



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

It is human reasoning and “logic” which conclude that a “loving” and “gracious” God *cannot* allow billions to go to hell only because they never heard the gospel or were destined to be born and raised in the realm of one of the other religions of this world.

See “All Around Us” — p. 476

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## Editorially Speaking ...

Around the first of September the thoughts of many among us turn to school — the “good Christian school” that, according to Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt, is a demand of the covenant.

The article by Herman Hoeksema, “Christian Training,” the first installment of which appears in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, therefore, is timely. The article was originally a lecture. Evidently Hoeksema gave it shortly after World War I. It is part of the invaluable collection of sermons and speeches by “HH” taken down by Martin Swart — the Martin Swart Collection of Herman Hoeksema (MSCHH). To my knowledge, this speech on Christian education has never before been published. Thanks to Mr. Jim Swart, who holds the collection, for permission to publish the speech.

The Board of the Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education in Lansing, IL has collected and bound together a number of editorials in the *SB* by Herman Hoeksema on the subject of Christian education generally and Protestant Reformed Christian education particularly. Some of these were written in Dutch and have been translated into English under the auspices of the Association. Topics include “The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School”; “The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure?”; and others.

Those who are interested can ask for a copy of this collection by writing the Board of the Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, P.O. Box 87, Lansing, IL 60438. Ask for the collection of articles by Hoeksema entitled, “Christian Education.”

A word of praise is in order to the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies for the course just concluded on principles and practices of Reformed education. More on this later.

Train up children in the way they should go....

— DJE



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# Transformed by the Sight of Our Lord's Glory

Able to gaze on the glory of our Lord now in this life?! And doing so, to be changed into the same image as He, even from glory to glory?! That we shall behold our Lord's glory in the hereafter is our great hope, for then we shall see Him "face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). That we shall be like Him then, in perfection, is our sure expectation (I Jn. 3:2). But now already to be able to see His glory and be changed into His glorious image?! Almost unthinkable! Hardly possible from our standpoint! Yet that is what our text declares. Amazing work of God in Christ and by His Spirit!

It is this transforming power of the gospel of Christ in the new dispensation which the inspired apostle magnifies in this section of the epistle. The old dispensation had a glorious revelation too, even though it was a ministration of death and condemnation. For it was the revelation of God's law through Moses demanding that the sinner love and serve Him perfectly, which law could only expose the church's sinners in their guilt and depravity. And when Moses was given that revelation of God's law in the mount, his face

shined so gloriously that the children of Israel could not look on it. Moses had to put a veil over his face when he read the law to them.

But how much more glorious is the gospel ministration of the new testament! For it is the revelation of Christ as the Savior from sin and death! It is the revelation of the righteousness of God in Christ imputed to sinners by faith alone! It is the revelation of the Spirit who gives life to dead sinners! It is the revelation that causes believers to behold Christ and be changed into His same image! Wonderful blessing of God to His own!

## The Amazing Vision

To behold the glory of the Lord is the amazing vision believers have in this life. They are able to see their Lord in His glory while He is in heaven and they are on earth! Here and now they gaze on Jesus as their glorious Savior and Lord! The question is, how? For we cannot pierce through the heavens with our earthly eyes and behold Christ. How then? We see Him "as in a glass," says our text. That is, we see Him by reflection, as in a mirror. While in this life we are not able to see our Lord directly, we can see Him and His glory reflected. That reflection we find in the Word of God — the Word of God written (the Scriptures) and the Word of God spoken (the preaching). The Scriptures, first of all, constitute the

mirror in which we behold the glory of the Lord. Christ's glory is reflected surely in the Old Testament Scriptures, yet weakly and dimly. It is in the New Testament Scriptures that we find the clearest reflection of our Lord. In the gospel accounts and in the epistles we are given a beautiful mirror in which to gaze on our Savior and His glory. There we see Him in the glory of His eternal Sonship, in the glory of His perfect manhood, in the glory of His humility and obedience, in the glory of His suffering and death for us sinners, in the glory of His resurrection and ascension. No smeared or cracked mirror is this which we have in the written Word of God! What a glorious reflection of our Lord is there, and therefore what an amazing sight is ours! When I read the Scriptures, or the Scriptures are read to me, I am beholding the glory of my Lord as in a glass!

And so too, secondly, in the preaching of that Word. Such is the ministry Paul speaks of in the context (3:12; 4:1ff.). When he preached Christ Jesus the Lord, God's people beheld the glory of their Lord as in a glass. And so today, when God's Word written is preached faithfully by godly servants of the Lord, the glory of Christ is set before us as in a mirror. The preaching holds Him up for us to see by reflection. In that preaching moment we also behold Him in the radiant perfection of His Person and nature and work.

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What a glorious sight for us sad and sorry sinners!

Yes, "we all, with open face," are gazing on the glory of our Lord as often as we open the Scriptures and hear the preaching! You understand that the text is referring only to the sight of believers. This is not the vision of all who read the Bible or who sit under the preaching. The context reveals plainly that there are many who read the Scriptures and who hear the gospel with a veil on their heart, just like the Jews in the apostle's day (3:14, 15). They are blind in unbelief, and they cannot and will not see the glory of the Lord, no matter how clearly it is reflected in the Word. Not with "open face" but with closed heart they "see." And unless they repent of this sin, they shall see only the day of wrath and eternal condemnation! How serious is this matter of seeing! Do *you* know this?!

Let us not forget that it would be the same for all of us who believe were it not for "the Spirit of the Lord." He it is who has given us this "open face" look, for He it is who has "unveiled" our hearts by the power of His grace in us. He converted us and gave us faith, and in so doing gave us the spiritual eyes to behold the glory of our Lord (cf. 4:6). Amazing mercy of God to us blind-by-nature sinners!

To behold the glory of the Lord, then, is no natural thing, no automatic thing, but an activity of faith! Consciously, actively, we must look for and gaze on our Lord's glory as reflected in the Scriptures and in the preaching! Is this what you do when you open the Word and when it is opened to you? Are you beholding your glorious Lord?

### The Glorious Change

If you are, then you are being gloriously changed, changed into the same image as our glorious Lord, even from glory to glory! We

are being transformed by this very sight! Such is the way it is and must be. You cannot behold the glory of Christ and stay the same; you must be changed. The reflection of His glory is so clear, and the power of His glory is so great, that you must be transformed by the sight of it. The vision of His glory makes you to be like Him! The sight of Him causes you to take on His glorious character so that you reflect Him!

To be in the same image as Christ — that is one of the purposes of our salvation. Romans 8:29 declares that God predestinated His people "to be conformed to the image of his Son." We are chosen to be like Him, and like Him we must and will be. For God Himself sees to this, sees to it "by the Spirit of the Lord." Already in our regeneration He saw to this, for then He worked through the Spirit to recreate us in the image of His Son. Yet it is also evident from this passage that there is an on-going work of God to make us in the image of His Son. For our text says that we are *being* changed (present tense, indicating continuous action). Throughout our lifetime, from the time of conversion on, the Spirit is at work in us to change us into the same image of our Lord. Constantly He works upon us, through our sight of Christ, to make us more like Him, to reflect more of His glory.

Make no mistake, this is real change. From our point of view this change into the same image is almost imperceptible. Slow and gradual is the work of the Spirit in us. Yet it is real transformation. That is evident, first of all, from the fact that the word "change" literally refers to a metamorphosis, a change from one form to another. Just as in the metamorphosis of a caterpillar there is change from the form of a worm-like creature to that of a butterfly, so believers are undergoing real transformation in their lives, from one form of the image of

Christ into another. They are ever making progress in their likeness to Him. This real change is also evident from the fact that we are being changed "from glory to glory," i.e., from one stage of glory to another. We think immediately of the end of our lives and the hereafter, but the point of the text is that we are being transformed into the image of our glorious Lord with each passing day. We move from glory to glory day by day, month by month, year by year. Amazing change, wrought by the Spirit of our Lord!

You understand that that does not mean we become more and more perfect in this life. It does not mean that we shall attain to some level of perfection in this world, so as to be sinless and perfectly holy and heavenly here on earth. No, that cannot be and will not be! For we are always sinful and imperfect in this life, always in the flesh and of the earth. For perfection in the image of Christ we will have to wait. Yet we are being changed into the same image as our Lord, from glory to glory! By the grace of the Spirit we are being transformed to be like Him, to reflect His glory, here and now! We are being changed into the likeness of His glorious *character* and *conduct*. As we behold Christ's glory in the Word, our hearts are filled with the knowledge of the true God, with wisdom — the knowledge and wisdom our Lord has! As we behold His glory in the Word, we are changed in holiness, so that we hate and flee sin more and more, and delight in righteousness more and more — the holiness of our Lord! As we behold the glory of our Lord in the gospel, we become more and more heavenly-minded, setting our minds on things above and laying up treasures in heaven — the heavenly-mindedness of our Lord! As we gaze on His glory in the Word, we learn more and more to be humble, self-denying, loving, obedient, trusting, even as our



Lord was. Yes, we are being changed into the same image as our Lord, made more and more *glorious* as He is! Amazing wonder of grace, applied by the Spirit!

Are you conscious of this transformation? Do you see the evidence of the Spirit's work in you? Is Christ-like character and Christ-like conduct visible in your life?

Remember, this change takes place only as we are beholding with open face the glory of the Lord! That is the Spirit's means to make us like Christ in glory. If you are failing to look for Him and gaze on Him in the Word, you cannot be changed into His image. If you are neglecting to behold Him in the preaching, you cannot be transformed from glory to glory. Only when you and I look upon the glory of the Lord are we changed. Therefore, get looking, believer! Behold Him in the Word, written and preached! Study His glory, and the Spirit will mold you into your Lord's image! Gaze on His reflected face, and the Spirit will move you from glory to glory!

### The Ultimate Goal

And then you will also reach the ultimate goal of this transformation — final glorification with Christ in heaven! That certainly is implied in those words "from glory to glory." God has determined that we shall be perfectly like His Son — sinless, holy, heavenly. And God will see to it that this purpose is achieved, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." He directs the Spirit to begin the work of transformation in us; He directs Him to continue it throughout our lives; and He directs Him also to finish it.

And so He does. That perfect transformation occurs, first of all, when the believer dies. Then according to the soul he is renewed in the perfect likeness of Christ. His sin is removed and he is made wholly holy. He is lifted out of the realm of the earthly and made wholly heavenly. He fully reflects the glory of his Lord. Such are those in glory now. But this transformation will be even more com-

plete for the believer in the return of Christ at the end of this age. Then, through the resurrection his body too will be transformed into the perfect likeness of Christ's, without sin and blemish, without weakness and disease, in perfect holiness adapted for life in the glory of the new creation. What a change that will bring! Then our sight will be perfect too, for we shall see our Lord at last "face to face" and not in a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:12).

This is our sure hope! The goal is certain, not doubtful. Not because of us and our sight of the glory of the Lord. But because of the Father's election, and the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sanctification. Because the sight and the transformation are of God alone! Let us live in the full confidence of that work being accomplished in us.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). □

### Editorial

## RFPA Publishing Merger

Last year there was a merger of two religious publishing organizations. They were not publishing giants by man's reckoning. The merger had no impact on the stock market. The religious press took no note of the event. But the merger is of interest to the readers of the *Standard Bearer*. It has importance because it affects the publishing of Reformed books.

At the annual meeting of the RFPA in September, 1995, two organizations carrying the name

RFPA merged. Although both went by the same name, they were separate organizations.

The original RFPA was formed in 1924 in connection with the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) over common grace and in connection with the founding of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The letters RFPA stand for Reformed Free Publishing Association. The purpose of the RFPA was, and is, "to witness to the truth contained in the Word

of God and expressed in the Three Forms of Unity" and "to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto" (Constitution, Art. II). The *Standard Bearer* is the publication by which the RFPA has been carrying out this purpose for more than 70 years.

Although widely regarded as the voice of the PRC, the *SB* is not the official organ of the PRC as the *Banner* is the official publication of the CRC and as the *Church Herald* is the official publication of the



Reformed Church in America. "Free," in the name Reformed Free Publishing Association, expresses that "the Association is non-ecclesiastical in the institutional sense of the word" (Constitution, Preamble). This holds, therefore, for the *SB*. Implied, according to the preamble of the constitution, is that the RFPA "shall not be empowered to levy an assessment on any church or member thereof." All these years, the *SB* has been supported only by subscriptions and by gifts from churches and individuals. This is not to hide the fact that almost half the cost of publishing the magazine has always come from collections taken in the Protestant Reformed congregations. Still, the support is voluntary, not assessed.

The reason, historically, for the non-ecclesiastical, or "free," status of the RFPA is the experience of the founders of the PRC in the early 1920s. Because they took issue with the developing party-line on common grace in the CRC, they were summarily and totally barred from writing in the house organ of that church.

As editor of the *SB*, Herman Hoeksema more than once called attention to the free status of the *SB*. He stressed that the *SB* could, and should, criticize dangerous trends within the PRC. His policy was to open up the periodical to dissenting opinions as much as possible, although the editor always had the last word.

The *SB* is intended to function as a truly free press functions in civil society.

Time may tell whether the *SB* will again serve this purpose in the PRC and whether the editor at that time will have the courage to press the truth of Scripture and the creeds against an un-Reformed doctrinal or ethical development within the PRC.

I say "again" because the *SB* served such a purpose in the late 1940s and early 1950s against the powerful, malign development in

the PRC of the doctrine of a conditional covenant, covenant promise, and covenant salvation.

Would the *SB* have resisted the alien theology in those days, had the RFPA and, thus, the *SB* not been free? Might not a majority favoring the false doctrine at some synod have silenced the editor? Or, might not a synodical majority foolishly desiring peace at any price have quieted the editorial and other columns? And if the *SB* had been unable to lay bare and defend the real issue of sovereign, particular grace, what then?

The other RFPA came into existence much later, in 1963. It was a small group of Protestant Reformed men who wanted to publish Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* and, after this, other books by Protestant Reformed writers. With the approval of the original RFPA, the new organization used the name RFPA, although the new publisher was autonomous. The official name of the new organization was "The Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature" (PCPPRL).

Beginning with Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* in 1966, this RFPA organization has published all the books and materials that are listed in the catalog of "Current Publications of the Reformed Free Publishing Assoc." The funding has been voluntary contributions and profits from the sale of books.

At its annual meeting in 1995, the original RFPA approved the full merger of the PCPPRL with itself. There is now one board and one constitution. Article III of the constitution now reads:

To effectuate the purpose contained in Article II, the Association should carry out these activities: 1. publish and distribute a magazine, to be known as the *Standard Bearer*, twice each month except during June, July, and August, during which time it

shall be distributed once each month; 2. publish in book form the writings of our Protestant Reformed professors, ministers, and educators, and good material in the Reformed tradition.

All decisions regarding the *SB* and the publishing of books are made by the (one) board. Membership on the board is determined by election by a (single) association at its annual meeting. Membership in the association is open to all who meet the requirements of article 4 of the constitution. A complete report of its decisions regarding the *SB* and the publishing of books and a financial report are submitted by the board to the association at its annual meeting.

There is, however, distinct funding of the *SB*: "The Treasurer shall keep separate financial records for the *Standard Bearer* and for the publication of books, which records will be reported separately to the Society" (Constitution, Art. VI, C, 5).

A copy of the revised constitution of the RFPA is available without charge by writing or calling the business office of the *SB*.

The purpose of the merger was the benefit of the book publishing venture.

This is a cause worthy both of the merger and of the support of the readers of the *SB*.

The books published by the RFPA are soundly biblical, Reformed works. They instruct, edify, defend the faith, warn, and bear witness to the gospel. Some are more doctrinal; others explain the Reformed, Christian life. Because they are books, their instruction and witness are more permanent than other forms of our testimony to the Reformed faith.

The purpose of the merger is already being accomplished. There has been benefit for the publishing of books. The board and its active sub-committees are publishing new books and reprinting old works in new and attractive



formats. They are energetically soliciting suggestions regarding new publications, including books that would have to be translated.

A new book catalog, in color, lists some of the new publications, as well as the books published in the past. I urge our readers to get a copy of this catalog by writing the RFPA, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418, USA. There is no cost for the catalog.

The board is also aggressively marketing the books. As money is available, they advertise. They are working at getting RFPA publications in the Christian book stores throughout North America. They are enlisting the help of the evangelism committees in the PRC

to promote sales.

The readers of the *SB* can help in this worthwhile work of publishing soundly Reformed books.

They can join the book club. Membership is now open to all. One need not be a subscriber to the *SB*. There is no membership fee. Membership is simply a commitment to buy all *new* books at a 35% discount. It entitles the member also to buy all existing RFPA publications at this same discount. The advantage to the RFPA of a large membership in the book club is that these assured sales are an important financial base.

The board of the RFPA is presently conducting a book club mem-

bership drive. Enclosed in this issue of the *SB* is a card giving information. To support the cause of publishing Reformed books as a member of the book club, fill in the card, and send it in.

Another way that readers can support the work is by contributions, large or small. There may very well be those who have a special interest in the publication of solid, Reformed books and the means to support this work liberally. Designate the contribution for book publishing. All gifts are tax-deductible.

Of course, one supports the work by buying the books.

And reading them. □

— DJE

*Special Article*

*Herman Hoeksema*

## Christian Training\*

*\* This article was originally a public lecture on Christian education given, apparently, at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan by its pastor, Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Evidently, the speech was given shortly after World War I. It is from the Martin Swart collection of handwritten transcriptions of sermons and speeches by Herman Hoeksema. It is now published for the first time. The general subject and, particularly, the specific reference to the Christian school make this speech fitting at this time of the year, when we resume the training of our children in catechism and in the Christian schools.*

— Ed.

When not so many years ago our country was plunged into the world war, the necessity of military training was impressed upon the minds of all. We had dreamed of the way of peace. In that dream we had not adequately provided for the emergency of being plunged into war. War was declared, and we were not ready. Not only were we not ready with respect to the fact that we did not have the means, the ammunition and the weapons, to carry on war, but especially with a view to trained soldiers.

What is true with respect to military training of the world is also true with respect to its spiritual and mental training. Even the world feels that spiritual, mental training is necessary, especially when certain crimes manifest themselves in an alarming way.

A lady once asked me to arrange meetings for her so that she might speak to the people at these meetings. The purpose was to warn against the sin of immorality, the sin of the seventh commandment. She emphasized that particularly that sin had passed all bounds and that it was developing at an alarming rate. She emphasized that, in her opinion, one of the chief causes of the alarming spread of immorality was lack of training in childhood. A want of education she considered to be one of the chief causes. Ignorance was, in her opinion, one of the main reasons — ignorance with respect to the life of the body and with respect to the evil effects of immorality. It was her opinion that proper training would to a large extent check this rapid development of immorality.



Of course, I did not agree with her. Knowledge is no virtue. Training does not make a good man. Education is not the cause of the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Instruction does not keep an evil man from sin. Education does not train a man in such a way that the leopard loses his spots and the Ethiopian changes the color of his skin. That is impossible. The idea of the world that education would have the result that our prisons would be vacated and we would have a better world is foolish. Education does not do that, and that is not the purpose of education. You must have a good man to train, if the result of that training is to be the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. As you cannot produce a minister in a theological school, so you cannot produce a Christian by training. That is impossible. But this is all the more reason why a Christian should train his children in the way they must go.

### The Child to be Trained

It is but natural that, when speaking on the subject of Christian education, we turn to Proverbs 22:6, where we read: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Man's life is made up of several different periods. Each has its own peculiar characteristics. Not as if you could divide man's life. Not as if you could definitely mark off and distinguish these periods in man's life. That is not the case. Man's life is organic. It follows the line of organic development. Because man's life develops organically, you cannot divide it into different periods. Rather do these different periods gradually blend into one another.

Nevertheless, these various periods in man's life can easily be distinguished. There is in the first place the period of childhood, characterized by passivity and re-

ceptivity. A child is passive. In connection with this passivity, the child is receptive. It does not take an active stand over against the world. The child receives. It is dependent. It is dependent for its food, drink, and clothing. It is dependent for its entire physical development. As it is dependent as to the development of the body, so it is dependent for its development mentally. Also from the point of view of the development of the soul the child is dependent. It receives. The child is easily impressed. It easily receives. It has a strong memory and a strong imagination. That power of the soul to receive, to store up, to commit to memory, is especially strong in the child. Therefore, the child is easily molded. It is easily shaped. Its mind is easily bent.

In this respect the child is different from the man. The man is characterized by stability. He is established in his judgments. The man has been shaped. He is not easily bent. He does not easily receive things. He does not take it all in. He does not say, as the child does, teacher said so, and therefore it must be so.

In between these two periods stands the age of adolescence, of youth. Youth is strong, in a certain sense. Youth is strong mentally. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, the apostle John says. The beauty of childhood is obedience. John writes: I write to you, little children, from that viewpoint of obedience, because your sins are forgiven. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and you have overcome the evil one. The beauty of the old man is wisdom, knowledge, understanding. Training that child, that is the purpose of education.

Usually when Scripture speaks of the child, it uses a word that has a large meaning. Especially is this true in the Old Testament. It includes not only the age of childhood up to about twelve or thir-

teen years, but also the age of adolescence, of youth. So the word is used of Moses in Egypt. So it is used of Solomon when he ascended the throne. So it is used of Samuel. In that same sense Paul uses the word in I Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Although it is hard to train the child in its youth if it has not been trained in its childhood, nevertheless, as it is to be trained, the child must be taken in its broadest sense.

Train the child in the way it must go. The original word for training is not well expressed in our English version. Training with us has a purely practical meaning. But that is not the meaning of the original word. The term in the original literally signifies: "to stuff one's mouth, to fill one's mouth." It is therefore a figurative term. It is somewhat akin to the Dutch word *opvoeden*. The term is therefore derived from the nourishing of the child physically. You must fill the mouth of the child with food to cause it to grow physically. That does not mean that your bringing that food to the mouth of the child is the cause of its growth. But it gives the child the opportunity to take that food, to digest it, to assimilate it. The child must take food, it must digest it, assimilate it, in order to grow. The parents do not cause the child to grow. But they fill the mouth of the child.

So it is with the spiritual, mental, psychological training of the child. It is often thought that it is the task of the educator to develop the child. The development of the child spiritually, mentally, and psychologically does not depend on the educator. But the educator must stuff the mental mouth of the child. As the parent brings food to the mouth of the child, so the educator must fill the mental mouth of the child. The better the



food you bring to that child, the better it will develop. But the child must assimilate it. The mental food which the educator brings is ideas. That is intellectual growth.

But that is not all. There must

not be mere intellectual growth. But through the mental mouth of the child, the will, the desires, and the heart must be reached. If it is true that the aim of education is thoroughly to furnish the man of God unto all good works, then the purpose is not intellectual attain-

ment. The educator must reach the heart of the child. He must not only stuff the mouth of the child, but he must also train it to digest, to assimilate that which he brings to the child. □

... to be concluded.

*Church and State*

*Mr. James Lanting*

## Protestant Reformed Worker Successfully Asserts Conscientious Objector Status at Union Shop

"Defendant Nichols had the right, under the religious accommodation provision of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, to make a substituted charitable payment in lieu of joining or financially supporting the labor union."

*Machinists & Aerospace Workers, Lodge 751 v. Boeing,  
662 F.Supp. 1069 (1986).*

In the past, many evangelical churches condemned labor union affiliation as incompatible with membership in the church of Christ. But almost all denominations today, including most in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, have capitulated to "pew pressure" and quietly allow their members and officebearers to join the Teamsters, the AFL/CIO, and many other godless unions notorious for their corruption, violence, and organized crime associations. Many of these denominations finally acquiesced because a ban on union membership would exclude their parishioners from many desirable occupations where union affiliation is a prerequisite for employment.

In contrast, the Protestant Reformed Churches have resolutely and consistently forbade labor union membership as contrary to

biblical principles that govern the relationship between employer and employee (e.g., Eph. 6:5-8; I Tim. 6:1, 2; and I Pet. 2:18-21). This caused untold hardships for many Protestant Reformed workers who were either preempted from certain preferable trades or who had to terminate their employment when their employer became unionized.

But these hardships are clearly no longer necessary. A Protestant Reformed employee may now work at *any* union shop or in *any* trade that requires union membership. This is because two federal statutes and recent court cases have outlawed compulsory unionization where the worker holds a sincerely held religious belief that precludes union membership. Such a worker can demand the status of a "conscientious objector" and neither the employer nor the union can retaliate so long as the union objector makes a monthly contribution equivalent to his union dues to a charitable organization.

This writer has represented several employees who resigned their union membership upon joining a Protestant Reformed church and claimed conscientious objectors' status at a "closed union shop." With permission from the parties involved, what follows is the actual correspondence in a typical case. A similar procedure is followed where a union organizes a factory that was preciously a non-union shop.

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May 17

Graphic Communications Union  
Local 415-S  
5717 S. Kedzie Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60629

Re: Union Membership Resignation  
Conscientious Objector's Status  
Employee: Glen Huisenga  
Employer: Calumet Carton Co.

Gentlemen:

Our firm represents Mr. Glen Huisenga who is presently a member of Local 415-S. Enclosed please

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



find Mr. Huisenga's resignation from the union. Mr. Huisenga informs us that he now believes that union membership is incompatible with his sincerely held religious beliefs. He and his family are in the process of joining the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church which refuses admission to union members.

Accordingly, would you kindly accept his enclosed resignation and have his records reflect his new status as a conscientious objector.

You are aware, of course, that Section 19 of the National Labor Relations Act (29 U.S.C. Section 169) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Section 701[j], 42 U.S.C. Section 2000e[j]) permit Mr. Huisenga to claim this status. I have enclosed for your perusal the decision in *Intern. Ass'n. of Machinists v. Boeing Co.*, 833 F.2d 1965 (9th Cir. 1987). In that case the U.S. Court of Appeal (9th Circuit) ruled that the Boeing employee involved was protected against being fired by the Civil Rights Act of 1972 which requires employers to make reasonable accommodation for workers' religious beliefs, unless such accommodation poses an "undue hardship" to the union. "To prove undue hardship, a union must demonstrate a widespread refusal to pay union dues," the court said.

Also please be advised that Mr. Huisenga wishes to have Local 415-S and his employer reasonably accommodate his religious views by allowing him to contribute monthly an amount equivalent to his union dues to a mutually agreed charity.

I have advised Mr. Huisenga that his conscientious objector's status will in no way affect his continued employment and scheduled promotions and advancement at Calumet Carton. We trust you understand that any direct or indirect retaliatory action taken by the union or his employer would be an unlawful violation of my client's religious freedom rights.

Would you kindly notify Mr. Huisenga immediately in writing concerning your acceptance of his resignation and contact my office to discuss the selection of a mutually agreeable charity as outlined above.

Please advise.

Sincerely yours,  
w/s James Lanting

May 17

Graphic Communications Union  
Local 415-S  
5717 S. Kedzie Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60629

Gentlemen:

Kindly accept this letter as resignation of my membership in Local 415-S, Graphic Communications Union. Union membership is incompatible with my sincerely held religious beliefs, and I wish to become a conscientious objector.

I wish you to take reasonable action to accommodate my religious convictions in this regard. Kindly notify me in writing regarding your acceptance of my resignation and conscientious objector status.

Sincerely yours,  
w/s Glen Huisenga

June 18

Graphic Communications Union  
Local 415-S  
5717 S. Kedzie Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60629

Attention: Ellis H. Davis  
Re: Conscientious Objector's Status  
Employee: Glen Huisenga  
Employer: Calumet Carton Co.

Dear Mr. Davis:

This letter will confirm our phone conversation yesterday during which you finally expressed the Union's acceptance of Mr. Huisenga's resignation. Would you kindly forward me a letter confirming this acceptance of his resignation in writing, and the union's recognition of his status as a religious conscientious objector.

You also requested that I furnish you with a number of charities to which Mr. Huisenga's monthly contributions are to be paid. I am in the process of consulting with Mr. Huisenga and will furnish you with these shortly.

We appreciate your prompt attention and response to this matter. Should you have any further questions regarding my client's resignation from your union, kindly contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,  
w/s James Lanting □

#### FEDERAL LAWS EXEMPT UNION OBJECTORS

Two unrelated federal laws now exempt religious conscientious objectors from supporting labor unions. See text above for an explanation of these laws which provide in pertinent part:

##### Section 19 of the NLRA

"Any employee who is a member of and adheres to established and traditional tenets or teachings of a bona fide religion, body, or sect which has historically held conscientious objections to joining or financially supporting labor organizations shall not be required to join or financially support any labor organization as a condition of employment; except that such employee may be required ... to pay sums equal to such dues and initiation fees to a non-religious, non-labor organization charitable fund...." 29 U.S.C. § 169.

##### Title VII, Civil Rights Act

"The term 'religion' includes all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief, unless an employer demonstrates that he is unable to reasonably accommodate to an employee's or prospective employee's religious observance or practice without undue hardship on the conduct of the employer's business." 42 U.S.C. §2000e(j).



# Redemptive-Historical Preaching and Preaching Christ Crucified (2)

It is in the context of Christ-centered preaching that we must understand the discussion over redemptive-historical preaching vs. exemplaristic preaching.

In an important writing on this subject (*The History of Redemption in the Preaching of the Gospel*, by B. Holwerda) the author states that really the origin of redemptive-historical preaching is to be found in "an ongoing discussion and debate which stirred the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands during the 1930s." It is the author's contention that during this crucial period of time in the Netherlands many ministers in the Reformed churches were guilty of preaching which could only be characterized as "exemplaristic." It was Dr. Klaas Schilder who raised a voice of protest against this kind of preaching and insisted on redemptive-historical preaching, an insistence which played at least a partial role in his ouster from the Reformed Churches in the early 1940s.

I may use the definitions offered in this book to clarify what is the difference between the two types of preaching. Exemplaristic preaching, according to the author,

"treats Biblical history as a number of independent happenings which are examples for us." Redemptive-historical preaching, on the other hand, "understands the historical accounts in their relation to each other, in their mutual inner unity, in their relation to the center of salvation history." To put the differences in another way, we may say that the one method uses Bible narratives to find examples of how we are to live; the other finds Christ and His work of redemption even in sacred history. The one has to do with "practical" preaching; the other with more "doctrinal" preaching.

Although it is not of major concern to us at the moment, it might be well to mention, at least in passing, that true preaching in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ has from the beginning of the new dispensational era been redemptive-historical. It is a bold statement to suggest that this began with Dr. Klaas Schilder. Surely no one can deny that the preaching of the Reformers of the 16th century was redemptive-historical. Timothy George, in his *Theology of the Reformers*, points out that Luther insisted that preaching "must be true to its proper content, which is Christ." And A. Skevington Wood, in his *Captive to the Word*, devotes an entire chapter to "Luther and the Christ-centeredness of Preaching."

But however that may be, what is of greater importance to us is the fact that those who so strongly defend redemptive-historical preaching seem to set it over against exemplaristic preaching. And in setting the former over against the latter, the latter is denied as a valid method of preaching. That strikes us as a mistake.

I Corinthians 10:11 speaks in so many words of the "examples" of the lives of Old Testament saints. It is true that the crucial word in that passage can be translated "types," as the defenders of redemptive-historical preaching maintain. But it is also true that the context compels us to translate the words as "examples" and not as "types." Referring to Israel's sad history in the wilderness and the judgments of God which came upon the people for their disobedience, the apostle Paul declares: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (not types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

This ought not to surprise us, for Scripture is much more bold than merely to hold up the saints as examples to us. Scripture insists that God Himself is our example, when in Ephesians 5:1 we are told to be imitators of God. And Christ is emphatically described as an example of patience

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*Transcript of speech delivered at the graduation of Richard Smit and Cheah Fook Meng, on June 17, 1996.*



in suffering for well-doing (I Pet. 2:21). Should it surprise us then that the saints also whose lives are described in Scripture are held up for examples? Hebrews goes so far as to claim that these very saints are a cloud of witnesses who testify of the power of faith, and whose faith we are to emulate.

But this does not mean that we are opposed to redemptive-historical preaching. Indeed we are not. All preaching ought to be redemptive-historical. Even exemplaristic preaching. The problem is to set the two over against each other as if it is a matter of either-or. The fact is that it is both-and.

Those who want to set the two over against each other can easily fall into mistakes. It is true, as the author of the above named book points out, that exemplaristic preaching can deteriorate into mere homilies and a sort of dogoodism. He himself gives two striking examples: Jesus' invitation to attend the wedding at Cana of Galilee becomes an example of how newly-married couples ought to invite Jesus into their marriages. And Jesus' cleansing of the temple is a homily on how we ought to purify the worship of God. No Reformed man preaches that way — or ought to preach that way.

But to exclude from exemplaristic preaching the fact that the lives of the saints serve as our example upon whom the end of the ages is come is equally to fall into the error of finding types and shadows of Christ in Scripture where there are none and where Scripture itself does not give direction. Then it is easy to make the purple cord by which Rahab let down the two spies from Jericho's walls a type of the blood of Christ by which we escape from our own spiritual Jericho. And Rahab's faith is no longer an example to us. Soon that kind of preaching becomes allegorical and is a kind of preaching which gives license to ministers to make of historical texts anything their vivid

imaginations are capable of making out of them.



All of this leads to the question of what constitutes a Christ-centered sermon. And to this we now turn.

Christ-centered preaching is preaching which is God-centered. That first of all. Christ is the Word of God in whom is the fullness of the revelation of Jehovah God in all His infinite perfections. Preaching which is properly and truly God-centered is preaching which extols the greatness of the glory of God and brings the people of God to give all praise and honor to Him who is enthroned on high.

Secondly, Christ-centered preaching is doctrinal preaching. God reveals Himself in Christ in all the truth of His own divine being. He speaks in Christ of Himself. When I speak of doctrinal preaching, I mean exactly such preaching which explains, expounds, and develops the truth of the Word of God who is the full revelation of God Himself. Such doctrine as is proclaimed in Christ-centered preaching is doctrine which is to be proclaimed for its own sake. While certainly it is true that preaching attempts to apply the truth of God's Word to the life and calling of the people of God, doctrinal preaching is, in its own right, good and attractive, desirable for the people of God, for by it they come to know the God who loves them. And there is blessedness in knowledge for its own sake, for eternal life is, according to Jesus own words, to know God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

Christ-centered preaching is antithetical preaching. This means a number of things. Antithetical preaching is preaching of sovereign and eternal predestination in both election and reprobation. When the late Herman Hoeksema introduced a series of radio sermons on predestination, he called this topic the heart of the gospel

— that is, that which pulses in the whole of the preaching and gives to the gospel its life and power. It is the truth of God's eternal purpose to save some and damn others. This antithesis is realized in the cross on which Christ both attained salvation for His people and brought the judgment of God upon the unbelieving. "Now is come the judgment of this world...."

That antithesis extends to the gospel itself. It extends to the contents of the gospel, for the gospel is addressed to the people of God. It is the good news from heaven; but that good news is for those whom God loves and for whom Christ died. It is good news to those who believe. For the rest it is bad news indeed, for it is the solemn warning of God that apart from faith and repentance is death and everlasting desolation. This distinction must be made explicit in the preaching so that everyone who hears knows that the gospel is a savor of life unto life, but also of death unto death. And this is because the gospel is also, just as its good news is for the elect, the power to save them and them alone. The gospel brings antithesis, division, separation. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, and to them only.

Antithetical preaching calls the people of God to live an antithetical life in the world. That is, it calls them to live that life which is a constant witness of the power of heaven, of citizenship in the kingdom of Christ, which kingdom is in heaven. It is not only a calling, however, but also the power itself to live such a life in this present evil world so that the antithesis of the gospel is manifested in the walk of those saved by its power.

It is immediately clear that such Christ-centered preaching is also exemplaristic preaching. Scripture is filled with examples of saints whose lives testify to us in calling us sharply to live as they lived. To ignore this is to ignore



an important part of Holy Writ. We are summoned to a holy walk by the testimony of others whose witness rings throughout the pages of Holy Writ.

There is much need of practical preaching. But at that point where practical preaching is no longer doctrinal preaching, it ceases altogether to be preaching. Practical preaching is in the truest sense of the word doctrinal preaching.

But let us be sure we get it straight. Such exemplaristic preaching is also Christ-centered. We are called to be imitators of God Himself, Scripture tells us; but we are called to be imitators of God *as dear children*, made to be such by the power of the cross. Peter does not exaggerate when he implores us to follow in the footsteps of Christ Himself in enduring the suffering which is our lot, for Christ is an example. But He is our example, as Peter goes on to say, because He suffered, the Just One for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God; for by His stripes we are healed. All the saints serve as our example because they were given the power

of a new and sanctified life in the redemptive power of the cross. If Scripture is not afraid to depict them in all their sins, it is that we may find that they are sinners as we are. But their noble and astonishing lives of faith are our examples because, if they were as sinful as we are, the power of faith in them can carry us also to the pinnacles of trust in God.

And finally, Christ-centered preaching is preaching which leads God's people to the cross. Every sermon has got to lead God's people to the cross. That is the only place for them to go. That is where they want to go. That is where they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.

There are two reasons why preaching always leads to the cross. The first is obvious: God's people, overcome with the consciousness of their sins, need to be led to the cross that they may find there forgiveness and pardon, for it is in the redemptive power of Calvary that alone can be found full and free forgiveness of sin. But God's people need to go to the cross also so that they may find in

that cross of Christ the grace and strength to walk as God's people in the world. They possess not this strength of their own. They have no ability to do such things as Scripture requires of them. They need the power of the cross. And when Christ-centered preaching leads them to the cross, then they learn to rely upon it alone, to seek their strength and life from Christ and Him crucified, and to put their trust in that cross.

Let it be known to God's saints: In the cross is indeed the power of a new life.

If you, beloved graduates, will only understand what it means to preach Christ crucified, to preach nothing else, ever, than Christ crucified, then you will be faithful servants of Christ to bring a gospel into this sorry world which brings heaven to earth, salvation to God's people, and glory to God alone. Make your motto and take as the polestar in all your ministry those ringing words of Paul in the conclusion of his letter to the Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). □

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Steven Key*

## Adam, God's Covenant Friend

As a unique creature who was created in the image of God, man was also created a covenant creature. Adam was created God's covenant friend, to reflect the blessed friendship and fellowship of God's own covenant life.

The truth of the covenant is a truth that we count precious. To

us it is an essential element of our Protestant Reformed heritage as we maintain the truth of Holy Scripture. The truth of the covenant is, in fact, as a golden thread that runs through the whole of Scripture and brings all of doctrine to a personal level of rich experience and enjoyment. Let us review that truth briefly.

### **The Covenant God**

To understand Adam's place as a covenant creature requires

that we see God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. God is Triune. It is not my intention to develop that truth now. That has been done in this column in the past. I only summarize. God is three Persons in one divine Being. He reveals Himself, therefore, as a *covenant* God. What does that mean?

We speak of the covenant as a bond or relationship of fellowship and love. Intimate friendship is one way to describe the essence of

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*Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.*



the covenant. If you think of the idea of a true and close friend, that will help you to remember what the covenant means.

God is a *friendship* God, a God of fellowship and love. He is that in Himself.

God is a *family* God. He is that in Himself.

The three Persons know each other, love one another, and have perfect fellowship with one another in the sphere of eternal goodness and perfection and life. In the Trinity each Person lives the entire divine life and fullness in His own personal way, but always in fellowship and unity with the other Persons. There is perfect fellowship and communion, a blessed relationship of love. The three Persons of the one divine Being rejoice together in their mutual communion of love.

This fellowship is God's own covenant life. This life of God is complete and perfect. He has no need of anything or anyone outside of Himself. Man cannot enrich God's life in any way.

What, then, does that covenant life of God have to do with us? And why, then, do we speak of God establishing His covenant with man? To ask that question is to ask why God has taken *us* into His fellowship. The answer is so profound, we barely touch the surface. God willed to do it! God's sovereign good pleasure and immeasurable goodness is the only explanation. It may be wholly inadequate to our human understanding, but that is the truth of Scripture and one that we joyfully receive by faith.

God is God alone. Adam was God's Adam. Adam's power was God's power; Adam's talents were given him by God alone. God is the Creator and Possessor of all things. Man cannot do anything that he does not already owe, nor bring anything to God that is not God's from the very beginning. And not only was that true of Adam; that is also true of us. So

Jesus instructs His disciples in Luke 17:10: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

This means that a very common conception of the covenant is found wanting. Most often the covenant between God and man is explained as an agreement or a contract, within which there are promises to man on God's part and obligations which must be fulfilled by man. The trouble is, the idea of man meriting *anything* with God is clearly contradicted by the Scriptures. Man is always in a position of obligation to God. We do nothing for Him. There is only One who could merit anything with God, and that was Jesus Christ, who alone realizes the covenant between God and man.

But, positively, the covenant as it applies to man and as it applied to Adam in the beginning is this: It is the living relationship of fellowship between God and Adam.

### **Man's Life in God's Covenant Fellowship**

Adam was created to be a partaker of God's own covenant life! He was created God's covenant friend, to reflect the blessed friendship and fellowship of God's own covenant life.

Psalm 25:14 reflects upon that covenant fellowship that God established with Adam (and with all those who are in Christ Jesus): "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

Can you possibly conceive of anything more wonderful than to live as a partaker of the perfect family life of the Triune God?! Can you? He is the living God! He is the One in whom is no darkness, the God of infinite goodness and perfection. At His right hand there is nothing but pleasures forevermore!

Consider all the wonders of

this creation. All those wonders speak of the glory of God, of His Godhead, of His power, of His wisdom.

Is it not an incomprehensibly wonderful thing that God would create Adam, and you and me, to share in the divine fullness, to be partakers, as the apostle Peter says, of His divine nature?!

Is it not an astounding truth, that God created a man to love as He loves, to know as He knows, to think as He thinks, to seek the things that He seeks? Is there anything higher than that?

That is *life*, you understand, the highest and most perfect bond of love which is life. It was that divine life of perfect fellowship and friendship that was reflected in Adam and that he experienced in the relationship to God in which he was created. The Most High God revealed Himself to Adam, and Adam entered into fellowship with God. He was the friend-servant of the living God.

On the basis of Adam's having been created in God's own image, Adam's heart was knit to the heart of God. His will was in harmony with God's will. He heard God speak, and he understood. God hid nothing from Adam, but opened His heart to him; and Adam did likewise.

God entrusted to His covenant creature the lordship over all the works of His hands, making Adam king in all the vast creation. And Adam served and glorified His Creator in all that he thought and said and did.

That was the living bond of fellowship and love in which the first man stood to his God.

Friend-servant of the living God he was, living in covenant fellowship with God on the earthly plane.

But as highly as he was exalted, so deeply has man fallen!

God created man His covenant friend. But Adam did not regard his rich blessedness and honor. He thought he saw something better.



He would *himself* be God! Becoming unfaithful to his Friend-Sovereign, man violated the covenant of friendship, rejected the Word of God for the lie of Satan, and became the enemy of God and the friend of the devil. And the righteous God, who is not mocked, slays him. Dying we die, the objects of divine wrath. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Nevertheless — and this is the wonder of the gospel — the God who is faithful to His eternal pur-

pose maintains His covenant. For He purposed to raise its revelation to the higher level of heavenly and everlasting perfection in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is covenant life in Jesus, by the wonder of sovereign grace!

How beautiful it is when the dead sinner hears the voice of the Son of God, when he is called from darkness unto light, and lives again in the consciousness of God's fellowship and love! How blessed is the moment when the sinner cries out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," and when he hears the

gospel of his salvation, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

How wonderful it is when Christ restores that image of God in man, giving His elect and regenerated children true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness!

But how much greater shall that blessedness be when we no longer have to contend with the corruption of this flesh, and when we shall experience perfectly the covenant fellowship of our God in heavenly glory! That will be glory indeed! □

*A Cloud of Witnesses*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

## Hendrik De Cock: Reformed Reformer (2)

### Introduction

Reformers are strange people. They do not seem at first glance to be cut out for the role. As a matter of fact, if one measures their abilities by human standards they are the world's worst people for the work into which they are thrust.

The reason for this is that the reformation of the church is God's work. We confess in our Heidelberg Catechism that the Son of God not only gathers His church, but He also defends and preserves it. That is, the work belongs to Christ, not to men. This does not mean that Christ does not use men; He always does. But He uses the most unlikely so that it may be evident that the work is after all His.

When we look at this fact from the viewpoint of those who do the work of reformation, we discover that this great truth translates into a naive unawareness on the part of reformers that they have been thrust into the role which they occupy. They never gave thought to being a reformer; they had no intention of becoming a reformer; indeed, if the idea had been suggested to them, they would have considered it preposterous. In fact, Luther himself spoke of being carried along by a tidal wave of events over which he had no control. And the last thing De Cock was thinking about was himself as a reformer in the church. For Luther, or Calvin, or De Cock, or anyone else to think of himself as a reformer would immediately have disqualified him for the work. Such is the irony of God's ways.

So these men do not set about the work of reforming. They have been conquered in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has sealed the truth indelibly upon their consciousness and who has given them the determination (often courageous) to go quietly about their business of doing what has to be done — which consists mostly of the simple act of preaching good, Bible-centered sermons.

So they never aspired to being reformers. They never considered themselves to be such unlikely people. They were astonished and not a little afraid at the forces that had been unleashed in the church through their work. Nor did they "count noses" to see how many would go along and then postpone moving ahead in the work until they were assured of a following. They simply did what had to be done — in humble reliance on divine grace. God did the rest.

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*Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*



And so Hendrik De Cock preached to growing crowds in the small church in Ulrum.

### The Work Of Reformation

A number of events, each somewhat small in itself, brought De Cock's work to its climax.

The more emphatic De Cock became in his preaching, the larger grew the crowds. And the larger grew the crowds, the stronger was the opposition. The growing throngs forced the Consistory to propose enlarging the auditorium. Even though the people themselves brought up the money, the wardens responsible for all building projects refused permission and overruled the desires of the congregation. It was the first hint of persecution.

In 1833 De Cock published a pamphlet which included the Canons of Dordrecht. In the introduction to the pamphlet De Cock spoke of "a return ... to the true service of God ... which had been forsaken by a majority of the population as it had turned to the idols of man's corrupted and darkened reason." This did not endear those who wanted nothing so much as the Canons forgotten in the churches.

As the crowds grew, many people from other congregations wanted De Cock to baptize their new babies. They could not, in good conscience, have their babies baptized in their own churches, partly because the old Baptism Form had been replaced with other heretical practices and liturgy, and partly because if the old Form was still used they could not answer "Yes" to the question whether they believed that the doctrine taught in their church was the truth of God's Word. After careful consideration, consultation with others and with his Consistory, and through anxious prayer, De Cock baptized these children. This infuriated the authorities. It was in fact this issue which was brought to Classis by De Cock's colleagues

in protest against him.

A committee of Classis was appointed to investigate, during which investigation De Cock came out with a pamphlet with an imposing title and one not calculated to appease the enemies of the truth: *"Defense of the True Reformed Doctrine and of the True Reformed Believers, Attacked and Exposed by Two So-called Reformed Teachers, or the Sheepfold of Christ Attacked by Two Wolves and Defended by H. DeCock, Reformed Teacher at Ulrum."* Both men referred to were colleagues who had themselves written against De Cock and the things for which he stood.

The Classis in the meantime met. De Cock pleaded with Classis to permit him to defend his views on the basis of Scripture. But he was refused, and in an illegal meeting he was suspended from office

in order to maintain law and order in the Reformed Church, to protect the name and honor of the ministers of the Gospel, and to prevent more disorders, divisions, and revolutions in several congregations in our Fatherland; ... if preachers as DeCock were not halted in their reckless enterprise, this Board fears the worst.

While ecclesiastical machinery was grinding along, De Cock submitted to his suspension and stayed off his pulpit. But as the case wound its way through the assemblies another issue was added, the issue of hymn singing. De Cock had written the preface to a pamphlet in which the author, a layman, had attacked the singing of hymns in the church. The title of the pamphlet is intriguing: *The Evangelical Hymns Weighed, Tested and Found to be too Light.* It was De Cock's conviction, and correctly so, that heresy had come singing into the church through hymns which had taken the place of the Psalms in the worship services.

And so tensions continued to rise. They reached a kind of climax when Scholte (later to settle and establish a colony in Pella, Iowa), known to be friendly to De Cock, was forbidden to preach for De Cock, so that a modernist could occupy the pulpit. The congregation did not take kindly to this, and the police were called in to prevent what was a near riot.

### Secession

Though De Cock had patiently and humbly submitted for nearly a year to the illegal suspension of the Classis, he remained the object of hatred. His colleagues did everything to make his life miserable. Slandorous talk was everywhere published about him and his wife. The ecclesiastical assemblies forced him to pay the expenses of their case against him. He was never granted a hearing and was told to submit unconditionally to the assemblies or he would never preach again. When he asked for a transcript of the decision, he was mockingly told to copy it himself and the president openly derided him as he proceeded to do so.

But the faithful people of God in the country were appalled that an honest and godly pastor could be treated in such a way for doing nothing but urging faithfulness to the historic Reformed faith. And God in heaven worked His sovereign work to do what had to be done to preserve and defend His church.

Upon returning from the assembly to his home, he found his two year old daughter very ill. She died six days later, and the burden of great grief at the loss of a covenant child was added to his grief at the apostasy of his church.

Scholte came to comfort the grieving family. The Consistory asked him to preach that Friday night, October 10, 1834. The Provincial Board refused him permission to preach on the Lord's Day; so he preached in an open field



from a wagon. And De Cock saw that the only hope for his sheep lay in secession.

And so it came about. It was Monday evening, October 13 that the Consistory came together. The *Act of Secession* was drawn up after some discussion, signed by the two elders and three deacons, and presented to the congregation where it was signed by 67 members and 63 heads of families who had not made profession of faith — a total of 247 souls.

The document is so important that parts of it ought to be quoted. Using Art. 29 of the *Confession of Faith* as its guide, it declared that the Church of which the congregation had been a part had lost the marks of the true church and that, therefore, "it has now become more than plain, that the Netherlands Reformed Church is not the True, but the False Church, according to God's Word and Article 29 of our confessions." The document binds those who sign it to be obedient to Article 28 of the same confession and "separate themselves from those who are not of the Church, and therefore will have no more fellowship with the Netherlands Reformed Church, until it returns to the true service of the Lord." The document expresses the "willingness" of those who sign it "to exercise fellowship with all true Reformed members, and to unite themselves with every gathering founded on God's infallible Word, in whatever place God has also united the same." It specifically states that the congregation is determined to be faithful to Scripture, to return to the three Forms of Unity which are "founded on that Word," to "order our public religious services according to the ancient ecclesiastical liturgy," and to return to the Church Order of Dordrecht.

"Finally, we hereby declare," so the document concludes, "that we continue to acknowledge our unjustly suspended Pastor.

"Ulrum, the 13th of October,

1834. (signed) J. J. Beukema, Elder; K. J. Barkema, Elder; K. A. van der Laan, Deacon; D. P. Ritsema, Deacon; Geert K. Bos, Deacon."

### Persecution

Neither De Cock nor his congregation escaped the heavy hand of persecution. They thought they would be free to go their own way and worship in peace, for the government had an official policy of religious toleration and every heresy under the face of the heavens was taught in the Netherlands and in the State Reformed Church. But this is not the way it goes for the cause of Christ. Every heresy is indeed tolerated — but the truth is not. There is no room for God's truth in this world nor in the apostate church.

De Cock was not long alone. He had been joined already by Rev. Scholte, and he was to be joined by three other ministers, one of whom was Albertus VanRaalte, who brought some of the Seceders to Holland, Michigan. And the number of people who followed the leaders grew rapidly so that seceder churches were organized throughout the land.

But it was a bitter and difficult struggle.

De Cock himself was forbidden to preach in his own congregation, was expelled from the parsonage, and was finally forced to settle elsewhere among friends.

Soldiers were sent to Ulrum and to other places where the seceders had established separate congregations and were billeted in the homes of the seceders. These people, usually from the poor, were forced to feed and shelter the soldiers, tend to their needs, live their lives with the soldiers always present, and try to endure their cruelty, godlessness, and depravity.

The seceders were also forbidden to hold any meetings with

more than a few people present, so that it was difficult, if not impossible, to gather in worship on the Lord's Day.

If any regulations imposed on them were broken, they were fined vast sums of money. And if they were unable to pay the fines, true of most of them, their possessions were sold in Sheriff's sales so that their fines could be paid to the government. If even this did not suffice, they were imprisoned. De Cock himself spent three months in prison separated from wife and family.

These saints paid the price of faithfulness.

It was only after two or three decades and many concessions to the government that persecution eased. But many came to America where they could live in peace and enjoy the freedom to worship God according to the Scriptures. In them lies the beginning of our own churches.

De Cock died at the age of 41 on November 14, 1842 in the province of Groningen. He did not live long, nor did he see his followers gain rest from suffering. But he had served his purpose according to the will of God, and the time came for others to continue the work.

De Cock was a man of humble life, from our point of view unfitted for the greatness of the work. His followers were, for the most part, the poor, the uneducated, the despised, the ignoble of the land. But, for all that, they were the godly, the pious, the upright who genuinely thirsted for that one true heavenly Bread which is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Together God used them to bring genuine reformation to his church. □



## The Reformed Family: Enemy Within

*"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*

Ephesians 5:11

A good sturdy outside door on our house is important. Because of the increasingly high incidence of burglary in our society, this door functions more as a barricade than an entranceway. The door is usually solid steel; the window, if any, very high so no thug can break the glass and easily unlock the door. Often it features a dead bolt. No easy access with a credit card here. Many doors also have a peephole to ensure that all who enter are friend or family. The alarm system wired to this door is intricate and sensitive because the foe outside is real and deadly. The havoc he wreaks is frightening. We are determined he will not cross our threshold.

Does our door also have a splash of blood on the doorpost? Has the husband/father of our home, in the interest of his family's welfare, taken hyssop, dipped it in blood, and painted the lintel and two side posts with blood (Ex. 12:22)? Has he indicated hereby that Christ is inside this home and Egypt is outside?

Are we certain that the enemy whom we wish to thwart is outside our home? Or, has Egypt already tracked his filthy feet into

our home? Has Egypt even now made himself at ease in our family room? Is it possible that the enemy within our home is more deadly than the enemy without? "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).



Way back in the 1930s two authors gave us a dark vision of our future society. Their visions were totally opposite, but similarly hopeless. I remember how the first book, 1984, by George Orwell, frightened me. Orwell predicted a culture under the supervising eye of Big Brother. He envisioned a society held in check by authoritarian repression. Torture, terror, and brain-washing would characterize this period until its members would be psychologically manipulated, their minds controlled by the Party. In this completely bureaucratic society, man would merely be a number (I had just gotten my social security number), never an individual. Of course, it would be necessary to ban the books; knowledge to a freedom-loving people is heady stuff.

I read Orwell's book in my late teens, and its message seemed all too possible. Russia, the Giant Bear, was pawing its way to the forefront as a political power, threatening the destruction of the Western nations by thermonuclear weapons. At least during one hour

in that history, America had stood nose to nose with this ferocious bear.

In describing the mind-manipulating which Big Brother would impose, Orwell coined the word "doublethink." "Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (1984, p. 176). Hence, a person no longer has any awareness of the difference between truth and falsehood. Here is a world of the graying of all terms, the fogging of all ethics, morals, and judgments.

Scary reading. But, except for that doublethink, one need not have worried.

Aldous Huxley's book, *Brave New World*, was far more subtle and difficult to understand. It was not nearly as frightening because the book seemed much too farfetched. I read it quickly, and dismissed it summarily. Huxley depicted a culture whose technologies undid its capacity to think and make judgments. In Huxley's society its members are subjected to mind-altering drugs, subliminal propaganda, and sub-conscious persuasion to control the mind and behavior. In this world, all standards of morality are forgotten. Pleasure reigns supreme. Truth is irrelevant. Ban the books? In Huxley's society there would be no need for this drastic measure; man would willingly give himself over to mindless pursuits.

I should have been more concerned, but we didn't even own a

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*Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.*



television at the time. Nor did most of our family or friends.



For those of you who are interested enough to read and weigh the following quotes, I encourage you, wherever possible, to form groups to discuss and react to the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, by Neil Postman, 1985. In this important book, Postman convincingly shows that television is the archenemy of higher order thinking, public discourse, family communication, and moral uprightness. It is pure show business, from switch on to switch off. Television is the fulfillment of Huxley's envisioned society — drowning oneself in pleasure and entertainment, becoming a culture of inconsequential claptrap. Graphics and fleeting images have usurped the time-honored activity of reading. Postman irrefutably proves that almost every program seen on television from political debates, to church services, to commercials, to news broadcasts, is pure entertainment.

Or, is entertainment the Reformed Christian's inalienable right?

"Twenty years ago, the question, Does television shape culture or merely reflect it? held considerable interest for many scholars and social critics. The question has largely disappeared as television has gradually *become* our culture....This, in turn, means that its epistemology goes largely unnoticed. And the peek-a-boo world it has constructed around us no longer seems even strange" (p. 79).

"There is no more disturbing consequence of the electronic and graphic revolution than this: that the world as given to us through television seems natural, not bizarre" (p.79).

"...television's way of knowing is uncompromisingly hostile to typography's way of knowing; that

television's conversations promote incoherence and triviality; that the phrase 'serious television' is a contradiction in terms; and that television speaks in only one persistent voice — the voice of entertainment" (p. 80).

"The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject matter is presented as entertaining ..." (p. 87).

"No matter what is depicted or from what point of view, the overarching presumption is that it is there for our amusement and pleasure. That is why even on news shows which provide us daily with fragments of tragedy and barbarism, we are urged by the newscasters to 'join them tomorrow.' What for? One would think that several minutes of murder and mayhem would suffice as material for a month of sleepless nights. We accept the newscasters' invitation because we know that the news is not to be taken seriously, that it is all in fun, so to say" (p. 87).

"Television is our culture's principal mode of knowing about itself. Therefore — and this is the critical point — how television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged. It is not merely that on the television screen entertainment is the metaphor for all discourse. It is that off the screen the same metaphor prevails.... Americans no longer talk to each other, they entertain each other. They do not exchange ideas; they exchange images. They do not argue with propositions; they argue with good looks, celebrities and commercials. For the message of television as metaphor is not only that all the world is a stage but that the stage is located in Las Vegas, Nevada" (p.93).

"And in saying that the television news show entertains but does not inform, I am saying something far more serious than that we are being deprived of authen-

tic information. I am saying we are losing our sense of what it means to be well informed. Ignorance is always correctable. But what shall we do if we take ignorance to be knowledge?" (p. 107-108).

"Television is, after all, a form of graven imagery far more alluring than a golden calf" (p. 123).

"Television's strongest point is that it brings personalities into our hearts, not abstractions into our heads. That is why CBS' programs about the universe were called "Walter Cronkite's Universe." One would think that the grandeur of the universe needs no assistance from Walter Cronkite. One would think wrong. CBS knows that Walter Cronkite plays better on television than the Milky Way. And Jimmy Swaggart plays better than God. For God exists only in our minds, whereas Swaggart is *there*, to be seen, admired, adored. Which is why he is the star of the show. And why Billy Graham is a celebrity, and why Oral Roberts has his own university, and why Robert Schuller has a crystal cathedral all to himself. If I am not mistaken, the word for this is blasphemy" (p. 123).



As Reformed Christians we have said nothing yet about the problem of drama. Or, isn't drama a problem with us anymore? Are the apostle Paul's words no longer relevant? "That they all might be damned who ... had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thes. 2:12). Or, his indicting words to the Romans: "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. 1:32).

People whom one wouldn't allow to step over one's door sill are already comfortably ensconced in the family room, saving us the uncomfortable decision of refusing



them entrance. The village slut, the whoremonger, the adulterer, the homosexual ("let it not be once named among you ..." Eph. 5:3) trumpets his iniquity; the violent man, the Sabbath desecrator, the Christ blasphemer, the dishonorer of father, mother, teacher, and every other authority named under heaven exalts his sin; the covetous man boasts of his cupidity; the

silly, inane cartoon mesmerizes the toddlers with mindless blather; the commercial celebrating "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die" — but not yet, the ad promoting this or that godless lifestyle, causes even the boldest among us to avert our eyes.

Is there no ruddy young lad in the land who will cry out to this Goliath: "This day I will smite

thee, and take thine head from thee ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (I Sam. 17:46)?

"Doublethink."

"Amusing Ourselves to Death."

Will this be inscribed on our doorpost? □

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ The Only Name Whereby We Are Saved

In the June issue of this magazine, we quoted a letter from a minister in the Reformed Church who claimed that salvation was possible outside of Christianity ("God is truly known in a saving way by others in their own respective religious traditions"). One might wistfully think that such a view is rare — at least in the Reformed community. Sadly, that is not true today.

The Reformed Ecumenical Council, meeting at Calvin College in Grand Rapids this past June, has faced the issue and proposed a study committee to consider the matter.

Darrell Todd Maurina, URNS press secretary, reports:

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (June 7, 1996) URNS — A few short weeks after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter declared to an astounded crowd in Jerusalem that "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Nearly two thousand years later, the meaning of that passage in Acts 4:12 has become a subject of intense debate among professing Christian theologians. If a recom-

mendation of the REC theology conference is adopted, it will also become a subject for study in the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

In a June 7 presentation to the Reformed Ecumenical Council, its theology conference reported that "in view of the growing importance of the subject a study committee should be appointed by the interim committee to make an in-depth study of a) the many-faceted problems of religious pluralism, b) the biblical view of other religions, c) what all this means for the communication of the gospel to the present world." The theology conference also suggested "that the REC print and distribute widely the papers read at the theological conference and ask the General Secretary to bring it to the attention of the member churches."

Dr. Klaas Runia, retired rector of the theological seminary of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands at Kampen, presented a paper that touched also on this subject — and created quite a stir! He explained the different views, as reported by Maurina, as follows:

Runia — long regarded as one of the most prominent conservatives in his denomination — surprised some delegates by the closing paragraphs of his speech.

Runia noted that professing Christians have historically taken three approaches to the relationship between Christ and adherents of other religions: an "exclusivist" approach declaring

that there is no salvation apart from an explicit profession of the name of Christ, "inclusivist" approaches which appreciate non-Christian religions but "refrain from saying that the non-Christian religion can itself save a person" and that "it is always Christ who saves by his hidden presence in the other religion," and what Runia termed "the 'pluralist' or 'liberal' approach" which "no longer has place for the unicity of Jesus Christ."

While noting that "the exclusivist approach was generally held by the Christian Church up to the Middle Ages and by the Reformers" and "is also held by the great majority of evangelical theologians," including those who drafted the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, Runia said the "inclusivist" position dates back to the second-century theologian Justin Martyr and is held today in various forms by a number of Roman Catholic leaders. Runia cited W.E. Hocking, William Cantwell Smith, John Hick, and Paul Knitter as examples of modern "pluralist" theologians — Hocking going to the point of stating that "the missionary will look forward, not to the destruction of these religions, but to their continued existence with Christianity, each stimulating the other in growth toward the ultimate goal, unity in the completest religious truth."

How do such theologians deal with Scripture passages such as Acts 4:13 (sic), John 14:6, and I Timothy 2:5 which appear to teach exclusive claims of Christ? Runia cited Knitter as an example of a Roman Catholic theologian

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



who "believes that these passages apply to Christians only."

"When Christians see Jesus as the way, the life, and the truth, they actually say no more than that this is the way they personally experience Jesus," Runia said regarding such views. "Knitter ranks it with the exclamation of a husband to his wife: 'You are the most beautiful woman in the world.' We have to do with 'love' language, which means that the passages I quoted should not be taken in an absolute sense, but as confessions that hold true within the Christian community only."

Runia's paper clearly distanced himself from such views. "This is the reason I take my starting point in the resurrection of Jesus Christ," said Runia. "This, in my opinion, is the only proper point of departure for getting a good and reliable picture of the real Jesus."

However, Runia was not willing to go as far as many exclusivists in declaring that no one can be saved apart from an explicit profession of faith in Jesus Christ. "Does this mean that there is no truth in all the other religions and that all the adherents of the other religions will be lost forever?" asked Runia.

Runia explained his views further:

In a subsequent interview, Runia confirmed his quote regarding the possibility of the Christian God hearing prayers to Allah but gave further explanation to his views. "I don't want to identify the concept of God in Islam with our concept," said Runia. "The fact that we have Jesus Christ makes our concept of God so different from theirs."

"Would the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ not hear such a cry? Would he close his ears?" asked Runia. "I don't think so. I can't believe that God would not have heard the cries of the Old Covenant people when they cried out in Auschwitz."

Dr. Roger Greenway, professor of missions at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, was one of several

who spoke in favor of the "uniqueness of Christ" in salvation:

"I think the gospel stands or falls on this issue," said Dr. Roger Greenway, professor of missions at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids and convener of the REC committee appointed after its 1992 Assembly to draft a document on the uniqueness of Christ. "This is not a peripheral issue, and if we hedge on this we are forfeiting our right to be called Christians."

Greenway agreed with other speakers that much of the debate arose from the fact that most modern Christians did not have close contact with adherents of other religions until recent years. "A lot of Christians have not thought this through because they have not been confronted by other worldviews," said Greenway. "Neither Bavinck nor Kuyper dealt extensively with other religions, so we need to look at this ourselves."

However, Greenway was willing to grant Runia's point that some Dutch Reformed theologians had not been insistent on the "exclusivist" position. "I have not been very satisfied with the history of Reformed theologians to be clear-cut in their presentation and defense of exclusivism," said Greenway. "They have held back in a way I find surprising."

Greenway predicted that the issue of the uniqueness of Christ was likely to become a divisive issue in the Christian community. "I think there's going to be a refining in both ways; some will come to a clear and more articulate faith and others will say it really isn't that important after all," said Greenway.

The *Press* had a letter from Rev. Sierd Woudstra, minister in the Christian Reformed Church. In it, he too presents some disturbing ideas concerning salvation.

I noted that the departure of Rev. Richard Rhem and his Spring Lake congregation from the Reformed Church of America now seems a foregone conclusion (*Press*, May 20).

I do not know Mr. Rhem. Nor do I know enough about his views to have an overall judgment. For myself I wish a fine, conservative denomination like the RCA, instead of forcing a parting of the ways, would have treated this conflict as a challenge to study the questions raised.

As to Holy Scripture, there can be no doubt that it should be read in its cultural context. If my own denomination, the Christian Reformed Church, had more fully realized this, it might have avoided the lengthy controversy on women in church office.

On the matter of salvation, it is my conviction that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. I also profess to believe in Jesus Christ. I also profess to believe in Jesus as my own savior and Lord. My church assures me that means I am heaven bound. Yet something keeps troubling me.

I am painfully aware that a majority of the world's people are not Christians, and, barring a divine miracle, never will be. Also, throughout history countless numbers of people, many of them not Christian believers, have lived and died in a hell on earth. Only recall the millions slaughtered under Stalin, the holocaust, Red China, Cambodia, Rwanda and, more recently, Bosnia.

Fine Christian minds have long held that it is unthinkable that following their hell on earth the almighty would send them to another hell, one far worse than the first and presumably lasting "forever."

Could it be that evangelical churches have too narrow an understanding of the Gospel? Since salvation is by grace alone, may we perhaps hope that, through Jesus Christ, the almighty has ways and is powerful enough to bring the majority of the human race into his eternal kingdom? The Bible offers plenty of openers for that belief.

Dr. Roger Greenway is correct: "The gospel stands or falls on this issue.... This is not a peripheral issue, and if we hedge on this we are forfeiting our right to be called



Christians." That is a clear and strong statement. I do wonder if he or others in the CRC will follow through with this conviction as pertains to the public writings of Rev. Sierd Woudstra.

These strange sounds arising from "Reformed" camps are clearly in violation of Scripture and our creeds.

To relegate such a clear teaching of Scripture (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; I Tim. 2:5; Rom. 10:13-15; etc.) to the trash heap on the claim that these "passages apply to Christians only," or, "that it should be read in its cultural context" is to deny the infallibility and inspiration of Scripture. It is to render all mission work foolish and even wrong; it is a denial of the mandate of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20. It introduces "another gospel" which

calls forth the condemnation of Revelation 22:18-19.

Those who deny these clear Scriptural truths who are within the Reformed camp are also in violation of the Formula of Subscription which presumably all officebearers have signed. The Reformed creeds present clearly the Scriptural truth that salvation is only in Christ and in the way of believing upon Him.

It is human reasoning and "logic" which conclude that a "loving" and "gracious" God *cannot* allow billions to go to hell only because they never heard the gospel or were destined to be born and raised in the realm of one of the other religions of this world. This reasoning, which contradicts the teachings of Scripture, *does* logi-

cally follow out of such views which insist upon a "common" grace of God and a universal love for all of mankind, or an atonement which is for all without exception.

One cannot help but be struck by the rapidly changing theological scene. When "Reformed Christians" seriously propose that salvation is possible outside of belief in Christ and without confession of sin and while still in the darkness of heathendom, when world religions begin to unite, then clearly the end is near. The second beast of Revelation 13 is materializing before our very eyes. Remember Greenway's warning: "This is not a peripheral issue, and if we hedge on this we are forfeiting our right to be called Christians." □

## Book Review

*Our Reformed Church Service Book*, by G. Van Rongen. Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada or Pella, Iowa: Inheritance Publications, 1995. 250 pages. \$13.90 (U.S.). (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. R. D. Decker.]

This book is about another book, *viz.*, the *Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter*. This latter contains the synodically approved Psalm texts and tunes and hymns, the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity, Orders of Worship, Liturgical Forms, Form Prayers, and Church Order of the Canadian (and American) Reformed Churches.

In *Our Reformed Church Service Book* Rev. Van Rongen, an emeritus minister of these churches, gives a history of the English Bible. He has a helpful essay on "Church Singing" which includes a history of singing before, during, and after the Reformation, as well as a history of both Psalm and Hymn singing.

Van Rongen gives a brief history of each of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. Brief commentaries on and histories of each of the Liturgical Forms (including the Form Prayers) are given. There is also

an introduction to *The Church Order*.

Obviously the book is applicable and especially valuable for the members of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The non-Canadian reader, however, will profit from those sections of the book which deal with the singing of the church and her creeds and confessions.

The author's otherwise pleasing and easy-to-read style is marred by his use of the first person personal pronoun. Any future re-printings ought to be carefully proofed so that the few spelling errors (emiritus for emeritus, e.g.) are eliminated. ■

## News From Our Churches

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

### Minister Activities

Rev. and Mrs. Mahtani, of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, were blessed with the birth of their seventh child, a healthy baby girl, named Mary, born on July 10.

Our congregation in Doon, IA formed a trio consisting of Candi-

date Richard Smit and Revs. Audred Spriensma and Arie den Hartog. Voting was held on July 14 with a call being extended to Candidate Smit, and he has since accepted that call.

On July 24th, the congregation of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC met and

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger



extended a call to Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma to serve as their pastor.

### Evangelism Activities

The congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC sponsored a Community Bible Study on three successive Tuesdays, July 20 and August 6 and 13, in their church. The subject considered on these three nights was "Calvinism: The Doctrine of Grace." Edgerton's intent with these classes was to demonstrate carefully from the Bible the doctrine of grace, following the five points of Calvinism. Edgerton's entire congregation, along with family and friends of the congregation, were encouraged to attend and be refreshed and edified in their knowledge of these fundamental truths.

Our Hope PRC in Walker, MI, through the efforts of their Reformed Witness Committee, sponsored a special worship service on Sunday evening, July 21. We say special only because of the extra effort Hope's congregation put into inviting those outside their church to worship with them that evening. The sermon that evening, delivered by Rev. R. Dykstra, and based on Ephesians 2:8, 9, was entitled "Saved by Grace," and was meant to explain the beautiful truth of God's unconditional election.

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC received from the Hendry Correctional Institution, Office of the Chaplain, Immakalee, Florida a letter which read, in part:

There's a large number of Hispanic inmates at Hendry and many don't read English. That is why I asked for literature in Spanish so that those men can be reached by your ministry also.

Did you know that the Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Holland, MI has overseen the printing of several pamphlets and books in the Spanish language? The request to Randolph for Span-

ish literature was therefore forwarded to First of Holland.

### Congregational Activities

Rev. Rodney Miersma became the third undershepherd of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada at an installation service held July 19 at Immanuel. Rev. A. denHartog of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA led the service, preaching on a theme taken from God's Word found in Isaiah 6:1-8. The following Lord's Day Rev. Miersma preached his inaugural sermon, based on I Peter 1:23-25 and entitled "God's Eternal Word." Rev. Miersma and his wife, Sharon, were officially welcomed by the congregation the following day with a picnic in a park in Lacombe.

The Council of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, on the recommendation of its Building Committee, adopted a set of conceptual drawings to submit to their congregation for approval. Work is now being done on investigating costs, financing, etc. with the hope of having a proposal concerning building ready for the congregation in the coming months.

At their annual congregational meeting held in early June, the congregation of the Byron Center, MI PRC approved a proposal to install air conditioning in their church building.

At the same congregational meeting in which our Kalamazoo, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. Bruinsma, they also made decisions concerning a new parsonage. It was decided to hold off on building a new parsonage until such time as the Lord provides them with a new undershepherd.

### School Activities

At an Association meeting of Adams Street Christian School, held in early July, a proposal for building expansion was approved. Restroom facilities and three classrooms will be added. Work has already begun, with anticipated

completion expected by this month.

### Mission Activities

We extend our congratulations to the members of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland, who by God's grace and purpose were organized into a congregation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on July 24. Now they are known as the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland.

We can also inform you that Prof. D. Engelsma, of our seminary, conducted the organizational service, preaching a sermon entitled "I Will Build My Church," based on God's Word in Matthew 16:18. Two elders were elected: Mr. Desmond Callender for a three-year term and Mr. John Clarke for two years. The two deacons elected were Mr. Ivan Reid for three years and Mr. Jonathan McAuley for two. A group of 98 were in attendance for this historic event, with a representative from the local paper there as well. We rejoice with them and thank God for His blessing upon our mission work there. May God bless this beginning and ever cause the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland to stand as a pillar and ground of the truth.

### *Food For Thought*

"I have no more conception of a true believer without morality, than of a river without water, or of a sun without light and heat."

— Toplady □

### NOTICE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

(or their parents)

We would like to send the **SB** to our college students. Please inform us of the college addresses as soon as possible. Thanks!!



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and the congregation of the Grace Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to the family of

#### ELDER GERRIT VAN DEN TOP,

who passed into glory on July 7, 1996.

May they find comfort in the Word of God, II Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Rev. M. Dick, President  
Don Lotterman, Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 12, 1996, the Lord willing, our beloved parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. RICHARD BLOEM,**  
will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the Christian love they have shared throughout those years and for their Christian guidance to us.

It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to keep them in His care.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting unto those that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

❖ James D. Bloem (in glory)

❖ Keith and Janice Gort

Timothy, Jonathan, Jeffery

Jenison, Michigan

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Grace PRC expresses their Christian sympathy to June VanDenTop and Gerald and Clara VanDenTop in the death of their husband and brother,

#### GERRIT VAN DEN TOP.

May they find comfort in the Word of God, II Corinthians 4:17, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Larry Meulenberg, President  
Beth DeVries, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Doon PRC expresses their sympathy to fellow officebearer, Alan DeBoer and his family, in the death of Alan's sister,

#### ARLOA DeBOER.

May they find comfort in the knowledge that, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Edwin VanGinkel, President  
Gene VanBemmel, Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JOHN KALSBECK, Jr.,**  
celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on August 26, 1996.

We are thankful to them for our covenant upbringing and their godly example. We pray that the Lord will bless and keep them through many years to come. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

❖ Joel and Jory Mulder

Kylie, Collin

❖ Jay Kalsbeek

❖ Tim and Gwennan Engen

❖ Chad and Erika Stuit

❖ Dan Kalsbeek

❖ Kristin Kalsbeek

❖ Trevor Kalsbeek

❖ Alex Kalsbeek

❖ Kenton Kalsbeek

❖ Ethan Kalsbeek

Grandville, Michigan

### NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who prefer hearing the *SB* to reading it. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC  
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

### NOTICE!!!

Annual Meeting of the RFPA  
September 26, 1996, 8 P.M.  
Grandville PRC

Speaker:  
Rev. Charles Terpstra

Topic:  
"The RFPA —  
*Stimulator of Sound Knowledge in an Age of Ignorance*"

(Four new board members will be elected from a nomination consisting of Don DeJong, Leroy DeVries, Arnold Dykstra, Leon Garvelink, Jon Hop, Marinus Kamps, Gordon Schipper, Mark VandenBerg.)

### Cassette Tape

of Recent Public Lecture:

**"Trying the Spirits"**  
by Rev. M. Joostens

Scripture's examination of evangelical issues facing the church today, such as:

Women in Office  
Promise Keepers  
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