



# *The Standard Bearer*

*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*

At the beginning of the new year our prayers ascend to Thee, O Thou great Jehovah, who dwellest in the high and lofty place, far beyond all that is creature.

We are Thy servants, Lord. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants.

...for then we shall behold ever more clearly Thy glory, and beholding Thy glory we will see the beauty of Thy glorious perfections and Thy own blessed covenant life. And thus, O our great God, establish Thou the work of our hands.

See "A New Year's Prayer" — p. 147

*Vol. 73, No. 7  
January 1, 1997*



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## In This Issue ...

Two contributions feature prominently in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Neither author is (or was) a minister. Mrs. Deborah Benson exercises her office as a Christian to prophesy against the widespread turning from the preaching of the Word of God for "experientialism and emotionalism." Read "The Church at the End of the 20th Century: Courting Harlots."

Martin Swart's essay is about the right way to conduct family visitation. An elder many times in the First PRC in Grand Rapids in years past, Mr. Swart opposed the practice of conducting family visitation by means of a set topic. "That would defeat the very purpose of family visitation." Since this practice is increasingly popular among us, consistories might consider Swart's objections. The article was originally an essay given to the Men's Society of First Church. Are our societies still a forum for such papers by the members of the congregation?

Rev. Jason Kortering's article on "Demon Possession" will prove provocative. Drawing on his experience in a heathen culture in Singapore, the PR minister-on-loan affirms that "demons take possession of a person." See our missions rubric, "Go Ye Into All the World." We look forward to a further article, or further articles, on the subject.

In the heathen culture of the United States, the legalization of the murder of the unborn is quickly being followed by the legalizing of self-murder, as well as the assistance of another's self-murder. Read Mr. James Lanting's "Church and State" column.

—DJE



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# A New Year's Prayer

*Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*

Psalm 91:16, 17

At the beginning of the new year our prayers ascend to Thee, O Thou great Jehovah, who dwellest in the high and lofty place, far beyond all that is creature.

We are Thy servants, Lord. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants.

We think of Thy work in all Thy wide and vast creation, even since the dawn of history, and until our Lord returns; Thy work throughout the ages as it centers in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; Thy work of salvation as it involves us, our place in our families, in the church, and in the midst of this present evil world. Give us eyes to see and hearts to understand all Thy wonders that introduce the coming of Thy kingdom and the glory of Thy matchless name.

We would not even dare to ask this if we did not know something about Thy work. We have Thy infallible Word in which Thou givest us Thy Self-revelation, making known to us on its inerrant pages

all Thy glorious virtues as Thou livest Thine own blessed covenant life as Triune God in Thyself and in intimate love and fellowship with Thy people, of whom we form a portion.

We have Thy sure promises. For already in the dispensation of shadows Thou didst assure Thy saints of the coming of the Savior. In the fullness of time He came, suffered, died, and is gone into glory, soon to return to make all things new. Thou hast partly withdrawn the veil, that we may behold the mystery of salvation, the wonder of Thy saving grace as our covenant God. O Jehovah, how great Thou art!

In the light of Thy Word we may behold Thy work in Thy wide and vast creation. We see the splendor of the innumerable stars of the night; Thou knowest them all by name. We behold the beauty of the sunrise and the radiance of the sunset. We hear Thy voice in the rumblings of the thunder, in the sighing of the wind, in the melodious song of the wren. Yea, all creation announces a new creation. For we also hear the groaning of the creature which with uplifted head patiently awaits our final adoption and our heavenly perfection. For that Thy name is near Thy wondrous works declare.

Thou hast given in our hearts the resurrection life of our risen Lord. As Thy servants we also groan as we patiently await our final redemption. For we know that all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is Thine

forever and ever. Our earthly pilgrimage is but a preparation for the real life still to come!

We know Thee, the true and living God, and knowing Thee we have life eternal!

\*\*\* \*\*

Yet, O Jehovah, Thou eternal, unchangeable, ever faithful covenant God, make Thy work known to Thy servants.

That which happens round about us distresses us. Especially now in these evil days horror grips our hearts as we see that wickedness abounds, and we are daily reminded that the end of the ages is rapidly, very rapidly, approaching.

Proud man, who is of the dust of the earth, dependent upon Thee for every breath he takes, for every thought that flashes through his mind, for the very use of his fingers, has cast Thee out of his thoughts and out of his life, even out of Thy creation, maintaining that he is God.

He dares to boast of his omnipotence. He displays his great accomplishments. He takes credit for the great advancements in the past century, as we have progressed from the horse and wagon to the huge trucks that rumble over the freeways; from the buggy and sleigh to the modern automobile; from mail delivery by stage coach to E-mail; from the simple farm house to the modern home with central heating, running water, bathrooms, and all its appliances and conveniences; and from

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



the feather-tipped ink pen to the computer. And there is much more. We have come a long way in one century, and mere man takes all the credit.

Man claims to be omniscient. He contends that anything he can imagine he can also do. He builds computers which are improved and outdated almost as fast as the plans leave the drawing board. He makes automobiles that are not only attractive, but can travel at high speed with great comfort both in the summer and in the winter. If one wishes he can plan his whole life in advance on his computer, make use of the instruments in the future. He is always in a hurry, and must do everything at top speed as if there is no tomorrow.

Man even dreams of being omnipresent. He sends his voice anywhere, even to the ends of the earth. As soon as something happens, or very soon thereafter, the news is flashed on the television screen into thousands of homes. Man lays claim to the whole earth.

Man also claims the heavens as his domain.

1. He sends satellites into the sky to search out the entire universe. He sets up powerful telescopes to reach beyond our solar system to constellations and stars many light years away. He sends a spaceship to the moon, to Mars, and to farther planets to investigate what can be found there. How great he is!

In the meantime lawlessness abounds. Scripture warns us that the last days will be characterized by such lawlessness as has never been seen on the earth. That is happening. We bitterly bemoan the slaughter of the Jews during Hitler's regime, yet today those in authority sanction the murder of millions of babes in embryo or at birth. Crime is on the increase: there are too many guns and knives in the wrong hands. No one is safe anymore anywhere. Many of our medicines and other products must be safeguarded with double seals. Automobiles,

homes, and property must at all times be safely locked.

But worst of all is the apostasy that runs rampant. True, many have no religion, or have a religion of convenience. But even those who profess to take their religion seriously resort to all sorts of false doctrines. In some "Reformed" circles the very inerrancy of Scripture, or verbal inspiration, is denied. Accepting the results of historical and scientific investigation rather than the truth of Scripture, men call into question the wonder of creation as recorded in Genesis, as well as the wonder of the incarnation. What does one have left? As our Lord warned us: When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?

O Lord, all this transpires before Thy very face. Thy name is dishonored, Thy people are despised as the offscouring of the earth, Thy church is as a hut in a vineyard, a besieged city!

\*\*\* \*\*

Almighty God, sovereign Ruler of the universe, let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, for then we shall behold ever more clearly Thy glory, and beholding Thy glory we will see the beauty of Thy glorious perfections and Thy own blessed covenant life. And thus, O our great God, establish Thou the work of our hands.

Give us to understand that we are saved *purely by grace*, in no way dependent upon us.

We are sinners who deserve only Thy just condemnation. We are dead in trespasses and sins, capable only of despising Thee and all that is holy, willfully transgressing all Thy commandments. We *may* be saved only because Thou lovest us with an eternal love which is so great that Thou didst not spare Thy Son from dying our accursed death in our stead to save

us and merit for us eternal life. We *can* be saved only because Christ implants His resurrection life in our hearts. We are *willing* to be saved only because Christ "produces (in us) both the will to believe, and the act of believing also" (Canons III/IV, 14). We *must* believe, not only because of the objective demand of Thy Word, but because of our subjective need for salvation. By the wonder of Thy grace wrought in us we *do* believe, embracing Christ and all His benefits. Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification — in one word, our full redemption.

Thou hast made us willing servants in Thy house, each in his own place with the gifts and talents entrusted to him, that we may be instruments through which Christ carries out His work, gathering, defending, and preserving His church in the line of continued generations of those who believe. Thou hast called us to be prophets declaring Thy praises, priests devoting ourselves in love to Thee, and kings having dominion over sin, in order that we may live and reign with Christ forever.

Father, we still have this treasure in an earthen vessel. Sin still wars in our members. We have but a small beginning of the new obedience. Yet Thou who hast begun a good work in us wilt surely finish it unto perfection!

Yea, Lord, establish Thou the work of our hands, that we may faithfully serve Thy purpose, as by Thy Fatherly hand

Yea, Lord,  
establish Thou  
the work  
of our hands,  
that we may  
faithfully serve  
Thy purpose....

Thou dost uphold and govern all things for the salvation of our souls. Not a hair falls from our heads except to serve Thy divine purpose. Rulers, kings, and all in authority may rage, but Thou hast set Thy King upon the holy hill of Zion. All power is entrusted to Christ in heaven and on earth. All things, literally all things must work together for good to those who fear



Thee, the called according to Thy purpose.

Thou art for us, nothing can be against us. We come forth out of our present battlefield with dented helmets, chipped swords, breastplates awry, shoes worn out — yet more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ. We enter the rest, where all tears are wiped away forever!

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Come, Lord Jesus.

We wait upon Thee as watch-

ers wait for the morning.

In the meantime, our God, establish Thou the work of our hands. Preserve and defend us over against all the onslaughts of the powers of darkness. Give us Thy grace to realize that with Thee we are always the victors.

Use us, Thy willing servants, according to the talents entrusted to us, in the midst of our families, in the midst of Thy people, in a present evil world, wherever Thou dost place us, that we may in our small way be instrumental toward the coming of Thy kingdom and

the glory of our Father's name.

Keep us close to Thee, that in Thee we may experience close communion of life with our God, resting assured at all times, that, come what may, His is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever and ever.

Come, Lord Jesus, according to Thy promise, that when all our works are burned as straw and stubble, Thy work in and through us may be our eternal reward. Yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it.

Yea, come quickly! Amen. □

## Editorial

# A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant

In the July, 1996 issue of this magazine, the Rev. Cecil W. Tuininga, Reformed minister in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, defended the doctrine of a conditional covenant with the children of believers. This doctrine teaches that God on His part makes His covenant with all the children of believing parents alike. At baptism, He promises every child that He will be the child's God and that the child will be God's child. Since the covenant provides salvation, God promises every child that He will save him. But the covenant is conditional. Made by God with every physical child of believing parents, the covenant depends for its maintenance and continuance with the individual child upon the child's faith. If the child will later

fulfill the condition of faith, the covenant will continue with him. If the child refuses to believe, the covenant that God made with him is broken.

The promise of salvation made by God to every child alike at baptism is conditional. The condition is the child's act of believing. If the child will fulfill the condition of believing, God's promise to him will be realized in his salvation. But if the child refuses to believe, God's promise to him will fail of realization. The child will perish, despite the fact that God once promised him eternal life in Jesus Christ, just as He promised eternal life to the children who are saved.

In the same issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I responded briefly to Rev. Tuininga. In order to clarify

the issue and make some progress in the debate, I asked that, if Rev. Tuininga wrote again, he would answer specific questions that I put to him. These questions take us to the heart of the issue in the controversy between defenders of a conditional covenant and those who teach that God's covenant with believers and their children is unconditional. These were the questions:

1) Does the promise that, according to Rev. Tuininga, is made by God to every child of believing parents express God's covenantal love for every child?

2) Does this promise indicate that God sincerely desires to save every child of believing parents?

3) Does this promise rest upon and flow from Jesus Christ's death for every child of believing



parents? Did Jesus Christ shed His blood for every baptized child of believing parents?

4) Among the benefits included in the promise to every child, is faith included? Does God at baptism promise to give every child faith?

5) With regard to the second principal part of the doctrine of holy baptism in the Reformed "Form for the Administration of Baptism" that Rev. Tuininga uses, is it Rev. Tuininga's understanding:

a) that God the Father witnesses and seals to every baptized child that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with the child and adopts him or her for His child and heir, on the condition that the child will believe;

b) that God the Son seals to every baptized child that He washes the child in His blood from all his or her sins, incorporating the child into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, on the condition that the child will believe;

c) and that God the Holy Ghost assures every baptized child that He will dwell in the child and sanctify the child to be a member of Christ, applying unto the child that which he or she has in Christ, on the condition that the child will believe?

Rev. Tuininga has indeed written again on the subject of the covenant of God with the children of believers. He has answered the questions that I had proposed. His letter follows, in its entirety.

This letter is in response to your comments on my letter in the *Standard Bearer* of July 1996. Before I answer your questions I wish to point out, as I read this response, that you are putting words into my answer that are not there. With Dr. Hendriksen I made very clear that the condition of faith *cannot* be fulfilled by man. That is God's work. But the condition is so clearly stated in Romans 11 that I fail to see how anyone can deny it. That man is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) does not remove the

condition that in order to be saved he must believe. God never removed from fallen man his responsibility to love God and serve Him, which he can do only by faith, a faith that he can exercise only by God's grace. I want to repeat that I have never stated anywhere that the condition of faith can be fulfilled by man. But that this is a condition that God demands cannot be denied (see Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:6; Gal. 3:14, 24; etc.)

To answer your questions:

1. Yes, God does express His love for every covenant child.

2. Yes, God does desire to save every covenant child.

3. No, Jesus shed His blood only for those given Him by the Father.

4. No, faith is a condition that a covenant child must fulfill but can only fulfill by God's grace (Eph. 2:8). If they do not fulfill this condition they are cut off the covenant tree (Rom. 11:22).

5. a. Yes, God makes an eternal covenant with all who are born into that covenant. To every covenant child God says: You are my child. Yes, the covenant child can break that covenant and be cut off from the covenant family. Many covenant children do indeed so break covenant and are indeed cut off (Rom. 11:22).

b. and c. We must say, yes indeed, these rich and beautiful assurances are given to every covenant child. But the child can reject them and sad to say, many do; and Hebrews 6 does indeed teach this. In stubborn unbelief they reject God and His rich promises. Covenant breakers will indeed receive the greater punishment.

Now allow me a few questions:

1. Is every baptized child, according to your position, elect and hence saved? How then answer for those who reject the covenant promises? Do they not break covenant with God?

2. Does God not love and desire the salvation of all those within the covenant? If not, why did Jesus weep over the covenant breaking Jerusalem with the words, "How often I wanted to gather your children, ... but you

were not willing" (Matt. 23:37)? How else can we understand Romans 10:21?

3. And in this connection, does God not desire the salvation of all men? If not, how do you interpret I Timothy 2:3, 4? Shall we do a little revising and say that by "all" God meant the elect? But then the Word of God would have said so! Shall we say that it means "all different kinds of people"? If that was the intention of the Holy Spirit, it would have been clearly stated. If this is not the clear message of Scripture, that God desires all men to be saved, then what does it say? For a good Reformed answer to this question read Calvin on 2 Peter 3:9 and Dr. Herman Ridderbos in *Paulus*, (p. 393). But the Canons of Dordt are also very clear when they state: "As many as are called by the Gospel are unfeignedly called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come to Him. He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe" (chap. III-IV, Article 8).

The fault with Arminians is that they apply human logic to God's Word and conclude that if God calls men to faith and repentance it must mean that man can come of his own free will and that Christ died for all men. Hyper-Calvinists, in applying logic to Scripture, come to exactly the opposite conclusion, namely, that since God from all eternity has elected some to salvation and bypassed "the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (Rom. 9:22), it must follow that God cannot seek these non-elect vessels of wrath with an honest and earnest call of Gospel. And so we proceed to reject clear teachings of Scripture. I would be very happy to see our Protestant Reformed brothers come to recognize and correct their hyper-Calvinism and become truly Reformed.

Sincerely in the Lord,  
Cecil W. Tuininga

The answers of Rev. Tuininga to my questions are remarkable for



their candor. This is how theological debate, like all discussion among Christians, should always be carried on. But such is by no means the case. Such is not always the case in doctrinal discussion. Such is certainly not the case in the controversy with those who defend a conditional covenant. It has proved difficult to get defenders of a conditional covenant to acknowledge their position and its implications with the frankness of Rev. Cecil Tuininga. One can read extensively in their literature without finding the unambiguous statement, "God loves every child of believing parents with His covenantal love." One can press them vigorously without ever getting them to admit in so many words that baptism represents God's sincere desire to save every child of believers. One cannot escape the impression that they deliberately avoid clarity and frankness at the crucial points because they themselves hesitate to own up to the implications of their doctrine.

Whatever the explanation, this lack of candor obscures the real issues for many. The result is that the controversy between defenders of a conditional covenant and those who hold that God's covenant is unconditional never makes progress toward a clear resolution in Reformed circles.

What invariably happens is that the defender of a conditional covenant refuses to state that his doctrine comes down to this, that God has a universal covenant love for all boys and girls born to believing parents, which universal love depends for its efficacy upon the human condition of faith. The defender of a conditional covenant refuses to state this, even though this is obviously the necessary implication of the position that he argues. Since the defender of a conditional covenant will not state this himself, the advocate of an unconditional covenant charges this against the doctrine of a conditional covenant. At the same time,

he points out that this was essentially the heresy that the Reformed churches condemned at Dordt. Whereupon the defender of a conditional covenant cries, "Foul!" complaining that the advocate of an unconditional covenant is putting words in his mouth and is accusing him of teaching an error to which, in fact, he is opposed.

In refreshing contrast to the typical ambiguity of a defense of a conditional covenant, Rev. Tuininga makes a candid confession of the character of a conditional covenant. This is to his credit. This can only serve the cause of truth.

The significance of his candid confession is that it makes plain to everyone what is, in fact, the real character of the doctrine of a conditional covenant, wherever and by whomever it is taught. And it is taught widely in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. No doubt, it is the majority opinion. Very few stand with the Protestant Reformed Churches in confessing an unconditional covenant.

In order that the real character of the doctrine of a conditional covenant may be clearly seen, let us place each of Rev. Tuininga's frank answers immediately after the question to which it is the answer. In what follows, my questions appear in italics; Rev. Tuininga's answers are in regular type.

1) *Does the promise that, according to Rev. Tuininga, is made by God to every child of believing parents express God's covenantal love for every child?*

Answer: Yes, God does express His love for every covenant child.

2) *Does this promise indicate that God sincerely desires to save every child of believing parents?*

Answer: Yes, God does desire to save every covenant child.

3) *Does this promise rest upon and flow from Jesus Christ's death for every child of believing parents? Did Jesus Christ shed His blood for*

*every baptized child of believing parents?*

Answer: No, Jesus shed His blood only for those given Him by the Father.

4) *Among the benefits included in the promise to every child, is faith included? Does God at baptism promise to give every child faith?*

Answer: No, faith is a condition that a covenant child must fulfill but can only fulfill by God's grace (Eph. 2:8). If they do not fulfill this condition they are cut off the covenant tree (Rom. 11:22).

5) *With regard to the second principal part of the doctrine of holy baptism in the Reformed "Form for the Administration of Baptism" that Rev. Tuininga uses, is it Rev. Tuininga's understanding:*

a) *that God the Father witnesses and seals to every baptized child that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with the child and adopts him or her for His child and heir, on the condition that the child will believe?*

Answer: Yes, God makes an eternal covenant with all who are born into that covenant. To every covenant child God says: You are my child. Yes, the covenant child can break that covenant and be cut off from the covenant family. Many covenant children do indeed so break covenant and are indeed cut off (Rom. 11:22).

b) *that God the Son seals to every baptized child that He washes the child in His blood from all his or her sins, incorporating the child into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, on the condition that the child will believe;*

c) *and that God the Holy Ghost assures every baptized child that He will dwell in the child and sanctify the child to be a member of Christ, applying unto the child that which he or she has in Christ, on the condition that the child will believe?*

Answer: We must say, yes indeed, these rich and beautiful assurances are given to every covenant child. But the child can reject them and sad to say, many do; and Hebrews 6 does indeed teach this. In stubborn unbelief they reject God and His rich promises. Covenant breakers will indeed receive the greater punishment.



Surely, the candid answers to these questions alert every professing Calvinist to the fact that at stake in the controversy over a conditional covenant is the grav-

est issue. At stake is the issue that lies at the heart of the Reformed faith, the gospel revealed in Holy Scripture and defended in the Canons of Dordt. This issue is the sovereignty of the grace of God in the

head and mediator of the new covenant.

Nothing less. □

— DJE  
(to be cont.)

*Contribution*

*Mrs. Deborah Benson*

## The Church at the End of the 20th Century: Courting Harlots

At the end of the 20th century God is pleased to withdraw Himself from men. This is nowhere more painfully witnessed than in the visible church on earth, that earthly body which, in order to live (in Christ), must ever remain faithful with respect to her end: that all things be done to the glory of God. In the 20th century the church, in following after the world, has shifted her underpinning principle from the glory of God, to a philosophy and theology that is man-centered. The church has corporately left the pursuit of the knowledge of God and His Word, to court the harlots of experientialism and emotionalism *as an end in themselves*. And this has resulted in the neglect, and finally the loss, of the knowledge of God's character and of His Word. This is nowhere more clearly seen than in the worship services and external activities of the church. If we desire to preserve our generations in the inheritance of the kingdom of

heaven, we must be zealous to look long and hard at the church of today, and at ourselves as individuals, to determine whether or not we are "courting harlots."

In Leviticus 10 we find the record of Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron who decided to come before God in the newly built tabernacle with "strange fire." God had told them exactly how He was to be worshiped, and they had devised their own method of placing fire on the altar, in direct disobedience to God's command. As a remarkable revelation of the gravity of this sin, God immediately struck them dead with fire from heaven. Our Lord says in Matthew 5:17, 18, "Think not that I came to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

This and every Old Testament law applies today, *in principle*. We are given instruction in the New Testament about what to do in the worship service. Our Lord says in John 4:23, 24: "But the hour cometh and *now is*, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the

Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Worshiping "in spirit" refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, without the use of physical or earthly "props" (John 14:16, 17); and "in truth" refers to the Word of God, which is *the* living truth (John 1:1, 2; I Thess. 2:13; Acts 17:11). In the New Testament He commands that in the worship service we *preach the Word: sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; pray; give tithes; and administer the sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper*. Nothing else.

Is this exactly and only what we do, or do we go to worship with all kinds of "strange fire"? In the church today we may witness the following as part of the worship service: skits, puppet shows, soloists, candles, idols of all kinds (manger scenes, statues, various biblically thematic paintings including Christ, Bethlehem walks, etc.), missionary reports, concerts, Sunday school programs, liturgical dance, responsive reading, holy laughter, and many more. *Strange fire!* While some of these things may be appropriate in another setting, *in the worship service* they are "strange fire." That for which we

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have received instruction from God's Holy Word, we may not add to, subtract from, or neglect, *as did Nadab and Abihu*, or we are "court-  
ing a harlot."

"Strange fire" in the worship service is only one result of "court-  
ing harlots." All throughout the life of the church there is evidence of that courtship. God's Word declares in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowl-  
edge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

As you are driving around, pay attention to the signs at churches and Christian schools, advertising the latest "harlotry" to entice people into the church. God declares that He will draw His people with His *living* Word and Spirit — but the church today does not trust the faithful proclamation of that Word, or is not satisfied with the results our Sovereign God is pleased to produce. The church is going to use skits, seminars on everything from soup to nuts, puppet shows, self-helps, biblical dramatizations. And the list goes on and on to include anything that feels good and fills the pews. Along with the "harlotry," many take God's Word and change it to fit the "sensitivities" of the audience. Sin is a mistake, homosexuality is an inescapable orientation, women preachers are filled with so many gifts that they can bypass God's command, creation is a matter of "interpretation," murder (by abortion) is choice, etc.

Do not be numbed because everybody "feels good," and is sincere, and the pews are full. The pews were full in the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, and they are full today. The church of that day was painfully sincere, so much so that many of

God's people were martyred for their reform. Would anyone dispute that, *as a whole*, that branch was cut out of the tree of life? If you dispute this, you must ask yourself, "Does God's character and Word mean anything at all to me?"

With respect to knowledge of God's character and of His Word, the church at large pays little attention. It is astounding to note that in the day of experientialism and emotionalism, the majority of the churches' children are herded *out* of the worship service. God requires (OT and NT) that God's people worship and grow in spiritual *knowledge* as a family. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," and the church is depriving the children of the preaching of God's Word, God's primary means of grace (Rom. 10:14, 15).

Though there are many examples to demonstrate the current "harlots at large," I offer the following two examples:

First. Recently I saw a write-up for a "Bethlehem Walk," which read in part as follows: "This bustling town from history filled with *smells, sights, sounds, and things to touch* will flood the senses and make memories for family traditions.

Please begin to pray even now that the Holy Spirit will use this event to impact each visitor for *eternity*" (italics mine). The direct focus is on having the *experience*, so that faith might be produced and might work eternal salvation. Romans 10:17 says,

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." How can we bring the knowledge of God and His Word when our *intent* is to produce a physical experience?

To be sure, the experiences of the senses and emotion feel good, but do they work faith? Not according to God's Word. In addition, this particular activity touches the issue of the second

commandment: idolatry. If we use the "Bethlehem Walk" as a means to approach God, to "impact each visitor for eternity," how is the idol in the manger different in principle from any other idol? Is God's Word and Spirit so anemic, so ineffective, that we desire *objects to see, smell, hear, and touch* to produce or confirm faith? This was a major principle that was at issue in the 16th century Reformation. Of course, we do not hear much about that anymore. At the time of the Reformation it was the priest, the confessional, the penance, the statues, etc. Today the idols before God take a different shape and character, but they are the same in principle. The same harlot.

And then we have the newest and fastest growing craze, that of Promise-keepers. I know it feels good. I know it is an emotional experience. I am convinced that some of the men love the Lord. I know they mean well. I know they get lots of self-helps. But why do they need it? Recently I spoke with a gentleman who was relating how wonderful his pastor was, and as an example he stated that his pastor was so dynamic that he got 75 men to attend the latest rally of Promise Keepers in Chicago. I asked him gently, "But how is his preaching?" He replied, "Well, I don't know, I never thought about it before." Maybe that is why he needs Promise Keepers! If the church you attend is not placing you before the face of God every Lord's Day, with a knowledge of His Word and character, then, in obedience, you must search for a church that does, not resort to "courtship with a harlot"! (Incidentally, God's Word and the faithful presentation of it are the biblical measures of a minister.)

Another man, when challenged about his involvement in the organization, replied with much emotion (and very little knowledge): "How would you know? You can't possibly imagine what I



felt when I sat and sang 'Amazing Grace' with 75,000 men. It was the most awesome feeling!" No doubt it was an awesome feeling in and of itself, but when 75,000 or even seven, men gather together to sing, (or do anything else), and several denominations are represented which do not even recognize the deity of Christ, then which amazing grace are they singing about, and to what god? I would say it is amazing grace that God does not strike us dead with fire from heaven when we yoke His name to a "harlot," neglecting His ordained means of feeding His people, the Word preached in the church of Jesus Christ.

The church of today needs reforming as badly as it did in the 16th century. But reformation hurts! It means tremendous upheaval, and it never leads to a lot of the "feel-goodies" that the church has become so attached to at the end of the 20th century. Perhaps, if the Lord tarries, we will see that reform, and out of the ashes will arise the glorious bride of Christ in the 21st century. Perhaps the Lord, for His glory, will

be pleased to spare only a small remnant, as in the days of Elijah and numerous other periods of history.

One person said in a discussion with me, "I know the church needs reform, but I'm not personally responsible to reform the church." Perhaps not, but God does require *obedience*. Either you and I are walking daily in the sight of God, reforming ourselves toward God-centered life and worship, with a knowledge of His Word, or we are "courting harlots." If it is the latter, as in Hosea's day, our children will be forgotten of the Lord. God is faithful in *all* that He promises.

Jesus Christ, who *is* the Word, entered human history and took hold of His eternal kingdom with a gripping violence (Matt. 11:12, Heb. 4:12, 13). When God's Word in its absolute and unchanging truth comes to us, let us pray that it does violence to our will, experience, and emotion. If it "feels good" it is a harlot, or we are in hardhearted rebellion. When God's Word has cut deep and changed our hearts of stone to

hearts of flesh, then and only then do we experience the eternal and lasting emotion of wonderful, peaceful, and blessed assurance in the faithfulness of His work. He *is* able to complete that work which He has once begun in us.

To many, that is not as titillating as the harlots of experientialism and emotionalism. But it is God's way and will, and it produces a full, rich, and eternal peace.

Let each of us think on the glory of God alone! Let us reform ourselves daily with that purpose, to the end that God may be glorified, being assured by His Word that in the way of our faithful (often painful) obedience to His will, He will work, by the knowledge and use of His Word, the fruit of righteousness in us and in our seed. He is drawing ever nearer to that final day when all of His people will be gathered in. May we and our children be found among that remnant which He is always faithful to preserve.

Above all, to God be the glory, for of Him, through Him, and unto Him are all things! □

*Ministering to the Saints*

*Prof. Robert Decker*

# Ministering to Our Ministers

**I**n the previous article we discussed who and what the congregation is. The congregation is the blood-bought, precious gath-

ering of believers and their children. In this connection we presented some of the implications of this truth as regards the elders' care of the congregation. Before moving to a discussion of more specific aspects of the elders' calling, we digress to a consideration of the subject of this article, "Ministering to Our Ministers."

There are many passages of Scripture which speak to this sub-

ject. The apostle Paul praises the brethren, "That ye remember me in all things" (I Cor. 11:2). The word "remember" in this text means "care for." The apostle is grateful to the saints for their caring for him both in his physical and in his spiritual needs. The same apostle was deeply conscious of his need for the prayers of the believers, especially that he might have boldness to make known the

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mystery of the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:18). In I Corinthians 9:3-13 Paul affirms the truth that the church is duty bound to support its ministers, but he is careful not to be burdensome to the churches. The call-letter used by our churches reflects this. The congregation promises to pay a salary to the minister which is adequate to "free him from all worldly cares and avocations." Scripture says in Galatians 6:6, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." The word "communicate" in this verse means "to enter into fellowship with, to join as an associate, to make another's needs his own so as to relieve them."

These passages and more indicate that the apostles were deeply conscious of their own needs. They needed the prayers, the concern, the care of the church. As the apostles ministered to the needs of the people of God, they themselves needed to be ministered unto by the people of God.

The same is true of ministers today.

That this is true is easily demonstrated. Consider the minister's work. His chief task is preaching. Preaching involves much prayer and preparation. Young preachers will find themselves spending fifteen to twenty hours per week in preparing one sermon. This means the preacher will spend thirty to forty hours per week just preparing his sermons. This is no exaggeration! He must work from the original Hebrew or Greek, he must carefully determine the meaning of the text, he must construct a good outline so as to present the sermon to the congregation clearly and logically. Even the older, more experienced pastor will spend twenty to thirty hours per week preparing his sermons.

In addition there is his other work. The minister in our churches typically teaches five to seven catechism classes each week

for thirty weeks of the year. There is a great deal of preparation that goes into teaching these classes. Besides, the minister must visit the sick and shut-ins, comfort the sorrowing, conduct funerals, and officiate at weddings. He must do his share of the annual family visiting, lead Bible Study Societies, and chair the consistory/council meetings. And an increasingly time-consuming aspect of the minister's work is counseling from the Word of God those members who have problems and trials of one sort or another.

The already busy minister is called upon to perform certain tasks for the denomination. He is a delegate to the meetings of classis and may be delegated to synod as well. He must contribute to the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights* and other publications. He must also give speeches and lectures from time to time for various public meetings.

All this can make for a great deal of stress! But there are other stress factors peculiar to the life of the minister. Ministers move more frequently than most people. In not a few instances ministers find themselves serving congregations far from their families and friends. There are people who are ill at ease in the minister's presence. A minister is on call twenty-four hours a day. And, he lives in a "glass house." Still more, the minister is always "spending himself and being spent," as Scripture puts it, for others (II Cor. 12:15).

But far more than all of these factors, and far more than merely the work load, it is the minister's keen awareness of his holy calling and awesome responsibility before God and His Christ to care for the flock of God that causes the stress. The Lord is pleased by the foolishness of the minister's preaching to save them that believe. The minister must represent Christ and

bring His Word to meet every need of those entrusted to his care. He must weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. He must admonish the wayward, encourage the faint of heart, and strengthen the weak.

Do not forget either that the minister is a man of like passions with any other member of the church. He has the same cares and concerns as any other Christian. He is a husband who must love, nourish, and cherish his wife as Christ loves the church. As a father, and with his wife's help, the minister must rear his children in the fear of God. This involves discipline, education, and not a little time. And the minister's wife and children have the same needs as

their peers in the church — but with this significant difference: their pastor happens to be their husband and father. Just as any other Christian, the minister is a sinner saved by grace through faith in Christ. He has the same sinful nature with all of its weaknesses.

He makes his pilgrimage through the same sinful world. He fights the same devil and must withstand the same temptations.

Finally, in all of his work and life as a minister of the gospel the pastor must be an example to the believers (I Tim. 4:12-16).

How then do we minister to our ministers? First, *pray* for them daily. This, according to Scripture, is our calling. God's people must remember their ministers in their private and family devotions. The children hearing those prayers will develop a proper attitude toward the minister and his work. The people of God must assure their ministers of their prayers on their behalf. This is a source of great encouragement to the ministers.

The congregations must also pay their ministers an adequate salary. According to Scripture he has a right to live of the gospel

*God's  
people  
must remember  
their ministers  
in their  
private and  
family  
devotions.*



(I Cor. 9). He must be free from worldly cares and avocations. Ministers must be free from anxiety concerning how they can meet their legitimate expenses. If they are not free from this, their work will be adversely affected! The elders must make certain that the ministers have adequate income to cover their needs. Ministers must not be made to worry about these matters.

The people of God must learn to criticize their ministers *constructively*. The believer as prophet, priest, and king in Christ must admonish the preacher if he preaches heresy or if he is remiss in his walk of life. But there is a wrong and a right way to do this. The admonishing must not be done in anger. Constructive criticism of the minister will not be done behind his back. The critic must not talk to others, he must go to the minister! Constructive criticism is given out of the love of God with a view to seeking the welfare of both the minister and the church.

Believers are called to "bear one another's burdens." The ministers need this care of God's love too! Believers must not forget the ministers when they have special needs. When the minister or ones dear to him are sick or in sorrow, he must be visited by his parishioners. Believers must bring the Word of God to their ministers and pray for and with them in their times of trial.

Ministers need encouragement as well. When a believer is struck by a sermon he ought to tell the minister and tell him why the sermon meant so much to him. The members of the congregation ought to befriend the minister. He needs wise, caring friends in whom he can safely confide.

God's people must understand too that the minister cannot do it all in the larger congregations. He cannot lead all the societies, do all of the counseling, visit all the families on the annual family visitation. The elders must assist in this work.

In this connection, there is a very practical matter that needs

mentioning. God's people must give their ministers time to study and prepare for preaching and teaching. They ought not disturb him during study hours except for emergencies. Phone calls must be limited to ones that are really necessary.

These are just some of the ways the people of God can minister to their ministers. Perhaps the reader can think of more!

In sum, let it be emphasized that God's people must minister to those whom Christ calls to minister to them.

Pray for them. Love them in the Lord. Be thankful for the faithful ministers Christ sends to care for His church. Support them also financially. Encourage the ministers and their wives and families.

In those congregations where God's servants minister faithfully and where God's people faithfully minister to those faithful servants, God's blessings abound to the advancing of His church. To the glory of His name. □

## Apples of Gold

### God Knows

God knows the heart of a pastor,  
How often 'tis laden with care;  
In sharing the burdens of others  
And seeking their needs in prayer.

God knows the work of a pastor,  
The many tasks he must do;  
As he goes forth in His service  
The power of the Lord sees him through.

God knows the joy of a pastor  
In teaching and preaching the Word:  
When souls are brought into the Kingdom  
To serve Christ as Savior and Lord.

God knows the way of a pastor  
And, heeding the Master's call  
He leaves one flock for another —  
God knows, for He knows it all.

God knows there is sadness in parting,  
He knows there are blessings ahead;  
And, trusting in Him for the future,  
May our lives by His presence be led.

Annetta Jansen  
Dorr, Michigan



# The Antithesis

**H**aving briefly considered the various aspects of Bible truth concerning the doctrine of man, or anthropology, we would normally proceed now to the third area of study in Reformed doctrine, which is Christology, the doctrine concerning the Christ. But before moving on to that area of study, there is one other truth that I would treat under the doctrine of man. I refer to the doctrine of the antithesis.

The antithesis, which I will define and explain presently, is not usually given separate treatment in the study of Reformed doctrine. It is, however, a critical truth that presses upon the very lives of the children of God.

We could, I suppose, discuss the antithesis when we treat the Reformed doctrine of sanctification. It is a truth that comes to expression in our lives as redeemed saints. But it is not without reason that we treat it now. The antithesis, after all, was established by God at creation.

## The Meaning of the Antithesis

The word "antithesis" is not a term found in Scripture, but a term that expresses a biblical truth. The word "antithesis" comes from two words—"anti," which means "against," and "thesis," or "that which is set forth." The antithesis is a *contrasting* position.

In terms of Bible doctrine, we usually speak of the antithesis as

it applies to man's life and calling in the world. God has willed that man's calling in the world have not only a positive, but also a negative aspect.

But what we must realize is that the antithesis did not come into existence after the fall, but before. It stands connected with God's own revelation of Himself at the very beginning. The truth of the antithesis, therefore, is intricately connected with all theology.

The thesis — that which is set forth — is exactly the Word of God concerning Himself.

God speaks. He speaks eternally. He speaks concerning Himself. Within His own Triune Being, among the three Persons of that holy Trinity, God bears testimony concerning Himself, His will, His perfection, His glory.

But it also pleased God to reveal Himself to a creature outside of Himself. That was His own good pleasure, according to Ephesians, chapter 1. It was not that He needed man. But out of His own sovereign good pleasure God willed to reveal Himself to the creature of His own making, man. He willed to do so in Christ.

God reveals Himself in such a way that His glory is seen in all its brilliance. He will be seen as God, who is God alone.

How does God do that?

We might ask another question by way of illustration? If you have a flashlight that you have not used for a while, and you want to check out the power of the batteries and the brightness of the light, what is the best way to do that? The best

way is not to go outside into the bright sunshine and shine the beam of that flashlight against the bright white siding of your house. You likely will not even see the light. Rather you will go into a dark place and turn on that light to see its brilliance in contrast to the darkness.

God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all (I John 1:5), determined that the glorious light of His infinite perfections would best be seen against the background of darkness.

He indicated His purpose already in the very first day of creation. Out of the darkness of His first creative handiwork, God said, "Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1:3, 4).

In other words, God willed the existence of that darkness in order to say "No" to it and to reveal that in Him there is no darkness at all.

God creates the antithesis.

God created that antithesis also for Adam, that Adam might see all the more clearly His glory, and that Adam, seeing God's glory, might himself show forth the glory of his Creator.

So already in the first paradise, God created two special trees that set forth this fundamental truth of the Christian life — the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. With those trees, distinct from all the other trees of the garden, God gave man the calling to show forth His glory in all its beauty.

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The positive side of Adam's existence was to eat of the tree of life, to enjoy the life and fellowship of Jehovah. He was to live as God's servant-king in the midst of God's creation. He was to say "Yes" to God by subduing the earth and exercising dominion over all things and in all relationships of life to God's glory and in God's service.

But that in itself was not enough.

So God placed in the midst of the garden, in addition to the tree of life, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That tree of knowledge of good and evil was not a poison tree. It was a perfectly good fruit tree, bearing fruit good to the taste and pleasant to the sight. But concerning that tree God said to Adam, "This tree is off limits for you."

"Of the fruit of this tree, thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or literally, "dying thou shalt die."

So that tree represented to Adam this aspect of his calling, that there is always a negative side that contrasts with the positive and that sets the positive in ever clearer light. There is always a "Yes" that proclaims God's glory. But it does so in contrast to the "No" that serves in a negative way to magnify that glory of God.

If the "Yes" is the *thesis*, the proclamation of God's glory, then the "No" is the *antithesis*. It is to take the contrasting position *over against* all that which would oppose God's glory. To say "yes" to God, it is necessary also to say "no" to sin.

#### God's Sovereign Purpose

This implies, of course, that God is sovereign also over sin. When we speak of the antithesis, we are speaking of that which God

has given to His people. The antithesis is not the devil's opposition to God. Antithesis is not dualism, the battle between two opposing powers. God alone is God.

So when God created man and gave man his fundamental calling to love Him, God also determined that the beauty of that life of obedience and the joy of His covenant fellowship should be seen against the dark background of disobedience and death.

Sin also serves God's purpose. The fall of man was under God's sovereign control and direction and determination. We have spoken of this truth earlier.

Behind it all lies God's purpose to glorify Himself.

When God determined to reveal Himself to man as the covenant God, He determined to reveal Himself as He is—the God of light, the God of infinite perfections, the God of perfect holiness, the God who alone gives life.

Man must understand that life cannot be sustained but by the Word of God's grace, the Word

which proceeds from His mouth, the voice that proclaims His love and fellowship.

That grace of God is revealed most beautifully in this, that God saves sinners, delivering them from the corruption of sin and death into which they willfully plunged themselves.

The God who creates light out of darkness, the God in whom is no darkness at all, is also the God who calls His people out of darkness into His most marvelous light.

#### Our Antithetical Calling

But with this sharp antithesis established by God from the very beginning there is also pointed application for you and for me. God gives us the calling to express that antithesis in all our life. We must learn to *live* antithetically. We have a calling to live a life of contrast, the life of pilgrims and strangers, who serve God and not Satan.

We must learn not only to say "Yes" to God, but also to say "No" to all that God says "No" to.

For that is the way of fellowship with the God of the antithesis. □

## Transformation

I am a sinner — depraved, loathsome, vile,  
I wallow in filth and the good I defile.  
Jesus comes; reaches down in His mercy and grace  
And with tenderness shows me the light of His face,  
Implants in my heart penitence for my sin —  
A sorrow profound He instills deep within.  
He sows there a seed that will grow and mature,  
A belief in my Lord that will ever endure.  
He justifies, sanctifies, helps me to stand  
And prepares me for heav'n, at the Father's right hand.  
How could a creature so foul be reversed —  
Changed so completely from what I was first?  
The answer of course: it is God's work alone;  
He's omnipotent, gracious, and calls forth His own.  
While on earth, a beginning is all that will be,  
But in glory complete transformation I'll see.

Thelma Westra



# Demon Possession

**T**he subject of demon possession is super-charged with both controversy and emotion. It can easily get out of hand. Our purpose is to write soberly and carefully so that we can reflect upon this aspect of missions as well.

Prior to coming to Singapore, I pretty much accepted the idea that demon possession was part of the phenomena which marked the apostolic age. I felt very comfortable placing it in the same category as miracles, speaking in tongues, and such like. My understanding was that during this particular age Jesus and His disciples (apostles) demonstrated the Lordship of Jesus over all things natural and spiritual. Jesus was confronted by people who were demon possessed, and He showed His majestic power by casting them out. Upon Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven, the early Christian church needed the same outward sign to establish the power of the living Lord as He dwelled with His church by His Holy Spirit. Jesus worked a mighty work through His apostles, and this included such signs and wonders. By doing this, Jesus made very clear who His apostles were. He gave them such signs and wonders to distinguish them from impostors.

Upon the writing of the Holy Bible, the need for such external signs and wonders ceased, as explained to the Christians in Corinth. The idea of demons actually taking possession of human beings ended along with the other signs and wonders. The devil was defeated by Jesus Christ. His head was crushed at the cross, and he now is made subject to Christ and is denied such power.

Though there is much truth stated above, there is more to be said about demon possession. My concept of what demon possession is all about has greatly expanded through working here in Singapore. I would be the first to admit that living in a western culture, which tends to discredit such things anyway, and not having contact with heathen culture, where demon possession takes on an entirely different perspective, I was a bit naive in this regards. I do remember reading of the escapades of the Volta Evangelistic Association brothers who would go into the back country of Ghana, Africa and recount for us in the Foreign Mission Committee their battles with demons. Also, I was most intrigued with missionary accounts of personal struggles with demons, and I wondered how that all could take place.

Living in Singapore for about five years does not make me an expert on demonology by any means. In fact, I hesitate writing on demon possession for the very reason that I would like to study much more on this subject; but

then again I suppose a person could put off writing on almost any topic because of this feeling of inadequacy.

In addition to this, there is something reprehensible about this subject. Fact is, the more I learn about it the more I tremble at the horror of it. We must not approach this subject with such curiosity that we are willing to place ourselves in spiritual danger. Demons are real and they have great power. They hate God and hate God's people and always work havoc in the lives of those who yield themselves to their power and control. Any account of demon possession carries with it nothing but horror. Instinctively, as Christians, we ought to run as far from this sort of thing as we can. The purpose of writing on this subject is to alert all of us to the reality of demons, and to try to bring us to some understanding of how we are to deal with it both in heathen and nominally Christian cultures.

Our approach must be that of the Bible. We are warned that in the latter days "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:1, 2). The devil is so subtle that we are told in II Corinthians 11:13-15, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an an-

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gel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

We can be sure that Satan, as the chief of all demons, would like nothing better than that we imagine that he has little power. Such a response would allow him to do his wicked work unopposed and he could strike as he would. The Holy Spirit makes perfectly clear to us that our real enemy in the spiritual battle of faith is none other than demons. "Put on the whole armour of God,... for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11, 12).

Here Paul refers to ranks of demons which are under the direction of Satan, their chief. The picture which the Holy Spirit conveys to us here is that the air is literally filled with demons, who are well organized and marshalled for battle against the church of Jesus Christ in this world.

Our Reformed forefathers understood this well when they wrote the Form for the Lord's Supper and included mention of tampering with demons as reason for one not to partake of the Lord's Supper. "Such as all idolaters, all those who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures, all those who worship images, all enchanters, diviners, charmers, and those who confide in such enchantments" — all these are admonished to abstain from the meat and drink of the Lord's Supper.

Beginning with this article, I would like to set forth six principles which I trust will help put into perspective the Bible's teaching about demons. 1) All non-Christians are under the dominion

of the devil. 2) Jesus stripped Satan completely of any control or authority over His people, the church. 3) Christians can never be demon possessed, though they can be harassed by demons. 4) If God is pleased to deliver a non-Christian from demon possession, He does it not through exorcism, but through the ministry of the gospel and prayer. 5) The Christian's security against the assaults of Satan is to live the holy life. 6) Jesus Christ is Lord also over the devil; that is our great comfort as Christians.

#### **All non-Christians are under the dominion of the devil**

The Bible uses this language.

In three passages, John 12:30; 14:30; and 16:11, Jesus calls

Satan the prince of this world. In John 8:44, Jesus is disputing with the Pharisees subsequent to His exposing their hypocrisy when they brought the woman taken in adultery to Jesus, and He says to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

When Jesus presented to His disciples the only two possible alternatives, God or mammon, He said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Mammon is the material world under the direction of Satan. It is either Christ or Satan as master.

Having said this in no way contradicts the biblical truth of God's sovereignty in Jesus Christ. We must add that God is always sovereign over Satan. The point is

that until Jesus finished His work of redemption, Satan had the right to exercise His lordship over the entire earth. The very first promise given by God to Adam and Eve by way of Satan was that Satan would have his head crushed by the Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. The history of Job not only teaches us that Satan had to receive permission from God to touch Job, but it also teaches us concerning the exalted position Satan had among the "sons of God" which presented themselves before the Lord," as Satan was among them (Job 2:1ff.).

This helps us understand the temptations of Jesus as well. Satan offered to Jesus the nations of the world without having to go to the cross (Matt. 4:8). Satan is prince of this world because of God's curse and judgment upon the world. When Jesus finished His redemptive work on the cross, He settled it once for all that Satan as prince of this world is greatly limited. Satan was cast out of heaven and given the earth as his domain (Rev. 12:9ff.). Hence the cry of the angels went to the earth, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having a great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12).

When we say that Satan has control of this world under the rule of Jesus Christ, we must understand that this control is exercised in varying degrees. Satan exercises his control over the whole world and from his point of view marshals his forces in spiritual battle. From a general point of view we can say that all the wicked are soldiers in the army of Satan. He has his own strategy for battle. He has his own ranking of spirits as described in Ephesians 6. Some devils are like generals, others like captains, sergeants, or infantrymen. He has his choice men in high places in the nations, schools, and churches, wherever



they can exert their greatest influence. He has a purpose for the drunk that wobbles in the alleys of our broken cities. Everything outside of Jesus Christ is part of Satan's own massive offensive against Christ's church.

The worst form of Satan's control comes in the form of demon possession. It is called "worst" not because of the amount of influence such a person has, but in the sense of the horrible expression of what Satan is all about and what horrible power he possesses. What we see in a demon possessed person is an outward and tangible display of what is true in the lives of all those who are non-Christian. Satan still rages as a horrible lion, or dragon, seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8 and Rev. 12:17).

This takes place where fallen men invite him into their lives and openly desire to have the power that Satan gives to them. Demon possession takes place in an environment where he exercises his rule in horrible wickedness.

A couple of examples may help.

You can see demon possession in the heathen temples where the worshipers literally give themselves over to be willful servants of the devil. The worst form of this is the temple medium. Heathen people are very superstitious. They are basically afraid of their deities. They imagine that their temple gods and even their ancestors control their lives. Unless they appease them with sacrifices and prayers, the gods will do them harm.

In such a setting, the temple medium plays an important role. He is the one who is literally under the control of Satan. He acts as the intermediary between the living and the dead. When the worshipers want to know their future or want to communicate with their dead rela-

tives, he knows how to place himself in a trance and function as a direct agent of Satan. It is striking that the families of such mediums are usually affected as well. In many instances their wives and children get involved in this.

Sometimes their demon possession is more controlled. The medium may take on a terrible appearance of death, and tremble, and his voice will sound exactly like that of the dead person when he was yet alive.

We should understand that mediums are not able to awaken the dead, nor to communicate with the dead, but the devils have such power that they are able to mimic it. We know of a Christian who attended such a visit to a medium when her mother wanted to make a financial decision but wanted to consult her dead husband before finalizing it. When the medium was in the trance he spoke with a voice just like her father's. This is the terrible deception.

At other times the demons take possession of a person, usually in connection with temple worship, and control him in a violent way, very similar to what is described in the Bible. Such a person can know full well that a demon is within him and that the demon is using him.

*What we see in a demon-possessed person is an outward and tangible display of what is true in the lives of all those who are non-Christian.*

We know of a person here in Singapore who was born and raised in such a medium family and was also at one time himself demon possessed. He tells how he experienced this. The devil would speak through him, and he had no control over what he was saying. He saw how his brother, while in a trance, had the end of his tongue cut off by a medium with no blood shed, and later how the medium placed the piece back on the tongue with no sign of it ever having been cut off. The Hindu practice of fire-walking is not only a

display of mind over body, but also a religious festival in honor to their gods. This is a festival which is actually demon controlled.

We had an interesting conversation with a young man on his way to serve as missionary in India. He was born in a Christian family, but he went through a period of spiritual backsliding. During this time he took up New Age meditation. While he was doing this, a devil moved in and took possession of his mind. For over a year, he told me, he lived in literal hellish torment, for this devil taunted him and challenged him that he was not a Christian. He could hardly sleep at night, and always the inner voice of the devil inside of him harassed him. He thanks God for his deliverance, for he sees the demon possession as an attempt of a devil to take control of him; but he had had enough spiritual strength given him by God that he could still resist, though it involved a year-long internal fight.

The Hindus and Buddhists do the same with their meditation to achieve karma. This is a realm in which Satan holds sway.

Devils are real, and the spiritual battle is intensifying as we enter the final moments of history, during which Satan will put forth his last effort to deceive the very elect of God. There is however much comfort for us as Christians. We will examine that in our next article, the Lord willing. □





# U.S. Supreme Court to Decide Its First Right-to-die Case

"Because they present issues of such profound spiritual importance and because they so deeply affect individuals' right to determine their own destiny, the abortion and right-to-die cases have given rise to a highly emotional and divisive debate. In deciding right-to-die cases, we are guided by the Supreme Court's approach to the abortion cases ... which provide powerful precedent...."

"Those who believe strongly that death must come without physician assistance are free to follow that creed; be they doctors or patients. They are not free, however, to force their views, their religious convictions, or their philosophies on all the other members of a democratic society, and to compel those who differ to die painful, protracted, and agonizing deaths."

*Compassion in Dying v. State of Wash.,*  
U.S. Court of Appeals (9th Cir. 1996).

## Physician Assisted Suicide

Approximately 40 states currently criminalize doctor-assisted suicides. Although the Michigan pathologist Dr. Kevorkian has been attracting international notoriety for his persistent challenges to Michigan's law, right-to-die organizations in many other states have been quietly challenging in federal courts the constitutionality of physician-assisted suicide bans. Regrettably, their efforts have finally met some success.

For the first time in history, two influential federal appellate courts have struck down laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide

in the states of Washington and New York. Both of these controversial decisions were appealed, and the Supreme Court is poised to decide next spring whether medical doctors may prescribe lethal drugs for their "terminally ill" patients who want to end their lives by committing suicide.

Although both federal appellate courts struck down the doctor-assisted laws as unconstitutional, they did so for different and perhaps contradictory reasons. Moreover, both cases utilized novel constitutional theories that may be rejected by the conservative Justices on the Supreme Court, but most likely adopted by the more liberal majority.

## The Washington Case

In *Compassion in Dying v. State of Washington*, the federal appel-

late court, admittedly following the precedent established by the earlier Supreme Court abortion cases (see quote above), discovered a new "substantive due process right" or "liberty interest" — the "right to control the time and manner of one's death."

Like the decision of whether or not to have an abortion, the decision how and when to die is one of "the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime; a choice central to personal dignity and autonomy." A competent terminally ill adult has a strong liberty interest in choosing a dignified and humane death.... Prohibiting a terminally ill patient from hastening his death may even have a more profound effect on that person's life than forcing a woman to carry a pregnancy to term.

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



In addition to finding "powerful" precedent in the abortion cases, the court also looked to the landmark 1989 *Cruzan* case in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that there is a constitutionally protected liberty interest in terminating unwanted medical treatment:

... the Court majority clearly recognized that granting the Cruzan family's request to remove the tubes through which Nancy Cruzan received nutrition and hydration would lead inexorably to her death. Accordingly, we conclude that Cruzan, by recognizing a liberty interest that includes a refusal of artificial provision of life-sustaining food and water, necessarily recognizes a liberty interest in hastening one's own death.

Thus, claiming to follow the lead of the Supreme Court which recently discovered "implicit" in the Constitution the right to privacy (abortion cases) and the right to terminate unwanted medical treatment (*Cruzan*), this court introduced yet another fundamental Constitutional right — the right-to-die. But what about the state's historical interest in preserving life?

### **State's Interest in Preserving Life Outweighed**

The court conceded this newly-discovered, fundamental due process right must nonetheless be balanced against the state's historical interest in preserving life in general. However, the state's interest in preserving life, the Court ruled, is not always controlling:

Although the state's interest in preserving life may be unqualified, and may be asserted regardless of the quality of life at issue, it is not always controlling. Nor is it of the same strength in each case. To the contrary, its strength is dependent on relevant circumstances, including the medical

condition and wishes of the person whose life is at stake.

The court went on to hold that here the individual's fundamental right to control the time and manner of his death prevails, because the state's general interest in preserving life is "dramatically diminished" if the person involved is terminally ill and expresses a wish to die.

The court also examined other interests asserted by the state: prevention of suicide; avoidance of undue influence by third parties who wish the patient dead; avoidance of the adverse effect of the suicide on children and other family members; the integrity of the medical profession; and other adverse consequences. The court reasoned, however, that none of these governmental interests outweighs the individual's newly-discovered right-to-die with the assistance of his physician.

### **The New York Case — No Right-to-Die**

Another federal appellate court recently faced a similar suit in New York, where the doctor plaintiffs likewise challenged their state's law criminalizing physician-assisted suicide. Facing the identical issue of whether terminally ill patients have a constitutional right-to-die, the court, contrary to the Washington case, refused to identify a new fundamental right:

The right to assisted suicide finds no cognizable basis in the Constitution's language or design.... We therefore decline the plaintiffs' invitation to identify a new fundamental right-to-die, in the absence of a clear direction from the Supreme Court whose precedents we are bound to follow.

### **Denial of Equal Protection**

Although the New York court declined to invent a new Constitutional right-to-die as did their

colleagues in the Washington case, the New York court nevertheless accomplished the same result by striking down the state law as violative of another section of the Constitution — the Equal Protection Clause. The Equal Protection Clause requires government to treat in a similar manner all individuals who are similarly situated, and any state legislation which does otherwise must be "rationally related to a legitimate state interest."

The court noted that New York and many other states, although outlawing doctor-assisted suicide, do nevertheless permit competent patients to refuse unwanted medical treatment such as lifesaving nutrition and hydration. This, the court ruled, is a distinction without a difference:

It seems clear that New York does not treat similarly circumstanced persons alike: those in the final stages of terminal illness who are on life support systems are allowed to hasten their deaths; but those who are similarly situated, except for previous attachment of life-sustaining equipment, are not allowed to hasten death by self-administering prescribed [lethal] drugs. This is violative of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.

### **No State Interest in Preserving Life**

The Court noted, however, that this denial of equal protection must be weighed against the state's interest in preserving life. But here the state's interest was found wanting:

But what interest can the state possibly have in requiring the prolongation of a life that is all but ended? And what business is it of the state to require the continuation of agony when the result is imminent and inevitable? What concern prompts the state to interfere with a mentally competent patient's right to define his



own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life? None.

### Conclusion

These two federal appellate court decisions striking down physician-assisted suicide laws now existing in forty states should be very troubling for the Reformed Christian. Both cases noted but effectively ignored centuries of English and American common law that criminalized suicide and assistance to suicide.

As was predicted by conservative Constitutional scholars, the Supreme Court abortion decisions are bearing fruit as precedent to establish ever more the autonomy of the individual over against the sanctity of life and the state's interest in preserving life. What is now apparently paramount to the federal courts is the individual's "right to define his own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life" (quoting from *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, a 1992 Su-

preme Court abortion decision).

Regrettably, it appears that the U.S. is now heading down the same road as the Netherlands, where physicians notoriously practice not only assisted suicide, but non-voluntary euthanasia whenever the patient's "quality of life" does not measure up to their standards. Unless the U.S. Supreme Court overrules these two decisions next spring, Dr. Kevorkian and his allies will have achieved a frightening victory in this country. □

**Contribution**

**Mr. Martin Swart**

# The Proper Manner of Conducting Family Visitation

**T**he subject concerns the proper manner of family visitation. By way of introduction, this subject can only be treated in a general way. It is impossible to state in detail what would be the proper manner of procedure in every individual case. Much depends upon the circumstances and conditions as they exist, not only in the various families called upon, but also in the congregation as a whole, and especially upon the spiritual state and condition of the individual

members. All that we can really do is to consider the fundamental principles that lie at the basis of family visitation, in order that, guided by these principles, we may conduct the work according as circumstances and conditions may demand and according as the need of the individual member may require.

This being the case, I would like, first of all, briefly to call attention to the history that lies back of our custom of periodically calling upon the members of the congregation. I do this, not only because of the fact that this history, to a large extent, determines the purpose of family visitation, but also because it provides us with many valuable suggestions as to the proper way of conducting it.

In the first place, our custom of periodically calling upon the membership of the congregation really took the place of the Roman Catholic practice of auricular and sacramental confession, i.e., the

acknowledgement of sin to the priest in order to obtain forgiveness through him. In the Roman Church no one is permitted to go to the mass unless he has been to confession just previous to the celebration of the mass.

Now the Reformers did not favor this Roman confession to the priest. They not only found no scriptural basis for this practice, but they also were aware of the many evils which attended it. But although this custom in the church which they had left did not appeal to them, the Reformers did feel the necessity of personal supervision by the overseers of the church, and personal consultation by the overseers, in order to instruct, correct, and comfort each one according to his individual need. They believed that this could best be carried on through periodic visits on the part of the officebearers at the home of the members. This was necessary especially in view of the fact that many in the Reformed churches

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*Mr. Martin Swart was for many years a member of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He served as elder many times, which involved him in the work of family visitation. This article, discovered among his papers after his death, was first delivered as an essay to the First Church Men's Society.*



had only recently left the Roman Church and were not well-founded in the truth, making repeated instruction and constant conferences necessary.

It is interesting to note that the "major assembly" of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, the Wezelian Convention held at Wezel in the year 1568, ruled that these visits should be conducted every week. It may be that in this they simply followed the practice of the church of Rome. Loyal Catholics, to this day, still go to confession every week. However this may be, the ruling of the Wezelian Convention, in part, reads as follows:

They (the elders) shall faithfully investigate whether they (the church members) manifest themselves uprightly in walk and conduct in the duties of godliness, in the faithful instruction of their households in the matter of family prayers (morning and evening prayers) and such like matters; they shall admonish them to these duties with consideration, but also in all seriousness and according to conditions and circumstances; they shall admonish them to steadfastness, or strengthen them to patience, or spur them on to a serious-minded fear of God; such as need comfort and admonition they shall comfort and admonish, and if need be they shall report a matter to their fellow elders, who together with them are appointed to exercise discipline; and besides these matters they shall correct that which can be corrected according to the gravity of the sin committed; nor shall they neglect, each one in his own district, to encourage them to send their children to catechism.

It must be admitted that we have in this designation a wealth of suggestive material for conducting family visitation, also for our own day. Nevertheless, it was soon felt that this formulation was too long. Hence the Synod of 1586 gave a summary of what the Wezelian Convention had formu-

lated, as we have it today in Article 23 of our Church Order:

The office of the elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the minister of the Word, is to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches, to visit the families of the congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian religion.

We may notice that this article stipulates that the elders shall visit the members not only before but also after communion. Also this gives us a valuable suggestion with respect to conducting family visitation. It may be that the fathers stipulated this because of the Roman Catholic custom of going to confession before partaking of the mass, although there is no proof for this. But at any rate, the fathers were convinced that a personal talk by the elders with the members of the congregation concerning the significance of the Lord's Table and the spiritual attitude of heart and mind in which they should come would be of great benefit. They thought also that a personal visit after the celebration, to speak on the benefits derived from it, would be of great value. They had witnessed the corruption of mere formalism in the church they had left and keenly felt the need to promote true spirituality in the churches that had been liberated from this corruption.

We should also take note of Article 55 of the Church Order:

To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation,

or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

Also this article sheds light on our subject. This article originally dealt with the censuring of books. Briefly, the Reformed churches of Holland, following the example of Rome and the general conceptions of their day, decided that no one should publish a book or writing without the approval of the ministers of his classis or particular synod or the professors of theology. The first synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, the Synod of Emden, held in Emden, German, in 1571, even went so far as to rule that no one, regardless whether he was a member of the Reformed churches, should be permitted to publish a book without proper authorization. They evidently nursed the mistaken hope that the government would become wholly Reformed and eventually take the same stand. This was confirmed by other synods. This hope, of course, did not materialize. Hence the synod of 1586 limited the restriction of Article 55 to those who professed to be Reformed, and therefore to those over whom the churches had supervision and control.

But for various reasons the censuring of books in the above sense proved to be impractical. Therefore the Synod of Utrecht, in 1905, changed the article to its present reading. The intent of the present reading is that undesirable books and literature shall be counteracted, not by prohibiting their publication, but by teaching, refutations, warnings, and admonitions, not only in the preaching of the Word, but also in family visitation.

Now all this certainly throws much light on the subject under discussion. It tells us, in the first place, that the purpose of family visitation is to promote true spiri-



tuality in the midst of the congregation. But if that purpose is to be attained, it certainly will have to be conducted according as circumstances, conditions, and need may require. These circumstances, conditions, and needs vary.

There is, in the first place,

a difference among the families as such. In some homes you have only husband and wife; in others you have young people; in still others there are small children. This difference among families certainly must be taken into consideration in family visitation. So, for example, in a family of young children, that father and mother must not

only be addressed as persons, but also as parents in their relation to their children. In a family where there are young people, these young people must be instructed and warned against the many temptations by the which they are surrounded. If they have come to years of discretion, it should be pointed out to them that it is their calling before God to confess the name of Christ in the midst of His church and willingly and consciously to assume their place in the church. Also the parents should be exhorted to use their influence in this respect.

Conditions vary in the different families. In some families you meet with a condition of true godliness in their family life, in their family worship, in the instruction of their children, in their attitude to the things of this world. Other families live just on the border line, and in their family life there is but little manifestation of true godliness. In other families you meet with a spirit of indifference, a laxity with respect to church attendance and with respect to admonishing their children and sending them to catechism.

Also the needs of the individual members differ. The need of the father, as head of the family and in his position in the broader sphere of life, is different from the need of the mother in the home

and in the bringing up of her children. The need of the

young men, especially in our modern age, differs from the need of the old man who is nearing the end of his journey here below. Then there are some who live in the assurance of faith, while others are weak in the faith and lack this assurance. Some are burdened with the weight of their sins, while others rejoice in the forgiveness of sins.

Now with a view to all these various circumstances and conditions and relationships of life, the elders in family visitation must edify, instruct, admonish, rebuke, comfort, and encourage, according as the need may be. The purpose of family visitation is to guide the lives of the people of God and to help them in their spiritual battle of faith. Family visitation, therefore, is a serious business.

From all this it ought to be plain that we cannot properly conduct family visitation by approaching people with a topic determined upon beforehand. That would defeat the very purpose of family visitation and make it unfruitful. We must not make of family visitation a sort of individualized catechism class. Surely in family visitation people must be instructed. But they must be instructed, not in certain points of doctrine, but with respect to their own personal spiritual life and walk. Besides, we must remember that, although the elders may prepare themselves for the topic they plan to discuss, the people will not be prepared for it. The result will be that there will be little or no response on the

part of the people.

What is more, the different circumstances and conditions that you meet with do not allow it. The topic to be discussed cannot be determined beforehand, but is determined by the need of the various people you call on. It is sometimes said of certain officebearers that in family visitation they talked about nothing but the weather. That is a figurative way of saying that they talked about everything except the spiritual things. But taken literally, the occasion could arise that the elders would be obliged to talk about the weather. If, for example, a farmer is faced with complete crop failure due to weather conditions, and he is in rebellion against that weather, or discouraged because of it, it certainly would be in order to admonish that farmer, or comfort him, as the case might be, with respect to that weather, and to point out to him that also that weather is in the hand of God, who causeth all things to work for the salvation of His people.

So it is with everything. If one is negligent in church attendance, he must be admonished with respect to his neglect. If one complains that he is not edified by the preaching of the Word, the elders should inquire as to the reason for this. If it becomes evident that the fault lies with the member himself, this should be pointed out to him, and an attempt be made to correct the situation.

Instead of approaching people, therefore, with a pre-determined topic, we must conduct our family visitation according to the circumstances and conditions as we meet with them, and speak with each member according to his or her individual need.

Of course, this must all be done by means of the Word of God. That simply implies that we must diligently search the Scriptures and be founded in the truth, in order that we may be able to meet the needs of the flock of Jesus Christ over which He has made us

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or her  
individual need.*



overseers, not with our own philosophy, but with the living Word of God, which alone can edify, instruct, comfort, and build up in the most holy faith. Family visitation has undoubtedly been one of our

strongholds in the past. Let us keep it that way. Most Protestant churches have done away with it, undoubtedly to their hurt. For others it has become no more than a mere social call. Let us beware, lest also in our circles it become a

mere formality. If we continue to conduct our family visitation according to the purpose for which it was instituted, it will prove to be a power for good, also in the future. □

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC recently thought it appropriate to give their congregation and catechism children a little update on how things are going with sending Bibles to Ghana. During the 1995/96 season they sent out 471 Bibles. Along with these Bibles they sent out also additional reading material such as some of Hudsonville's unused Sunday School papers, *Beacon Lights*, and the *Standard Bearer*. So far in this society year they have sent out an additional 156 Bibles. The majority of requests come from young people ages 12-15. Hudsonville's Men's Society of course does not know what the Lord has in store with all these requests, but they feel compelled to supply Bibles to these young people, letting God deal with the increase. We know that His Word does not return unto Him void. This project continues to be financed from various individual donations as well as yearly catechism collections.

Rev. J. Mahtani was able to show his slide program, entitled "Reaching the Nations with the Gospel of Grace," at a mid-week Bible study for his own congregation at the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX in mid-November. This served as preparation for showing the same program to sister congregations at South Holland, IL on December 1 and Hudsonville, MI

on December 3, and later that month in Singapore as well.

With recent additions to their mailing list, the Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA now has more than 300 subscribers to their monthly newsletter, "The Reformed Witness." And they also report that the Christian Discount Bookstore in Ontario, CA is now selling RFPA books.

### Congregational Activities

In early September, the ladies of the Grandville, MI PRC were asked to remember to reserve September 19, 26, and October 3 for the "Women Caring for Women" seminar in their church. Each of these sessions were led by Rev. A. Spriensma, Grandville's pastor, and were followed by discussion groups. Some of the goals of this seminar were: 1) to receive biblical instruction and to discuss together the role of women, based on Titus 2, 2) to foster relationships for daily personal edification and that of Grandville Church, and 3) to evaluate if there is a desire and need for a Ladies' Bible Study in Grandville Church. We are happy to report that one visible result of this seminar was the organization of a Ladies' Bible Study at Grandville. They began their meetings together on October 30, with Rev. Spriensma leading discussion centered on Women of the Bible.

The Choral Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC presented their annual Thanksgiving/Christmas Concert on December 1.

The Choral Societies of the Edgerton, MN and Doon and Hull, IA PRCs combined their voices this past Christmas season to present a choral program at Hull on December 8. Each choir sang separate numbers, with all three choirs joining together at the end in singing praises to God.

The Choral Society of the Loveland, CO PRC invited their congregation to their program after their evening service on December 8.

### Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the South Holland, IL PRC invited members of their congregation, as well as members from the nearby Bethel and Peace PRCs, to a Christmas Singspiration on December 8. The audience sang from the Psalms and Christmas carols, plus they were able to enjoy some special numbers by the young people.

The Young People's Society of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI hosted this year's Thanksgiving Mass Meeting for all young people's societies around Grand Rapids, on December 1 at Heritage Christian School. Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC, spoke on the theme "A Pharisee, a Leper, and a PR Young Person." Rev. Kuiper used the accounts of the healing of the ten lepers in Luke 17, and the parable of the Pharisee and publican in prayer in Luke 18, as a springboard to show the young people the proper way to show thankfulness to God for all He has done for us, His people.

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



## Minister Activities

Rev. and Mrs. G. Lanting arrived at the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX in early December to take on the care of the congregation there in the absence of Rev. Mahtani. Rev. Lanting was scheduled to lead the divine services on December 8, 15, 22, and 29, as well as all special services.

Rev. W. Bekkering has declined the call he had been consid-

ering to serve as our denomination's missionary to Ghana, W. Africa.

Rev. B. Gritters received the call to serve as pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC. With Rev. Gritters on the trio were Rev. S. Key and Prof. H. Hanko.

Our vacant Hope PRC in Walker, MI extended a call to Rev.

Dale Kuiper to serve as their next pastor. Rev. Kuiper was chosen from a trio which included also the Revs. R. Cammenga and K. Koole.

## Food for Thought

"People who teach that God is love without teaching that He hates sin are presenting another God — essentially Satan with a mask on."

— Martyn Lloyd-Jones. □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NOTICE!!

The Board of Covenant Christian High School is seeking two teachers for the 1997-1998 school year. We will consider applicants with backgrounds in a variety of subjects: English, history, math, foreign languages, business and economics, or music. Applicants should have, or be working toward, certification in secondary education. Those interested should send applications to Peter VanDerSchaaf, secretary, 1451 Broadview Dr., Jenison, MI 49428, (616) 455-6605.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, MI express their Christian sympathy to Cornie and Fran Doezeema in the death of his mother,

**MRS. NELLIE DOEZEEMA,**

at the age of 95.

May they find comfort knowing that He who holds us in life is our sure hope in death. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Terry Elzinga, Pres.  
Gwen VanKampen, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PR Church express their Christian sympathy to Don and Judi Doezeema in the death of his mother,

**NELLIE DOEZEEMA,**

and to Gerald and Jean Driesenga in the death of his brother,

**FRANK DRIESENGA.**

May they be comforted by the words of the psalmist, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Marvin Kamps, Pres.  
Ann Clawson, Sec'y.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new address of Rev. and Mrs. Charles Terpstra and family is:

300 E. 18th St.  
Holland, MI 49423  
(616) 396-8303

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their Christian sympathy to our members, Mrs. Ed VanGinkel, Mrs. Elmer VanDenTop, Mrs. John VanDenTop, Mrs. Minard VanDenTop, Mrs. Peter VanDenTop, and Mrs. Bob Blankespoor, in the death of their mother and grandmother,

**MRS. MINNIE VAN DEN TOP.**

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.  
Henrietta Klein, Sec'y.

### ATTENTION TEACHERS!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, CA, is in need of an administrator/teacher or teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. Grade assignments are negotiable. For more information, interested persons should contact the school principal, Mr. Ed Karsemeyer, at the school at (909) 793-4584, or Doug Pastoor at (909) 792-9392, or Glenn Feenstra at (909) 794-5859.

