema would have presented, particularly regarding that crucial matter of the covenant; but Schilder was equal to each of them, as thetically he brought both views together as though they were actually one.

Never did there seem to be a problem left. This was Schilder's hour; and it was almost as though the absence of Hoeksema added to its power. Schilder passed through our little denomination like a conquering hero, with none to detract from his endless rounds of impressive accomplishments.

And then the unexpected happened. Suddenly Hoeksema was back. Within five short months he was out of his bed and able to take part in the final, climactic, three-day conference on that most crucial subject of the covenant. Clearly Hoeksema's illness still restricted him as he struggled, both to remain polite, and yet to present the difficulties he saw in Schilder's covenant view, and which he had waited so long to have discussed, while Ophoff did what he could to drive each point home. But the day belonged to Schilder, and he was equal to it all. With his gift for molding an audience, he easily parried each problem, or succeeded in laying it aside, until it was left for him to wrap everything up by laying out three succinct conclusions:

1. The covenant is always to be identified directly with the promise of God and the demands or conditions which must accompany it.
2. The Liberated view of the covenant was to be distinguished from that of Prof. Heyns because they did not include in their view a preparatory grace for everyone.
3. There were no essential differences between our view of the covenant and that of the Liberated, other than in terminology and emphasis due to the different histories through which we had passed.

And then, to the surprise of nearly everyone, he laid out two personal goals, and in such a way as though they had been agreed upon by all: first, that we should work to bring our two denominations into closer union as sister-churches so that

our preachers might pass freely back and forth between them both; and secondly, to encourage those emigrating from the Netherlands to join our churches when they arrived on our shores. For our men, few things could have seemed more gratifying. Here was the most pre-eminent of Dutch theologians, having come to know each of them personally, expressing his complete confidence in them, and expressing his intention to direct his own people to come under their preaching and care. At last, by his good graces, it seemed that our long longed-for growth might

yet come to be.

Still, underneath there were some, along with Hoeksema, and especially Ophoff, who felt a lingering sense of uneasiness. In spite of Schilder's striking rhetoric, when it came down to it the real problems had not actually been grappled with, and had certainly not been resolved, as Ophoff was later to reflect in speaking of the Liberated view of the covenant, "It is the very doctrine he expounded on our meetings with him. But he did so in a kind of veiled speech so that we didn't know what he was driving at"

(*Acts of Synod 1949*, p. 50). Nor could they feel anything but uncomfortable with his claim that our differences were simply in terminology and emphasis, for that was the very thing we had been hearing for years out of the CRC concerning common grace, and it was hardly reassuring to hear it now from the lips of Schilder regarding our covenant view as well.

Nevertheless, those were pleasant days which Schilder spent in our midst, and a genuine sense of sorrow was felt when the time came for Dr. Schilder to depart our shores once more. □

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

The Gifts Necessary for the Office of Elder (2)

In the previous article we examined in some detail the gifts necessary for the office of elder as these are presented in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. If we consider these gifts as a whole we may conclude that the elder in Christ's church must possess certain qualifications or gifts of the Holy Spirit of Christ. These are: spirituality or genuine piety, humility, sympathetic understanding, courage or boldness, knowledge of the truth of Holy Scripture. To this must be added the fact that Scripture teaches that the elder must be an example to the people of God.

That the elder must possess the gift of spirituality or genuine pi-

ety means that he must be a child of God. It is true that there may be hypocrites among the elders. We are warned in Scripture that just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament era so there will be false teachers in the church today.¹ God even used a Balaam to bless His Old Testament church. Two things may be said of these false teachers. They never last. Sooner or later, but inevitably, they are exposed. When that happens they either leave the church or are put out of office and the church by means of discipline. These hypocrites are not the rule, but the exception. The man who would serve the church as an elder, either ruling or teaching, must be a spiritual man. He must be pious and godly, a man saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God's gift. The elder must be a

man in whose heart burns the love of God in Christ so that he loves God and God's people, God's church and cause. Without the love of God in his heart, the elder may speak with the tongue of men and of angels, but he will become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. He may have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but if the elder lacks God's love, he is nothing.²

Closely related to spirituality is the gift of humility. There is no room for pride in the elder. Pride, the Bible says, goes before destruction.³ Self-seeking pride, selfishness, the seeking of the praise of men — these are abominable sins among God's people, especially among the elders. The elder must be a humble man. Just as were the apostles, so must the elders be

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servants (the word in the Greek is "slaves") of the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. The elder must give his life in the service of God's church. This means the elder must be a man of prayer. If he is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, the elder must know that all that he is and all that he has, and that includes the office which he occupies, is the gift of God's grace. The elder must know that he cannot watch for the souls of God's people, admonish one wayward saint, visit one afflicted child of God, or counsel one troubled saint apart from God's grace. If anyone in the church needs to pray without ceasing, it is the elder. He needs God's grace and Holy Spirit to enable him to "shepherd the flock of God ... taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."⁴

Sympathetic understanding must also characterize the elder. Jesus, the Son of God, our great High Priest who is passed into the heavens for us, is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin.⁵ If Jesus is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, then surely the elder who is the servant of Christ must have sympathetic understanding of God's people. He must know God's people: their needs, their struggles, joys, afflictions, sorrows, weaknesses, and sins. The elder must "feel with" the people of God so as to be able to bring the Word of God which meets their need.

To serve in the office of elder requires courage or boldness. The apostle Paul asked the saints in Ephesus to pray for him that he might have boldness to open his mouth to make known the mystery of the gospel.⁶ The elder must emulate the apostle in this respect,

for he too needs boldness to do the work. To hold fast the truth in an age of apostasy, to insist on obedience to the law of God in a lawless age, to insist on good, expository preaching which presents the truth antithetically in an age in which people despise preaching, to discipline the wayward even to the point of applying the "last remedy," excommunication, in an age of permissiveness — all this takes boldness. The elder, together with the minister and deacon, stands in the front line of the battle of faith. This takes great courage!

The elder needs to know the doctrines of the Word of God as these are summed and presented systematically in the Reformed confessions. He must be thoroughly steeped in the Reformed faith. Constantly the elder must grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he does not he will surely fall from his own steadfastness and be led away with the error of the wicked.⁷ If he is to contend earnestly for the faith, the elder must know the faith.⁸ If

If anyone in the church needs to pray without ceasing, it is the elder.

he is to shepherd the flock of God by means of teaching the people of God, he must know the doctrine of God's Word. He must know the history of the church generally, but he must especially know the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The elder must know the struggles and battles of the church which make her what she is today. The elder must be able to discern the truth and distinguish it from the lie. An elder who is ignorant of all this will never be able to govern and lead the people of God in the way of the truth.

Finally, the elder must be an example to the people of God. His actions must never contradict his teaching. Always the elder must be able to say to the congregation,

"Do as I do, speak as I speak, live as I live." The holy apostle admonishes us to be followers ("imitators" is the literal translation) of him and his co-workers. Many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. We must imitate the apostles and their co-laborers because their conversation (citizenship) is in heaven, from whence also they look for the Savior, the

Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ The apostle Paul exhorts his spiritual son Timothy, the young preacher, to "be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹⁰ To cite no more, the apostle Peter exhorts the elders of the church to shepherd the flock of God, "... not as lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."¹¹

The man of God whom the Lord calls to this sacred office trembles when he ponders all this. "Who," he asks with Paul, "is sufficient for these things?"¹² The answer is, only the man whom God in His mercy has blessed with the calling and the gifts to serve Him by serving His precious and beloved church in Jesus Christ. □

Endnotes:

- ¹ II Peter 2 : 1-3; Jude 3-4, 17-19.
- ² I Corinthians 13:1-2.
- ³ Proverbs 16:18.
- ⁴ I Peter 5:1-3.
- ⁵ Hebrews 4:14-16.
- ⁶ Ephesians 6:18-19.
- ⁷ II Peter 3:17-18.
- ⁸ Jude 3.
- ⁹ Philippians 3:17-20.
- ¹⁰ I Timothy 4:12.
- ¹¹ I Peter 5:1-3.
- ¹² II Corinthians 2:16.

He that Sitteth in the Heavens Shall Laugh (1)

I have chosen the theme for this article from Psalm 2, verse 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Certainly this is one of the most fearful passages of all of Scripture. God is laughing at the wicked! This laughter is not one of joy and pleasure but one of holy wrath and of scorn and derision. God laughs at the heathen and at the wicked who are arrayed in rebellion against Him. The Lord enthroned in the heavens laughs at the utterly vain purposes of the heathen and the wicked to oppose God, and at their attempts to frustrate His counsel and overthrow Him. How can man ever hope to destroy the Almighty? How can puny man dethrone the King of all the universe? How can he succeed in establishing the throne of man and of the devil against God's purpose here on this earth? The sovereign, almighty God laughs at it all. The holy God of righteousness and judgment laughs as He prepares His judgment for the wicked. This laughter should strike terror in the hearts of the men of this world.

"The heathen rage, the people imagine a vain thing." The psalmist is amazed, he is shocked and dismayed. Therefore he asks the question, "Why?" The whole thing is insane. It is ludicrous madness.

It is consummate folly. It is monstrous wickedness. It is outrageous depravity to make a tumult against the Holy One, the Lord of heaven and earth.

Psalm 2 gives a description of the history of the world, the wicked world in which we live. From the time of the Fall until the end of this age this world is engaged in tumultuous raging against God. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." The whole wicked world is arrayed as a vast army of millions and millions of soldiers against God. Included are the kings of the earth and the rulers of the world, and under them the millions and millions of ungodly men. The devil, the great enemy of God, is the prince over them all.

The raging tumult is seen in the violence and wickedness of the world. It is seen in the social strife and conflict that characterizes the history of this world. It is seen in the crime and murder that fill the streets of our cities. It is seen in the thousands and thousands of wars that the world has engaged in throughout history. There is no peace in this wicked world. There never will be. There cannot be. All of this is the characteristic of a world that has rebelled against God. Every day in the leading

newspapers of the world one can read of the raging of the wicked world.

According to Psalm 2, all this raging and tumult in the world has a very definite purpose. It is all *against* the Lord and *against* His anointed! That is the shocking reality of it all. It is an attempt to break the bands of the Lord and cast away His cords. Wicked men do not want God to rule over them. Under the instigation of the devil, wicked men rebel against God. They refuse to submit themselves unto His holy commandments. We must understand clearly what is going on with all of this. We must understand who all is involved in the raging of the wicked world. We must be very clear that what the psalmist speaks of is really going on even today in the ungodly world in which we live. Our modern civilized world is making a tumult against God.

Wicked men violate every ordinance of God. They refuse to acknowledge Him as God. They do not glorify Him as God, neither are they thankful to Him. This is not because they are ignorant of God. God clearly reveals Himself in His creation, in the things which He has made. He declares His sovereign Word in the world. He has written the works of the law in the heart of every man. But the world hates God. It refuses to glorify Him. In proud, assumed wisdom this world rejects

Our modern civilized world is making a tumult against God.

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

God and makes idols of their own vain imagination.

This is not done only in the uncivilized heathen world far away from us, and perhaps long ago, but also in the modern-day world of America and Europe, Australia, and all over the globe. This is done in a world that boasts of great learning, technology, science, and astounding inventions. The idols that the modern-day world makes are of man's wicked humanistic philosophy and learning, of boasted power and human greatness and glory. They are the idols of materialism and covetousness, of pleasure and lust, of the worship of man and the glorying in man. These idols are just as stupid and dumb and evil as those of heathen nations. Their being clothed with the great learning and supposed intelligence of modern man does not make them one whit better, but in fact even worse. The more "intelligent" man becomes in his denying and rejecting God and rebelling against Him, the more of a consummate fool in reality he is.

The tumult and raging of man, wicked man, against God is seen in every violation of God's commandments. The constant blasphemy of God's holy name by wicked man is tumult and raging against God. The desecration of the Lord's day for sports and pleasures is wicked man's tumult against the God of heaven who has ordained this day for man to rest and come to the house of God to worship and thereby acknowledge Him as God and to glory in Him. The lying, stealing, and corruption of man in business is man's tumult against God.

The refusal of man to live in the bonds of holy marriage is raging against God. The brazen wickedness of the fornication and adultery of this world is raging against God. The whole entertainment in-

dustry, together with the mass media, promotes blatant immorality day after day. Any attempt to curb or to limit this in any way is met by vehement insistence on the "American right" of the freedom of speech. Evil men imagine that they can violate God's law with impunity. They imagine that man was placed on earth only for lawless, selfish, immoral pleasure, to gratify his own lust. Christians ought not to make watching this a form of entertainment and relaxation but recognize it for what it really is, raging against God!

The skyrocketing divorce rates, the ease of contracting one marriage after the other, is a shocking example of wicked men raging against God. The refusal of man to limit sexual activity to the opposite sex within the holy bond of marriage, the horrible depravity of homosexuality, the defiant insistence that such activity is a legitimate alternate life-style that we today must simply accept, whether we like it or not, is raging against the Holy God of heaven and earth.

The refusal of women to submit to their husbands in the home, and their insistence that they must have places of authority in the church, involves them in raging against God. The terrible evil according to which these women insist on the "right" to be able even to abort and murder their unborn children, because they will not accept the responsibility of motherhood, is raging against God.

The wickedness of our courts, the judges and juries which refuse to condemn and punish even the most evil criminals of our society, is in reality raging against God. The youth gangs, with their drug culture and violent crime and cold-blooded murder, their songs, their entertainment, the whole of their philosophy of life — all these are an outrageous example of

wicked men making a tumult and raging against God.

The heretics in the church who are seeking to overthrow all the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God and to subvert whole denominations to the evils of modernism and worldliness are raging against God. Man makes a god of His own imagination, one which loves all men and winks at sin, a god who serves the whim and fancy of men doing whatever man pleases. He will not have a God who rules over man and who has established His holy law for man to live by. How awful all of this is! What grief it causes to those who truly love God.

We need to bring this matter even closer to home however. Our sinful nature is prone to hate God and our neighbor. We have within our own being and person a raging and tumult against God. Every true Christian is aware of this raging within his own breast. All men in the world, also we ourselves according to our sinful nature, are included in the vast armies of millions and millions of men who have set themselves against the Lord, and who imagine a vain thing against Him.

The culmination of the raging of the wicked world against the Lord and against His anointed came at the cross of Christ Jesus. The inspired writer Luke understood that the cross was the extreme fulfillment of Psalm 2. Therefore he quotes this Psalm to explain what took place at the cross. Who can fathom the shocking wickedness of the crucifixion of the Holy Son of God!?

It was not because of some great evil that Jesus had done that He was condemned to be crucified. That is impossible, for He is the Holy Son of God. It was not because He had rebelled against the Lord, or because He was the leader of some social or political revolutionary movement creating confusion and strife in the world. Jesus was the Lord's anointed. He was

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the Holy One. Maintaining and establishing the holiness of God was the great occupation of His whole earthly career. He came as the prince of peace, not worldly peace, but the true peace of God based on righteousness before Him. Jesus was perfectly righteous in all that He did. He went everywhere preaching the truth and righteousness of God. He did good all His life, healing the sick, making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, even raising up the dead. The words of His mouth were words of peace, and of love, and of mercy and kindness. What an amazing and wonderful thing the life of Jesus was, when compared to all the raging of this wicked world. Jesus was perfectly obedient unto God. He loved God. He served God. He submitted Himself completely to the will of God.

Yet Jesus was hated. He was despised and rejected of men. He was called a son of Beelzebub. He came to His own and His own received Him not. The religious elite of the day, the leaders of the church, the chief priests, the scribes and Pharisees, opposed Him, hated Him, and contradicted Him. In the most atrociously illegal court in all of history they with one consent condemned Jesus to be worthy of death. They considered Jesus to be so evil that He had to die the accursed death of the cross. The world of the Roman empire, notable for its system of law and justice even today, this world through its infamous representative Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to be put to death. Pilate did this after repeatedly declaring that he could find no fault in Him. Yet he condemned the Holy Son of God to be worthy of death. Pilate gave Jesus over to the evil multitudes who were screaming for His crucifixion. This was the most monstrous of all raging against the Lord and His anointed.

Psalm 2 emphasizes the unbelievable wickedness and extreme

folly of the raging of the wicked world against the Lord. The Lord is the sovereign God of heaven and earth. He created heaven and earth for His own glory. He gives to every creature its very existence. He gives all things to all creatures. How incomprehensibly wicked it is for the creature to rebel against its creator. The Lord rules among the nations. He sits on the circle of the earth. Before Him the nations of the world are as nothing, as dust in the balance and as a drop on a bucket, as less than nothing. How futile and ridiculous for this world to make a tumult against Him.

In the midst of all the raging of wicked men, God remains sovereign. The versification of Psalm 2 in our *Psalter* says, "Calm He sits enthroned on high." God is enthroned in quiet, undisturbed sovereignty. What a glorious picture of the absolute reign of God. He sits in the heaven and laughs. He holds the wicked in derision. He is not disturbed by all their raging against Him. He laughs at its folly. He remains God from eternity to eternity. It is utterly impossible for all the raging of millions and millions of wicked men of the world to move this God even one iota from being the absolutely sovereign One. It is the height of stupidity to imagine that this God can be destroyed. It is

ridiculous folly to imagine that man can free himself from His rule and escape His judgment.

God's people are often greatly distressed because of the raging of the world. In the midst of the tumult of the world against the Lord, the church often suffers persecution. It seems to us that the truth and righteousness of God is overthrown. It seems as though the kingdom of God is destroyed. We are deeply grieved by the wickedness of the wicked and their blasphemy against God. We are grieved by the apparent prosperity of the wicked. We are grieved by the apostasy of the church. We wonder how wicked man can apparently succeed in their evil purposes against God and His truth.

Psalm 2 is written for the comfort of God's people. God remains enthroned in the heavens through all the history of the raging of the wicked in this world. We are told of the absolute sovereignty of God in realizing His sovereign decree and in His coming to judge the world in His Son Jesus Christ. Psalm 2 ends with an exhortation to God's people to bow before the fearful, sovereign God so vividly described in this passage of God's Word. "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling."

(We shall return to consider some of the rest of this Psalm in our next article, D.V.) □

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed,...

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psalm 2:1-4

Love and the Husband

In the home the husband is head, according to God's command. This means that the husband's responsibility to love has precedence. The husband is the source of the love of the marriage, of the home, and of the family. Love is a force which the husband in the home is primarily responsible for originating, and is primarily responsible for perpetuating.

To love is the law of a married man's life. His duty to love comprehends all of his responsibilities.

How are you doing? Is this how you view your responsibility?

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The husband's responsibility to love is clearly taught in Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself."

Husbands are to love their God-given wives *because* Christ loved the church. Also, they are to love their wife *in the manner* Christ loved.

How are you doing? Follow

the model provided by Christ. Learn from Christ. Seek to reflect (as much as you can) His love for the church as you live daily with your wife.

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To love your wife sounds easy when you are engaged and first married. At other times, in every marriage, this love seems impossible. In both cases something is wrong. In both cases love is improperly defined and understood. It is thought that love is primarily a sentiment or passion, emotional feelings of attraction. This kind of "love" can be very sacrificial, but it often is twisted, in that it gives in order to receive, or (worse yet) in order to possess. This kind of "love" can easily fade, so we find ourselves saying (or thinking), "All the love is gone," when what is meant is that the feelings, the emotions, are no longer present.

True love includes feelings and emotions, but it is not to be identified with them. Also, true love does not depend on feelings. The feeling or emotion of love must be educated by a conscience and controlled by a will. This conscience and will must be taught by the Scriptures and guided by gratitude. The conscience and will which educates and controls love must be taught God's will. We are to love because we know this is what our good God demands of us and because we want to show our gratitude to Him.

God commands husbands to

love. Repeated obedience to God's command makes for the powerful habit of love.

True love of a wife is essentially not different from, but the same as, love of God and of the neighbor. Anyone who is hardhearted toward his duty of loving his wife, will also be hardhearted toward his calling to love God. In fact, not loving the wife is proof that there is no love for God. True love of a wife must be with Christian love — a love which has God for its object. It is a great appreciation for what God has done and is doing in her. It is great appreciation for what God has done, is doing, and will do for him through God's use of her.

Real marital love does not keep springing from feelings for her, but has its origin in the Lord.

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Real love, arising from humble and grateful obedience to the heavenly Father, says much about the kind of authority the husband exercises as the head of his home. Love determines the nature of his authority. Love tempers his authority with grace.

Does your love do that to your authority? Or do you exercise authority without evidence of love? Believers are under the authoritative rule of Christ, but that does not humiliate us. Because a husband's rule of his home comes from God, he must exercise his authority with tenderness, without humiliating. The husband's au-

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thority is founded on his love for his wife. His authority must be administered in the spirit of love.



Consider the love of Jesus Christ for His church in order better to know how the husband must love his wife.

Consider the free, electing love which chose us. It was a totally undeserved love. It was a completely unconditional love. He did not choose us because we were better or greater or more lovable. He chose us simply because He loved us.

Also consider that Christ's headship is rooted in His sacrificial love for His people. Jesus humbled Himself in order to identify Himself with us, and this He did because He loved us.

The highest demonstration of God's love for us is that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Christ loved (sacrificed Himself for) His bride, not because she was so attractive, but when she was filthy.

The aim of Christ's love was, is, and will be to sanctify and cleanse His people. Christ's act of love took the impure church and cleansed her and made her beautiful (without blemish). Christ's love manifested itself when we were yet sinners. A greater and more profound example of love cannot be found.



Similarly, a husband's headship stems from his love (the sacrifice of himself) for his wife. This may involve the big things of life. But more often it's the little things of life which are so important to the making of a relationship (unnoticed by others, often even by the wife).

True love is a commitment which seeks what is good and beneficial for the wife ("gives honor," I Peter 3:7). Love seeks to know

and understand her. True love respects her as a fellow-saint, as one bought with Christ's most precious blood (so she must be most precious), as clothed with His righteousness, and as bound for heaven. True love, then, will work to come to grips with her feelings, will value what she says, and will respect her opinion. Love is gentle, comforts her, prays for her, and helps her use her talents.

The purpose and goal of a husband's love is not simply to satisfy her, or to keep peace. Many times a husband will be silent before his wife when she is nagging. The thinking is, "Just be quiet and she will get over it." But Christ loved in order to sanctify the church. So a husband must seek his wife's spiritual well-being, whether she responds or not.

True love of a husband considers the real needs of his wife and places those needs above his own. It is thinking (next to his commitment to Christ) first of his wife's well-being (more than of self, friends, work, or hobbies). Love moves the husband to seek to meet his wife's needs, which are first spiritual.

A husband's love may not be controlled and governed by the behavior of his wife, for Christ loved and loves His bride unconditionally. The husband is commanded to love her — even if she does not notice or respond. She may have character traits or weaknesses that irritate, but he may not become bitter, as Christ is not. A loving husband will have patience, which does not mean he silently puts up with, but calmly talks to her about her weaknesses and sins.

You must constantly ask, "Do I love my wife in the way my Lord demands of me? Am I following the example of Christ?"



Husbands are commanded to love their wives "as their own bodies" (Eph. 5:28). This does not

mean that he is to love his wife as he loves his own body. Rather it means that he must love his wife because she is his body. You and your wife are one flesh; and one part of the body cannot say to another part, "I have no need of you." Originally God took the wife out of the man's body. Even though the wife exists apart from her husband, with her own personality, marriage puts the woman back into a union with the man.

Therefore the husband must strive to include his wife in as many of his activities as possible. He should not talk about "my" child or "my" house, etc., but about "our" child and "our" house. He should not think of his time away. He may not live beside her without involving her. A married man may not live as if he is still single, as if he is free to pursue his own interests and ambitions. He must not neglect her, but must communicate with her about his own personal life and about matters of mutual interest.

We cannot be perfect in loving our wives, as Christ was and is in His love for His bride. But that the Spirit of this Christ dwells in us means that we can begin to approximate His loving leadership. We must follow our Lord's example, by striving more and more to reflect His perfect love. It is possible to love our God-given wife through the power of the Spirit who dwells in us. We must pray for insight and wisdom to see where our love is lacking. We must pray for God's Word to shape our thoughts, words, and actions.

Loving your wife is not optional. It is one of the chief ways in which a Christian home is distinguished from an unbeliever's home. It is also one of the most evident ways in which a husband demonstrates his faith.

Husbands, love your wife for the glory of God. □

Trying the Spirits

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
I John 4:1

The subject that we consider is a matter of critical importance. The fact that the call to discernment is issued throughout the Bible, in the Old and New Testaments, the fact that repeated warning is given concerning the rise of false teachers and the increase of attacks upon the church in the last hour, the fact that I John 4:1 calls us to specific action, namely, that of trying the spirits, demonstrates that discernment is a matter of critical importance for the church today.

Constantly we are being confronted with "new" teachings, "new" religious movements, different ways of doing things. What shall we say? Shall we condemn things simply because they are different? Shall we cast off anything that threatens change? Or, on the other hand, shall we accept things simply because they are taught and take place within the confines of Christianity and more particularly the Reformed faith?

Critically important it is that we be *discerning* Christians, *discerning* church leaders. Critically important it is that we not merely criticize, but that we carefully evaluate and pass judgment and be careful that our rejection or ac-

ceptance of any particular matter has foundation in God's Word of truth.

It is a common conception in our day that men may simply believe what they wish. After all, "We're all on the same road to heaven; just headed there in different ways."

But I John 4:1, like all the rest of Scripture, teaches quite the opposite.

The apostle Peter, in reflecting upon the Old Testament, said in II Peter 2, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (II Pet. 2:1-3). That hardly speaks of those on the same road to heaven.

Repeatedly Scripture warns us that there is a standard that must be applied to every teaching and every way. It is the command of God that we *not* believe every spirit, but that we try the spirits whether they be of God. And the standard that must be applied to every teaching and every movement is the standard of God's Holy Word, the truth of Holy Scripture. That is, in very brief sum, what we are taught in I John 4:1.

But we want to consider in a little more depth the importance

of trying the spirits. In this article, and in two to follow, there are four sub-points that I would have you consider with me in this connection. We will consider, first, the necessity of trying the spirits; secondly, what are these "spirits" that we are to try; thirdly, how we are to try them; and finally, to whom this calling is addressed.

The Necessity

Spiritual discernment, trying the spirits, must be a vital concern for us as officebearers, and for our Protestant Reformed churches and people. Certainly one of the chief concerns that we have as pastors and elders is that God's people be discerning Christians. That is and must be our concern, because all too often the people of God show themselves sorely lacking in this virtue. That has always been the case. The examples and the many admonitions of Scripture pertaining to this subject show that the people of God are inclined toward spiritual laziness. And officebearers in the church are not immune to such a lack of virtue in this area.

If we begin simply by focusing on ourselves and our people, some of that spiritual laziness arises out of an intense loyalty to our churches — a loyalty which on the one hand is a commendable thing, when it is rooted in a desire to stand steadfast in the truth.

But it is easy in such a case to take the attitude that, "Well, all our ministers preach the same thing, we all believe the same, we have the truth; therefore we are invincible. There is no danger that we be misled by any false teacher."

Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin. This article is the substance of the opening address given by Pastor Key at an Officebearers' Conference in Pella, IA, on March 5, 1996.

It is a kind of "the enemy is all out there" attitude.

The problem is that such an attitude tends to neglect the calling set before us in the example of the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to see whether the things that the apostle Paul preached were true. Such an attitude actually breeds spiritual lethargy, a lethargy rooted in spiritual pride.

That is a grave danger to us. It is a grave danger because the devil not only attacks the church with spirits of false doctrine, but he attacks the church just as vigorously with spirits of worldliness and carnality, spirits of disobedience to God's truth, spirits of a life-style that does not conform to the spirit of Christianity.

So the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 3:1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." The devil will do whatever it takes to lead astray the members of the church.

That there is a tremendous and appalling indifference to sound doctrine today is clearly evident. The vast majority in the nominally Christian church of our day are unconcerned with doctrine. Their one interest is to have a church where they can function in a social community, feeling good about themselves, and improving those good self-feelings by their cloak of religiosity. "Doing" is the name of the game. Social action is where it is at!

So it is not uncommon that we who love the truth are charged

with rationalism, with holding to a dead religion, with legalism, with sectarianism, separatism, and many other less than favorable terms.

Of course we *must* be critical of any dead orthodoxy in our midst. We must *war against* any pharisaical attitudes. We must preach that there must be more to our religion than mere head knowledge. But, at the same time, we must hold forth the importance of God's truth!

The necessity of trying the spirits is clear, especially throughout the New Testament Scriptures, but also in our own experience. The church is constantly confronted with false teachings and practices that are contrary to the standard of God's Holy Word. Almost all the epistles call attention to that in one way or another.

The apostle Paul wrote frequently of the churches being troubled by certain teachers who had followed after him, imitating his preaching and his gospel in many respects, but adding to it their own particular teachings. The result was often confusion in the churches, and, even more, departure from the faith. The apostle did not hesitate to expose these things as the works of the devil, the father of lies.

He warns us of false teachers with these words (II Cor. 11:13-15): "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Satan attacks the church, and us who are members of the church,

always attempting to rob us of the gospel, and to wreck our Christian testimony and the witness of the truth, our peace and our joy. The history of the church has always seen the same thing.

And if we look at John's warning in the broader context of his epistle, we see the danger of false prophets and the importance of trying the spirits. Error in either doctrine or life is destructive of fellowship with God. And fellowship is the apostle's primary concern.

To put it in terms of that truth which we as churches hold so dear: John's fervent desire is that those to whom he writes know the *covenant*, not only doctrinally, but as a matter of their own experience. They must know the fellowship of God's love, that blessed relationship with the Triune God, which relationship is ours in Christ Jesus, and which is reflected in the fellowship we have one with another.

So John writes in I John 1:3: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

But while the great blessedness of the Christian life is that covenant fellowship with God through Jesus Christ and, as members of His body, one with another, there is something most destructive to that covenant fellowship. That is the lie. "The spirit of error," as John refers to it in verse 6 of chapter 4, in all its different forms, militates against our enjoyment of that fellowship.

For that reason we must be vigilant in our watchfulness and our defense of the truth. For the truth shall make us free.

(to be continued) □

The vast majority in the nominally Christian church of our day are unconcerned with doctrine. Their one interest is to have a church where they can function in a social community....

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC sponsored a Spring Lecture again this year. Prof. H. Hanko, of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, spoke on March 25 in Randolph on the broad theme of Church Unity and Ecumenism.

In an attempt to stir up a little interest in good Christian books, the Evangelism Committee of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada asked some thought-provoking questions about creation. Had anyone there ever wondered about dinosaurs ... or about where all the water of the Flood came from ... or if it is true that Noah's ark had been discovered? To help answer these and many other questions, they recommended that members of their congregation get and read *The Flood*, by Dr. Alfred Rehwinkel. Possibly you might consider doing the same.

In a follow-up to a recent "News," we note that our Edgerton, MN PRC has prepared a pamphlet, patterning it after the model of some of our other churches, which will serve as a nice, concise introduction of Edgerton and our churches, to anyone interested. The Lord willing, a copy of this pamphlet was to be mailed to every household in Edgerton, Woodstock, Chandler, and Leota.

Many of our regular readers will remember that our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX has been busy the past couple of years with evangelism work with the large Indian population in the Houston area. This work continues today, with

much of the effort being done with the Christian S.I.N.D.H.I. organization, or Sindhi International Network Discipling Houston's Indians. This effort of Trinity received a boost this past month when approximately twenty young people from our Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI spent their spring break at Trinity, taking part in a week-long Evangelism Seminar entitled, "Reaching the Nations with the Gospel of Grace." Not only were the young people kept busy the entire week with a wide range of activities, from Sunday worship services with Trinity's congregation, to evangelism meetings with the Christian SINDHI's and Rev. T. Miersma, our denomination's home missionary, but they also had time to tour different areas of interest in and around Houston, including China and Indian Town, in addition to enjoying a meal at Akbar, an Indian restaurant.

The young people also spent the better part of a day working at a spring clean-up around the Trinity church building.

Congregational Activities

The Council of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was so impressed with a paper given by Rev. Ron Cammenga on the subject of "Promise Keepers" at this year's officebearers' conference, that they decided to put it to further use, particularly because of its immediate relevance. There was a massive rally of Promise Keepers being planned for Southern California in April. For that reason Redlands' Council decided to make copies of that paper available so Hope's membership could be informed about this latest, sensational movement that continues to sweep into many churches. Quite honestly, not just Hope's congregation, but all of us are

faced with that same question: may we in any way participate?

Sunday evening, March 24, the Hudsonville Choral Society from Hudsonville, MI PRC gave their annual Spring Concert with a nice selection of songs commemorating the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Men's Society of the Hull, IA PRC invited the men from their two neighboring congregations, the Doon, IA and Edgerton, MN PRCs, to join with them in a combined meeting. Bible discussion centered on Genesis 39, with an after-recess program looking at the subject of "Christian Liberty," what it is and what it means for us.

School Activities

Our Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA has formed a special committee to study the use of their school facilities and possible future expansion. This committee will consider the limitations of their present property from the standpoint of physical room and governmental regulations. A canvass of young families regarding interest and future enrollment was also planned.

The students of the Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA presented their All-School Spring Program on March 22 under the theme, "Jesus, the Chief Corner Stone."

Minister Activities

Rev. and Mrs. M. Dick, of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI (the Lord willing), were blessed with the birth of a baby boy, Nathaniel William, on March 25. Rev. Dick was scheduled to preach his farewell sermon at Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada on March 31, with an anticipated move to Michigan the second week in April and installation at Grace planned

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

for April 21.

Related to the above news about Rev. Dick, we learned that our Immanuel PRC announced the following trio: the Revs. Bekkering, denHartog, and Key.

And from those three they extended a call to Rev. Bekkering.

The vacant Doon, IA congregation has extended a call to Rev. K. Koole.

Food for Thought

"There are two ways of going to hell; one is to walk into it with your eyes open ... the other is to go down by the steps of little sins."

— J.C. Ryle □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 10, 1996, the Lord willing,

**MR. and MRS. EDWARD
CAMMENG**

will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them in this momentous occasion. We thank the Lord for His covenant faithfulness to them and commend them to His care in their future. We are grateful for their godly instruction and example, which have meant so much to us over the years. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- ✿ Rev. Ron and Rhonda
Cammenga
- ✿ Randy and Joyce Cammenga
- ✿ Rev. Ron and Nancy Hanco
- ✿ Tim and Sandy Sale
- ✿ Bob and Shelley Cammenga
- ✿ Tom and Cherie Cammenga
28 grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1995 appointed Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI the calling church for the 1996 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1996 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 11, 1996 at 9:00 A.M. in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 10, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. G. VanBaren, president of the 1995 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Clare Kuiper, 2669 Byron Center Ave. S.W., Wyoming, MI 49509. Phone: (616) 534-0098.

Consistory of
Southwest PR Church
Mr. Clare Kuiper, Clerk.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Rev. Jason Kortering
6 Sunrise Place
Singapore 806412

Please make a note of the change.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church express their deep sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Tim Griess in the death of their still-born son,

ZACHARY RICHARD,

on March 21. They and we find comfort in the assurance of the psalmist, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. G. VanBaren, President
Mr. R. Brands, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, MI expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to Clarena Hirdes in the death of her husband,

JOEL HIRDES.

May she find comfort in the knowledge that God works all things together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Alan Elzinga, Pres.
Mrs. LaVerne Casemier, Sec'y.

Help Wanted!

✿ Have YOU returned the "Help Wanted" card from your April 1 issue? Many have already responded. Thank you!! We need your help!