



The Standard Bearer

***A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine***

Come down to the floor
of the courtroom.
On the floor of the courtroom
is a Lawyer.
Man has no excuse.
But for him who places himself
on the floor of the courtroom,
among the condemned,
there is the righteousness
of God.
Jesus Christ is his
eternal defense and apology.

See "The Inexcusable Judge" — p. 267

***Vol. 73, No. 12
March 15, 1997***



EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezeema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. A. Brummel, Rev. R. Cammenga,
Prof. R. Decker, Rev. A. denHartog, Rev. M. Dick, Prof. H.
Hanko, Rev. R. Hanko, Rev. S. Key, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. J.
Kortering, Rev. D. H. Kuiper, Mr. J. Lanting, Mrs. M. Lubbers,
Rev. T. Miersma, Mr. G. Schipper, Rev. G. VanBaren, Rev. R.
VanOverloop, Mr. B. Wigger, Rev. B. Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

PH: (616) 531-1490

(616) 538-1778

FAX: (616) 531-3033

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry
Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT42 3EL
Northern Ireland

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Meditation — <i>Herman Hoeksema</i>	
The Inexcusable Judge	267
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	
A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant (6)	269
A Cloud of Witnesses — <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i>	
Abraham Kuyper: Dutch Calvinist (2)	272
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — <i>Rev. Steven R. Key</i>	
The Antithesis (2)	275
Special Feature — <i>Rev. Ronald VanOverloop</i>	
Conference of the PRC in America with the EPC of Australia.	277
Day of Shadows — <i>Homer C. Hoeksema</i>	
The Fall of Our First Parents (concluded)	279
Search the Scriptures — <i>Rev. Mitchell C. Dick</i>	
When the Light Shines (1)	282
Decency and Order — <i>Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga</i>	
Essentials and Incidentals	283
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i>	285
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	287

In This Issue ...

It is our intention — and hope — that Bible study societies use Rev. Mitchell Dick's outlines on the gospel of John. The clear, helpful introductions by Rev. Dick are also well-suited to personal devotions. See "When the Light Shines."

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, explaining Article 62 of the Church Order of Dordt, gives instruction, how a Reformed congregation must administer the Lord's Supper. Perhaps, some readers of the *Standard Bearer* do not know that it has become common in Reformed circles to celebrate the Lord's Supper in gatherings that are not worship services of the church and in which there is no sermon. The manner of these celebrations sometimes borders on the bizarre. Article 62 of Dordt, based on the Word of God, "prescribes certain definite requirements for the administration of the Lord's Supper." Read "Essentials and Incidentals."

"All Around Us" gives touching information from minister-on-loan to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS), Rev. Jay Kortering, concerning persecution for the gospel's sake. The report in Rev. Gise VanBaren's column raises the question whether the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) cannot, at the request of the ERCS, help with the financial aspect of the persecution. Surely sister-church relations imply such a readiness. See "Suffering for Christ's Sake."

Prof. Herman Hanko continues his sketch of the life and labor of the amazing Abraham Kuyper. As Prof. Hanko points out, many Reformed people in the United States and Canada, as well as in other countries, whose fathers and mothers emigrated from the Netherlands are directly and substantially indebted to this great Dutchman and man of God. This includes many in the PRC. Read the second installment of "Abraham Kuyper: Dutch Calvinist."

— DJE

The Inexcusable Judge

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Romans 2:1

The apostle introduces this second chapter by combining it with the first when he says: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest."

"Therefore."

The question is, wherefore? Wherefore is this particular man whom the apostle addresses inexcusable?

It is evident that the apostle is introducing a new phase of the main theme of this part of his epistle. This main theme is that the apostle develops a reason why he is not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is not ashamed of the gospel, because, positively, it proclaims a righteousness which is free, which is by faith, which is without works. Negatively, he is not ashamed of the gospel, because the world is in need of just such a righteousness. It is impossible for man to attain righteousness. He is unrighteous, drawn down by the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven. This the apostle developed in the first chapter.

Now it is not only possible, but it is also characteristic of sinful man, to look for an excuse. If what

the apostle has written concerning the sinner is to take hold of the consciousness of man, it is necessary that the sinner does not excuse himself anymore. As long as the sinner can find one excuse, he will not be receptive to the gospel. It is also one of the chief characteristics of the sinner that he will try to exclude himself from the company of those who are under the wrath of God. According to this tendency of the sinful heart, the sinner might say, "It is all true what the apostle has written concerning the world. But I am not part of that rebellious, vile, damnable world." He lifts himself above the world which the apostle has described and, instead of being a defendant, he makes himself a judge.

This tendency the apostle takes away. He says: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things." Then this "therefore" is plain. For also in the last verse of the preceding chapter the apostle had said: "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Therefore, thou belongest in this class. For thou doest the same things.

In the text, the apostle places the individual in the class of those who are under the wrath of God.

The Judge

The apostle addresses a man.

It is important that we see this. The apostle addresses a man who judges others. He addresses a man who does the same things, while he accuses others. Notice that the apostle addresses this man directly. He points the finger at him and says, "Thou art the man."

The question has been asked: what man does the apostle have in mind? There have been many answers. The most common answer is that the apostle here addresses the Jews. Those who hold that position say that in chapter 1 the apostle addresses the heathen. In chapter 2 he addresses the Jews. The reason for this interpretation is, in the first place, that it is evident that the apostle begins a new phase of his main theme in chapter 2. In the second place, the apostle literally addresses the Jews in verse 17, where he says: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God." In the third place, the argument is that the apostle is speaking of one who judges another. It is characteristic of the Jews, they say, to judge others, and to place themselves above those whom they judge. Therefore, they say, the apostle addresses the Jews.

I do not agree with this interpretation, even though it is the most general one. My reasons are, first, that the apostle says, "O man." He might have said, "O Jew." But he does not. He says, "O man." You can never interpret this to mean, "O Jew." Second, the apostle adds: "whosoever thou art." This cannot mean the Jews only. Third, it is not true

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the *Standard Bearer*.

that the characteristic which the apostle mentions is peculiarly Jewish. It is not characteristically Jewish. It is characteristic of every sinful heart. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, for thou that judgest another, doest the same thing." This is not only characteristic of the Jew, but also of every sinful man.

Therefore, the explanation is this. In the preceding chapter the apostle had spoken of the heathen. But here he is speaking of man, including the Jew, but not excluding the heathen. In the second place, you may notice that the apostle is using the singular. He does not speak of *men*. He specifically addresses *man*. It is important that we see this. The apostle means to point his finger at the individual man. In the third place, notice this feature of the text, that instead of talking *about* man, the apostle is now speaking *to* him.

There is this difference between the viewpoint of chapter 1 and the viewpoint of chapter 2. In the first chapter, the apostle speaks of the heathen. But in the second chapter, he speaks of man, including the Jews, but not excluding the heathen, although he has in mind to apply it specifically to the Jews later on. In the first chapter, the apostle speaks in general. But in the second chapter, he uses the singular and points at the individual.

The question now is, how do you react when what the apostle says here is laid at your door. The apostle means to say, "Did you understand what I have developed here? Well, this applies to you." The text must be understood in this light. We must not say: this is sound doctrine. That is not the question. The question is, when the word of God comes to us and says, thou art that man, what do we say?

The text says, "thou that judgest." The apostle says that man is a judge. Every man is a judge. He must judge. He must

judge in a moral sense. This implies that we are able to evaluate a moral act. It implies that we are able to estimate the moral value of an act. In the second place, it implies that we know the righteous judgment of God over the deeds of men. In the third place, it implies, with a view to our text, that this man's judgment is not applied to himself but to others. This is his mistake. In the fourth place, the word implies that this man condemns them whom he judges. In the fifth place, the word implies that he expresses this judgment. He openly condemns them before others.

Let us understand that this man who judges does the same things. Notice that the apostle does not say, thou also sinnest. This is not the point. The point is that he does the *same* sins. He condemns another who lies, and he lies himself. He condemns another who steals, and he steals himself. He condemns another who commits adultery, and he commits adultery himself. The same moral deeds which he condemns in others, he commits himself.

Let us see how characteristic this is of sinful man. There is nothing Jewish about it. We find it in our own hearts. How characteristic of the world that the world condemns the world in the things which the world does. You find it in your daily newspapers. A man condemns the thief and the bank robber. At the same time, this judge who condemns the thief himself steals right and left. The banker cries bloody murder when one steals from him. But he does not care that after he has piled up the money of the poor, he closes his bank.* How characteristic of one generation to condemn the sins of a former generation. How easy we can see, through the beam in our own eye, the mote in the other's eye. Did you never notice, while sitting in company and talking about another, what a slanderer he is, that all the while you

are doing the same thing? In other words, it is possible for us to backbite in talking about the backbiting of others. In one word, it is characteristic of the heart of man that he judges another, while he himself does the same things.

His Imagination

Why should man do this? The implication is that the man who so judges another, while he himself does the same things, tries to persuade himself that he is judge rather than defendant. Thus, he imagines that he can persuade God and others that he is with excuse. He lifts himself above all. He takes part with the Judge. He tells the Judge that he agrees with him. He tells the Judge that all those men before him are worthy of death. He makes himself a companion of the Judge in the courtroom. The man does it. Each man does it.

What a situation! Everybody accusing everybody but himself. This is the implication of the text. What a situation! This is terrible. Just imagine, in a courtroom there are one hundred men, and everyone of them demands the sentence of the other ninety-nine. This is the world. The world is a courtroom. The judgment is not *coming*; the judgment is *every day*. It is true that there is a final judgment coming. But the world is a courtroom already now. God judges every man. But in this courtroom every man stands before the face of God and says, "Yes, condemn them." Therefore, the apostle says: "Thou that judgest another condemnest thyself, for thou doest the same things."

* Hoeksema here comments on the social conditions during the years of the "great depression," specifically the closing of the banks. These sermons were preached in the late 1930s. — Ed.

In the second place, the purpose of the sinful heart that so judges is to declare himself to be outside of this judgment. Why does the sinner condemn the other sinner? What is the underlying idea? What is there in the sinful heart that makes a man do this? It is this, that he means to say, "I am better than all the others."

You all know the story of David and Nathan. As long as Nathan is speaking of the other man, it is easy for David to condemn that other man. He condemns the other man in the thing that he was doing himself. When David says, "that man shall surely be put to death," he means to say by implication, "I would never do that."

Did you ever notice that if a man really comes to repentance, he talks about himself alone? He says: "Be merciful to me a sinner." But as long as he talks about others, he means to say, "I am better."

Before himself, this means deceit. He deceives himself. Before others, it is conceit. Before God, it is self-righteousness. And this man, who so judges, will never be receptive to the gospel.

His Inexcusability

Therefore, the apostle says: "Thou art inexcusable, O man." What does this mean? Literally, it means, "to be without defense." When is a man with an excuse? In the first place, when the charge brought against him is not true. In the second place, if that man is not under obligation. In the third place, when a man is morally not responsible. In the fourth place, when what is demanded of him is physically impossible.

Now the apostle says that in God's courtroom man is inexcusable. In the day of judgment, he will be without defense. In the day of judgment, God will judge according to truth. The apostle really implies that God asks every man: "Have you anything to say? Have you anything to say for yourself?" And man will keep still. God will say to the others: "Have you anything to say for the defense of this man?" The world will say, "No, we have always condemned him."

He is inexcusable.

Why should he be? The apostle says: "The things wherein thou judgest another, thou doest thyself." When a man judges others, he shows that he is not irresponsible. He shows that he can evaluate a moral deed. While he

does so, he actually includes himself among them whom he condemns, for he does the same things.

What shall we say then? We shall say this. We will come down from the bench. We will come down from the bench of our imaginary judgeship. We will take our place among the accused. We will stop judging the other; we will bring ourselves under the righteous judgment of God; and we will hear the word of our text: "Thou art the man."

We will never do it! We will never do it, unless God takes this word and inscribes it in our hearts, so that we hear it as the word of God: "Thou art that man." Then we will say: "Be merciful to me a sinner."

But this is the admonition of the text. Come down from the bench. Come down to the floor of the courtroom. On the floor of the courtroom is a Lawyer. Man has no excuse. But for him who places himself on the floor of the courtroom, among the condemned, there is the righteousness of God. Jesus Christ is his eternal defense and apology. And we will say: "We, then, being justified by faith, have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

□

Editorial

A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant

(6)

The third text that the defender of the conditional covenant appeals to is I Timothy 2:3, 4. He is contending

for a doctrine that holds that God loves all the physical children of believers with His covenant love, and that God desires to save them all. In support of this doctrine, he

appeals to a passage of Scripture which he supposes to teach a desire of God to save all men without exception. It is no longer a matter only of God's desiring to

save all the physical children of believing parents. It is now a matter of God's desiring to save every human without exception.

Here again, it is evident that the doctrine of a conditional covenant with all the physical children of believers is essentially the same as the teaching of a grace of God in the gospel toward all who hear. Both appeal to the same texts. Rev. Cecil Tuininga appeals to I Timothy 2:3, 4 in support of a covenant love of God for all children of believers. In his recent book advocating that God loves and desires to save all who hear the gospel, Iain H. Murray of the Banner of Truth makes I Timothy 2:3, 4 a main biblical proof of his doctrine. He calls I Timothy 2:3, 4 "a crucial text" on behalf of his view of universal, conditional grace in the gospel (see *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism*, Banner of Truth, 1995, pp. 149-154).

This is Rev. Tuininga's appeal to the text:

And in this connection, does God not desire the salvation of all men? If not, how do you interpret I Timothy 2:3, 4? ... If this is not the clear message of Scripture, that God desires all men to be saved, then what does it say? (See the *Standard Bearer*, Jan. 1, 1997, p. 150.)

I Timothy 2:3, 4 reads: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Rev. Tuininga understands the apostle to teach that God desires to save every human without exception, by having every human come to the knowledge of the truth. He appeals to this text in support of his doctrine of a conditional covenant. His explanation of the text, therefore, must be that God's desire depends for its realization on the sinner's performance of the condition of faith. Just as in the covenant the promise, which

(according to him) is given to every child alike, depends upon the child's faith, so in the general preaching of the gospel God's desire to save all, which is expressed to every hearer by the "well-meant offer," depends upon the sinner's faith.

The Word "All" in I Timothy 2:4

Rev. Tuininga stumbles, seriously, over the word "all." He assumes that the word "all" means "every human without exception." He is wrong. Seldom in Scripture does "all" mean "every person without exception." Often it means "all kinds or classes of persons," or "all men and women who make up a certain, definite group."

"All" does not mean "every person without exception" in Romans 5:18b: "even so by the righteousness of one (Jesus Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." The righteousness of Christ does not justify and give life to "every person without exception."

"All" does not mean "every person without exception" in John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The crucified Christ does not draw "every person without exception" to Himself.

"All" does not mean "every person without exception" in I Corinthians 15:22b: "even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Christ will not raise "every person without exception" unto eternal life in the last day.

"All" does not mean "every human without exception" in I Timothy 2:3, 4. The words "all men" occur first in the passage in verse 1. There, they refer to "all classes of men," as verse 2 shows. Christians must pray for "all men." The ruling class ("kings ... and all that are in authority") may not be excluded from their prayers. Verses 3 and 4 give the ground for this exhortation: God wills that all classes and kinds of men be saved.

That "all men" in verse 4 does not refer to "every human without exception" is proved beyond all doubt to every Reformed student of Scripture from verse 6. In verse 6 we read of "all" once more. But this time the word describes those for whom Christ died: "(Christ Jesus) gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

If "all" in verse 4 refers to "every human without exception," this is what "all" means also in verse 6. In this case, Jesus died as a ransom for every man without exception.

The connection between explaining "all" in verse 4 as "every man without exception" and explaining "all" in verse 6 as "every man without exception" is inescapable *exegetically*. Those who explain "all" in verse 4 as "every man without exception" cannot avoid universal atonement in verse 6.

It is also inescapable *theologically*. If God does indeed love every man without exception, so that He wills the salvation of every man without exception, Jesus certainly died as a ransom for every man without exception. For Jesus carried out the will of God.

Implications of Taking "All" Universally

Have Rev. Tuininga and, to be fair, the many other professing Calvinists who appeal to I Timothy 2 in support of a doctrine of God's loving desire to save all without exception considered the implications of their explanation of the text?

1) There is in God a real will that all without exception be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, *which will goes unfulfilled and is everlastingly frustrated*. The text does not speak of a vague "desire" or superficial "wish" (as though this were possible in God), but of God's "will" (Greek: *theloo*). The salvation of all without exception is God's well-thought-out and firm

purpose. He may have other purposes. One of them may be the very opposite of this one. But it is the will of God to save every human without exception. This is not the will of God about a minor matter. This is the will of God about the salvation and damnation of human beings. And this purpose is not accomplished. This is a will of God that is frustrated.

2) God is a God of sheer self-contradiction. He Himself has ordained that the only way of salvation is one's coming to the knowledge of the truth, as verse 4 teaches: "... and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Even though He wills the salvation of all, He Himself withholds the knowledge of the truth from many (as in the time of the old covenant); hides the truth from others (Matt. 11:25, 26); and employs the truth to blind and harden others (Rom. 9:18; 11:7-10), thus assuring that they will *not* be saved.

3) Jesus Christ died as a ransom for every human without exception. Both exegetically and theologically, it is certain that if "all" in I Timothy 2:3, 4 means "every man without exception," this is what "all" means two verses later. All who explain the text as teaching a desire of God to save all are committed, willy-nilly, to universal atonement.

The Logic of Hyper-Calvinism?

Rev. Tuininga dismisses my interpretation of the text as mere hyper-Calvinistic logic-chopping before I give it.

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. ... Hyper-Calvinists, in applying logic to Scripture, come to exactly the opposite conclusion ... and so ... proceed to reject clear teachings of Scripture.

He should be more careful.

The interpretation that I have given was that of John Calvin.

In his commentary on I Timothy 2:4, the Reformer responded to "those who represent this passage to be opposed to predestination." Their argument was that the text contradicts and overthrows the teaching that "some are predestinated by His eternal purpose to salvation, and others to perdition." Calvin's explanation was that "the Apostle simply means, that there is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation.... The present discourse relates to classes of men, and not to individual persons" (*Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Eerdmans, 1959, pp. 54, 55).

Calvin also explained the text in his treatise, "A Defence of the Secret Providence of God." An enemy of the truth of God's sovereign predestination had appealed against Calvin's defense of the doctrine to I Timothy 2:4. Wrote Calvin:

And as to your usual way of citing that passage of the apostle Paul, "That God would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), how vain a prop that is to put under your error to support it, I think I have shown with sufficient plainness already, and that repeatedly. For it is (so to speak) more certain than certainty itself that the apostle is not, in that passage, speaking of individuals at all, but of orders of men in their various civil and national vocations. He had just before commanded that the public prayers of the Church should be offered up for kings and others in authority, and for all who held magisterial offices, of what kind and degree soever they may be. But as nearly all those who were then armed with the sword of public justice were open and professed enemies to the Church, and as it might therefore seem to the Church singular or absurd that

public prayers should be offered up for them, the apostle meets all objections, so very natural, by admonishing the Church to pray even for them also, and to supplicate God to extend His grace and favour even to them, for the Church's quiet, peace and safety (*Calvin's Calvinism*, RFP, pp. 275, 276).

Concerning the word "all" in Scripture over which so many stumble and which is eagerly used by so many to oppose the Reformed doctrine of sovereign, particular grace, John Calvin made a sharp, important comment in his explanation of Daniel 7:27. The text promises that "all dominions shall serve and obey him (Mesiah)."

As, however, it is certain that many have perseveringly rebelled against God and the teaching of his gospel, it may seem absurd for the angel to pronounce all the powers of the world obedient and submissive. But it is worth while to study the customary methods of scriptural expression. For instance, by the phrase "all people," the Spirit does not mean every single person, but simply some out of every nation who should submit to Christ's yoke, acknowledge him to be king, and obediently obey his Church.... Some persons foolishly press beyond their meaning words of universal import, as when Paul says, God wishes all to be saved. Hence, they say, no one is predetermined for destruction, but all are elect, that is, God is not God (I Tim. 2:4). But we are not surprised at such madness as this, corrupting the impious and profane, who desire by their cavils to promote disbelief in all the oracles of the Spirit. Let us clearly comprehend the frequency of this figure of speech; when the Holy Spirit names "all," he means some out of all nations, and not every one universally (*Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, vol. 2, Eerdmans, 1948, p. 78).

Will the advocates of universal, conditional grace, whether in

the sphere of the covenant or in the wide world, who love to appeal to I Timothy 2:3, 4 now call John Calvin a hyper-Calvinist?

It is easy, and even popular in Reformed circles, to call the Prot-

estant Reformed Churches hyper-Calvinists.

Dare they say this about John Calvin, from whose interpretation of I Timothy 2:3, 4 and doctrine of

sovereign, particular grace grounded in God's will of predestination we do not differ?

John Calvin: hyper-Calvinist? □

— DJE

Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Abraham Kuyper: Dutch Calvinist (2)

The Journalist and Writer

It is largely through Kuyper's writings that his influence has continued over the years. Article after article and volume after volume poured from his pen. It is almost impossible to imagine that Kuyper, as busy as he was, could write as much as he did.

The only reason he did succeed in writing so much was his highly structured and disciplined life. Not only those who loved him, but also his enemies, wondered if he ever slept. He himself wrote out in longhand everything he published, preached, and spoke. His mornings were reserved for his writing. He absolutely refused to be interrupted during these hours and gave strict instructions to his wife and servants that only a grave emergency could interfere with his morning's work. In the afternoon he lectured. From 5:30-6:30 was dinner hour and time to spend with his family. In the evenings he corrected proofs from the

printer. And his work often continued far into the night. Kuyper spent himself in the cause of the church and the kingdom of Christ.

His literary career really began in 1866 with the publication of à Lasco's works which he had used in the writing of his award-winning essay during university days. Kuyper prepared a lengthy introduction to the set, and did the church invaluable service by making available these important treasures from the past. His life could have been profitably spent as a historian: he later edited and published selected writings of Junius and Voetius.

In 1869 Kuyper became associate editor of *De Heraut* (*The Herald*), and in 1871 he assumed the editorship of this paper. Its character could easily be determined by the motto carried on its masthead: "For a free church and a free school in a free land." In 1872 he became editor of *De Standaard* (*The Standard*), a Christian daily newspaper. He continued to function as editor of both these papers (*De Heraut* was a weekly) until he was 82 years old, a span of almost fifty years. Both papers took considerable time, not only for editorial responsibilities, but also for filling the pages with his own writ-

ings. Many of the series of articles he wrote in them were later published in book form.

The papers were widely read by friend and foe, and exerted considerable influence on the nation, especially in the area of politics.

It has been said that Kuyper could have been an expert in anything to which he set his hands. There is truth to this. His writings are not only vast, but are on many different subjects. He wrote widely in the field of theology; his lectures on Dogmatics were published under the title *Dictaten Dogmatiek* (*Dictated Dogmatics*). He wrote hundreds of meditations, these being perhaps some of his most enjoyable writings. He prepared many articles on practical Christianity, material that remains of value to the present. He was a student of history and philosophy, of politics and aesthetics, and his writings embrace all these subjects. He prepared expositions of the confessions, the most famous being his exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, *E Voto Dordraceno* (*According to the Will of Dort*). After touring the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, he wrote two extensive volumes on the geography, history, and cultural life of the many peoples who

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

lived in these lands. Some of his writings indicate that he was not a cold intellectual as some charged; emerging from his facile pen are many writings which can only be classified as Reformed mysticism. *Nabij God te Zijn (Nearness to God)* is perhaps his most widely known book in this field.

His writings (as well as his speeches and sermons) abounded in illustrations and figures of speech. Some of his illustrations are memorable, although there are times when one wonders whether the illustrations were intended to prove a point rather than illustrate a point.

There can be no question about it, however, that Kuyper's vast writings have continued to influence the thinking of countless people.

Church Reformer

After his conversion, Kuyper became an unrelenting foe of modernism, which had captured the universities and divinity schools in the Netherlands, and which had sapped the church of its spiritual life.

The Separation which had taken place in 1834 under DeCock and others had been indeed a true reformation of the State church in the Netherlands. But by virtue of its very character it had attracted only the lower classes of people; it had never had any strong theological leadership; many of its members had migrated to America under the heavy burdens of poverty and persecution; and it was itself torn by strife, internal division, and ecclesiastical separation. Many faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed creeds had remained in the State church.

Kuyper's battle against the evils of doctrine and life in the church brought him into conflict with the theologians, professors, and leaders. They hated him and fought against him bitterly. But opposition never deterred Kuyper

from doing what he believed right.

Kuyper did battle with liberalism and modernism through his preaching and writing, and as his influence grew, his work led to an increasing polarization of the orthodox and liberals.

The first open conflict was while Kuyper was minister in Utrecht. The consistory's refusal to answer a questionnaire sent out in the place of a visit by classical delegates aroused the anger of the classical board. But it was passed over and the matter never was pressed.

It was only after Kuyper had resigned from the ministry and had become in 1882 an elder in the consistory of the church of Amsterdam, that troubles finally came to a head.

The issues were these.

The Formula of Subscription, which formerly had bound all ministers, elders, deacons, and professors to faithfulness to the creeds, was changed to require of those signing it only a promise "to promote the interests of the kingdom of God in general and especially those of the State Church" — where, presumably, "the interests of the State Church" were decided by those who held positions of power. The consistory of Amsterdam, under the leadership of Kuyper, insisted on confessional integrity of its ministers and officebearers.

Furthermore, within the consistory arose the question whether unbelieving young people ought to be admitted into full membership in the church and ought to be received at the Lord's Supper. The consistory refused to allow such desecration of the Lord's table even though the practice was common and widespread.

The result was inevitable. The assemblies acted against them. Five ministers, 42 elders, and 33 deacons were suspended by the classical board. The Board also changed the locks in the cathedral consistory room and put steel pan-

els on the inside, taking possession of all the property and the archives. These actions were upheld by the Synod, which deposed them all. Two hundred congregations left, with about 100,000 people. This movement was called *De Doleantie* (The Grieving Ones, or, The Aggrieved Ones), a name given to designate their sorrow over the apostasy of the church and their identification over against their denomination while they were still a part of it.

Although this too was a genuine reformation of the church of Christ, Kuyper himself recognized the fact that the Separation of 1834 was also a true reformation. He set about, almost immediately, seeking contact with the people of the Separation, in an effort to unite these two into one denomination.

His efforts were, on the whole successful, and in 1892 the two denominations merged. Four hundred congregations of the Separation of 1834 and 300 congregations of the Kuyperian churches came together to form *De Gereformeerde Kerken* (The Reformed Churches).

In some respects, the marriage was a forced one. The doctrinal differences were many and significant, although the basic difference had to do with God's covenant.

The co-existence of these two denominations in one church structure resulted in a great deal of tension. The people distinguished between the two by speaking of the churches of the Secession as the A-churches, and the churches of the Kuyperian group as the B-churches. It often happened in various cities and villages that neither the people nor the ministers of the one group would want to appear in the other.

Immigrants from both parts of the church went to America and became in this country the Christian Reformed Church.

It is of no little significance that God used Kuyper also to bring about reformation in the apostate State church in the Neth-

erlands, and to preserve the cause of His truth.

The Politician

Perhaps Kuyper's role in the political affairs of the Netherlands, more than anything else, has had its effect on subsequent generations. And it is true that much of Kuyper's time and activity was spent in politics. His goal was to restore the Netherlands to what it had once been in the golden days of its history when the Reformed church was truly Reformed and the government was a strong supporter of this orthodox Reformed church. And, as a by-product of this goal, Kuyper saw that the advantage would be an alleviation of the difficult lot of the common people.

We have noticed before that Kuyper was a man of the common people. He spoke to them in a way in which they could understand. He loved them with a deep love. He sought, throughout his entire life, the spiritual, material, and political welfare of these *kleine luyden*, as he was wont to call them.

A meeting of Kuyper with Groen VanPrinsterer, an extraordinarily capable man of *De Reveil*, who was really the founder of the Anti-revolutionary Party, early in his career (1869) so profoundly moved Kuyper that from thenceforth he cast his lot with the Anti-revolutionary Party.

In keeping with his character, Kuyper threw himself into the work of the party with vigor and enthusiasm, and stood for election in the Second Chamber of Parliament. After being defeated twice at the polls, he was elected from Gouda in 1874. It was at this point that he resigned his position as minister of the church of Amsterdam and assumed the role of emeritus minister, so as to give himself completely to the work of Parliament. The law also forbade anyone from being both a member of Parliament and an active minister of a church.

In 1875 he was re-elected, but this term was interrupted by his second major nervous breakdown from overwork. Fifteen months he was incapacitated, months which he spent mainly in Southern Europe — Italy and Switzerland.

Upon his return, and through his efforts, the Anti-revolutionary Party was thoroughly organized with a Constitution, a Statement of Principles, national and local organization, and a well-formulated platform. Such organization paid dividends, and the party continued to increase its membership in Parliament.

Nevertheless, as Kuyper and his policies were more and more hated by the opposition, the two main parties in Parliament united against him. The result was that it soon became clear that the only way for the Anti-revolutionary Party to break the hold of the liberals on the country was to form a coalition with the Roman Catholics. This coalition was effected and was victorious in the election of 1888; but its victory was temporary and it lost the election of 1891. It was not until 1901 that the coalition once again came to power. This time Kuyper was asked to head the new government. He became prime minister. After the dissolution of the government and the defeat of the coalition in the election of 1905, Kuyper's brief term as prime minister came to an end. Twice more he served briefly, once in the Second Chamber and once in the First Chamber. But his age and infirmities were catching up with him and his terms were ineffective.

Although the goals of the Anti-revolutionary Party were never achieved, some accomplishments of note resulted from the years in which the party of Kuyper was a force with which the opposition had to reckon. Perhaps most importantly, a school bill was passed which gave the Christian schools legal parity with the government schools. Prior to Kuyper's labors

on behalf of Christian education, the situation in the Netherlands was very much like it is in this country: government schools were supported by all taxpayers; Christians schools had to be supported by the people who did not want their children taught in government schools; a double burden of taxation and tuition fell upon them. Kuyper succeeded in getting legislation passed which gave government subsidy also to Christian schools.

Kuyper pressed hard and long for the Christianizing of the colonies under Netherlands rule, and he sought legislation which would alleviate the hard lot of the working man and abolish child labor. Kuyper was astounded to learn that little children were required to work 70 to 80 hours a week, and had to be wakened in the morning by being doused with cold water.

That Kuyper came to power at all involved a compromise of his own position. Early in his work with the Anti-revolutionary Party, Kuyper refused cooperation with the Conservative Party (its name is deceptive; though called "Conservative," it was closely allied with the Liberal Party and was bitterly opposed to anything the orthodox stood for) because they "subjected even the honor of the holy God to calculations of political advantage." Yet Kuyper could form a coalition with Roman Catholics in order to gain political advantage.

As he became older, Kuyper not only did not actively participate in party affairs as he once had done, but he became more and more critical of his party, criticisms publicly voiced in *De Heraut* and *De Standaard*. He sometimes left the impression, rightly or wrongly, that he was becoming a bitter old man who could not tolerate the leadership of others, especially when they disagreed with him. And many complained of his autocratic leadership. □

The Antithesis (2)

The truth of the antithesis ought to be a doctrine prominent in our thinking. It is a very serious matter. The whole of the Christian life is defined by the antithesis, as we explained that concept in our last article.

After man's fall into sin, the antithesis took on a very specific form.

The *thesis*, the revelation of God's glory, and the *antithesis*, the contrasting position over against all that which would oppose God's glory, now stands out even more sharply.

God came to the fallen Adam and Eve, sought them out, called them by name, and assured them that in spite of their unfaithfulness He keeps His covenant forever. He promised them the Savior, to be born as the Seed of the woman, the Head of His elect, who would save His people from their sins.

God, who Himself is Light and in whom is no darkness at all, sovereignly and powerfully calls His people out of darkness into His marvelous light. Against the dark background of disobedience, rebellion, and death in which once we His people were consumed, our great God has revealed His infinite glory and grace, His holiness and righteousness, His life.

The Savior establishes the antithesis in the hearts of His people by His Spirit. He dwells in us in such a way that by His grace we

become citizens of the kingdom of heaven, who walk in the light. He implants in our hearts the willing desire to live the life of pilgrims and strangers, who serve God and not Satan.

So God continues to reveal His glory. The principle of the life of regeneration and faith in the redeemed shows forth the glories of God's mercy and grace and love against the background of sin's darkness and the rebellion of this world.

And thus is seen the battle of the ages.

The Antithesis Rejected

But in our day the idea of a battle is not well liked, not even a *spiritual* battle.

In our day the term *antithesis* is despised—even within the church. There is another term that has taken its place. *Synthesis* is the desired doctrine today. *Synthesis* denotes a *putting together*, an attempted marriage of *yes* and *no*. It is the attempt to merge together light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the truth and the lie, the church and the world. And the attempt has been largely successful — successful, that is, in the devil's terms.

This rejection of the antithesis is seen rising on several fronts within the church historically.

Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church rejected the antithesis centuries ago. It did so by adopting Pelagianism as its foundational view of man. Eventually that rejection of the antithesis took the form of synthesizing religious and

pagan practices. If one were to research many of the unbiblical practices of the Roman Catholic Church and find their historical roots, he would find them rooted in paganism. As the church attempted to take under its wing all nations and all peoples, without true conversion, the loss of the antithesis brought synthesis, a horrendous corruption which eventually formed the impetus for the Reformation.

Another form of a rejection of the antithesis is found in Rome's teaching of a two-level morality. Whereas we maintain the truth that "saints" are all those who are in Christ Jesus (see Rom. 1:7, e.g.), the Roman Catholic Church teaches a separate level, a higher level of morality and consecration to God, necessary for one to attain to sainthood. From this error arises their whole system of monastic orders, with their renunciation of marriage, vows of poverty, and isolationism. In the meantime, the common folk often wallow in spiritual ignorance and immorality. All of them are in desperate need of the gospel!

Common Grace

Another rejection of the antithesis is found closer to our own roots, in the theory of common grace. This was the error that gave rise to the Protestant Reformed Churches, when our spiritual forefathers rejected the idea that had been adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 with their "Three Points."

One aspect of that three-headed monster maintains that in the world of ungodly and unre-

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

generate men there is a certain operation of the Holy Spirit which results in the ability of the natural man to do good in the sight of God in certain areas of life. The unbeliever does no spiritual good. But he is able, nonetheless, to do that which is pleasing in God's sight in the "civic sphere," i.e., in everyday things.

Although Scripture teaches clearly that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23) and reveals again and again that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His standards of righteousness far exceed ours, this theory of common grace maintains that what Jesus called "an evil tree" can bring forth good fruit. In fact, it says more. This theory teaches that the *Holy Spirit* hangs good fruits on an evil tree! By the work of the *Holy Spirit*, the ungodly are not so bad after all!

Herman Hoeksema, in his opposition to this teaching, exposed its error by pointing out the irreconcilable conflict between this teaching and the biblical doctrine of total depravity.

He pointed to the official confession of the Reformed churches which maintains that the natural man is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, and that good works are defined only as those that proceed from true faith, are done according to the law of God and to His glory and not those that are based upon the imagination or the institutions of men (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 3 and 33).

"Yet," he wrote, "although in the abstract and as a matter of their confession the Christian Reformed Churches admit this, in practical life they profess it to be wholly different. In this life, with respect to the things and spheres of this world, there is nowhere a totally depraved man, according to them. All are able to do good. All can live a morally good life."

His conclusion? "Total depravity has become a mere abstrac-

tion in the Christian Reformed Churches."¹

This was only one aspect of the common grace theory as developed by Christian Reformed theologians, and to our mind not even the most vile aspect. But it brought devastating consequences to the life of the antithesis. With this doctrine, there is a certain area of common ground on which the people of God may stand with the wicked. Hoeksema prophesied that the adoption of this doctrine would see the church consumed by the world.

In a futile attempt to prevent that from happening, the Synod of the CRC in 1928 took a stand against worldly amusements. In its report to the Synod, the study committee faced the question of the relationship between the church and the world.

"The question arises, *what basis of fellowship there can be* between the child of God and the man of this world? What have they in common which makes a degree of communion possible and legitimate?...The solution is found in the doctrine of common grace. *Spiritually* the believers and unbelievers have nothing in common, but morally they have. The basis of our fellowship should never be *the sin* which we have in common with them, but the grace (common) which they have in common with us!...This principle can be applied to the sphere of amusements. In his general grace God has (1) given certain joys, diversions, pleasures to men.... By that same general grace He (2) restrains sin in the hearts of the ungodly so that the diversions and amusements which they devise are not always and necessarily tainted with sin.... We do not advise Christians to seek their amusements in mixed company. This is often dangerous. But the mere fact that they meet on *common* ground is no proof that the Christian is on *forbidden* ground."²

The fact is, the Study Committee, though wanting to prevent the

body of the Christian Reformed Church from being consumed by the poison of worldliness, had no antidote. The antithesis had been destroyed by the unbiblical doctrine of common grace. And today *antithesis* has been replaced by *synthesis*. Worldliness has overwhelmed the churches like a flood. The people of God grieve.

But still other errors have brought about a rejection of the antithesis within the church world.

Ecumenism

There is a fierce attack upon the biblical antithesis by various forms of ecumenism, often intertwined with New Age thought. Behind most of the contemporary cry to break down the barriers, and the urgent call for tolerance and spiritual unity, there lurks a rejection of God's truth and a denial of the antithesis that will eventually bring the church world into fellowship with Antichrist.

Forgotten is what Scripture teaches concerning the central place of God's truth to all of Christianity. Jesus said (John 8:31,32), "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He made clear in His high priestly prayer of John 17 that the only way in which His people will be received into God's fellowship and be sanctified is "through the truth" (John 17:17,19). So important is the truth, that "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26,27).

For all its outward striving for unity, the church of our day falls under the sharp condemnation of the Spirit's warning in II Thessalonians 2, where He warned of the deceitfulness of that Wicked One, whose coming is "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness

in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

Forgotten in this prevalent rejection of God's truth in our day and this denial of the antithesis is what James writes in James 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Closer to Home

But having mentioned just a few of the various ways in which the antithesis is rejected in the church of our day, we must not neglect to mention one other way, a way that without question has affected us as Protestant Reformed people and churches.

It is possible that while the doctrine of the antithesis is maintained doctrinally, and while all the above-named errors are rejected, the truth of the antithesis is denied in practice.

The antithesis, let us understand, involves a life-style. It involves a very particular world-and-life view. It is this that we must consider in our next article. □

¹ H. Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, 1947, p. 381.

² *Report of the Committee on Worldly Amusements, To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting in Holland, Mich., June, 1928*, p. 15. (All emphasis is found in the report. SK.)

Special Feature

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Conference of the PRC in America with the EPC of Australia

In the middle of January 1997, during the summer holidays of the southern hemisphere, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia hosted a conference with representatives of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. They hosted this conference in the church building of their congregation in Launceston, Tasmania. Launceston is approximately as far south of the equator as Grand Rapids, Michigan is north of it. Tasmania was a great place to be if one wanted to escape some of the coldest and snowiest weather to hit southwestern Michigan in 1997. It was also a great place to be to enjoy the blessing of the communion of saints.

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Bauer, Michigan and member of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches.

The invitation for this conference was sent to the "Committee for Contact With Other Churches" of the Protestant Reformed Churches way back in the spring of 1996. A date was set, topics for discussion were chosen, and an agenda for the conference was determined. And Synod 1996 expressed itself in favor of such a conference, willing to bear the cost of just over \$5,000, in order that it might fulfill its calling to show the unity of the church of Christ on a broader level.



Contact between the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia began in the mid '70s, when Prof. Homer Hoeksema and Rev. Cornelius Hanks of the Protestant Reformed Churches traveled to New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore, and at that time met brethren from the Evangelical Presbyterian denomination. The contact has continued ever since.

Delegations from the EPC came to the United States twice, once in 1991 to attend a conference sponsored by the PRC for their sister churches, and again in 1993. During those years the EPC also sent two men who felt called to the ministry to receive their seminary training in the theological school of the PRC. These two men (now Rev. David Higgs and Rev. Chris Connors) attended the Protestant Reformed Seminary for three years beginning in the fall of 1991.

It was at the meeting of its Synod in June, 1994 that the PRC instructed their Contact Committee to continue "to address the issues in which we differ with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, as given by the Contact Committee, with a view to a conference." That decision and subsequent correspondence led to the EPC's making plans for and sending an invitation to the PRC to attend a conference scheduled for January 22 and 23, 1997. The PRC Synod 1996 approved the plans made, and at the same time instructed its Con-

tact Committee "to continue to pursue, in whatever ways possible, a good relationship with the fellow-saints of the EPC of Australia." In its grounds for that instruction, Synod noted that "of all the Presbyterian churches in the world, this denomination is one of the closest to us in faith and life." To fulfill this mandate of Synod the Contact Committee decided to send Prof. Hanko and Rev. VanOverloop to Australia.



The PRC delegation arrived in Australia nine days before the conference. During those days the two men went in different directions, visiting with the saints in various congregations of the EPC. This provided them with opportunities to become better acquainted with the members of the EPC. Many in the EPC were especially delighted to meet Prof. Hanko, who was one of the men responsible for the seminary training of the two new ministers in their denomination. Prof. Hanko and his wife spent a week in the home of Rev. and Mrs. David Higgs in Brisbane, Queensland. During and after the conference they were the guests in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Chris Connors. In Brisbane, Prof. Hanko led a congregational Bible study, gave a public lecture, and preached two times on Sunday, January 19. A week later, after the conference, Prof. Hanko preached twice on the Lord's Day, January 26, in the EPC congregation in Launceston, Tasmania.

Rev. VanOverloop's stay in Australia began with a three-hour car drive north of Melbourne to Cohuna, Victoria, where there is a preaching station (mission) of the EPC. There he was graciously hosted for two nights by Rev. and Mrs. Chris Coleborn. On one of the evenings of his stay there he was introduced to the small congregation as they gathered in the

Coleborn home. Rev. VanOverloop gave a brief introduction of the PRC in America and then gave a meditation. After two days in Cohuna, Rev. VanOverloop flew to the large island of Tasmania (about the size of the state of Wisconsin). He was there a guest for three days in the home of Rev. Chris Connors, the pastor of the Launceston congregation. One of those evenings Rev. VanOverloop led a Bible Study for the congregation. On another evening he gave a public lecture in their church building on the "Call or Offer of the Gospel." On Saturday he was taken on an hour and a half drive to the northeast of Launceston to the beautiful village of Winnaleah, where there is an EPC congregation pastored by Rev. Phil Burley. That night, in Pastor Burley's home, he gave an introduction of his congregation and denomination, and then a brief meditation. The next morning he preached in their beautiful, quaint country church building. He was driven back to Launceston in the afternoon, to preach for the Launceston congregation.

Prof. Hanko had been in Australia before, and had at that time become acquainted with some of the people of the EPC. Rev. VanOverloop had never before been to Australia, so he was meeting all these people for the first time. The nine days of visiting, speaking, and preaching, then, gave opportunity to become acquainted, or re-acquainted, with many of the wonderful saints of this small denomination. All of this interchange provided a good setting for the conference.

The evening of Tuesday, January 21, the night before the Presbytery constituted itself and the conference began, there was a worship service led by the Rev. Tony Fisk, pastor of the EPC congregation in Rockhampton, Queensland. The Word of God preached and the prayers uttered at that time set the tone for the conference.

It had been arranged that the conference was to be a part of the bi-annual meeting of the EPC Presbytery, the broadest assembly of the EPC. On the morning of Wednesday, January 22, therefore, the Presbytery constituted itself and invited the two representatives of the PRC to seat themselves among them, giving them advisory vote. At that point the delegates of the Presbytery declared themselves a committee of the whole for the duration of the conference, and the conference began.

The conference itself was well arranged, providing good opportunity for the presentation and discussion of the four topics which had been selected. The whole of the first day of the conference was spent with the reading of eight papers, two on each subject, one by a man of the EPC and one by a man of the PRC. The four men who wrote for the EPC were Rev. Chris Connors on Temporal Justification, Rev. Phil Burley on the Regulative Principle and Worship, Rev. Brian Dole on the Establishment Principle, and Rev. Chris Coleborn on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. Prof. Herman Hanko presented papers on Eternal Justification and on the Establishment Principle, and Rev. Ron VanOverloop presented papers on the Regulative Principle and on Divorce and Remarriage. [Copies of these papers may be obtained for the copying price (\$8.00) from the Protestant Reformed Seminary, 4949 Ivanrest Avenue, Grandville, MI 49418 (616) 531-1490.] The first day of the conference was concluded with representatives of each denomination preparing a list of the salient points on each topic which would be discussed the next day.

The second day of the conference was taken up with a discussion of those points. Each topic was discussed separately. These discussions helped to identify the areas of agreement as well as those of difference. A brief summary of

each of the four discussions was drawn up and approved as an accurate description of the discussion.

The evening of the second day of the conference was spent discussing the possibility of a future formal relationship between the two denominations. The discussion was extensive and profitable, dealing with specific areas of difficulty. The discussion concluded with the Contact Committees of both denominations being urged to continue to discuss the possibility of future relationship. Each Contact Committee also agreed to investigate how the Continental Reformed and the Scottish Presbyterian churches established such close relationships when they differed on the very same issues which today distinguish the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

The Presbytery of the EPC of Australia met on the following two days. Rev. VanOverloop was able to attend only a couple of hours

of the Presbytery meeting before he had to depart for home. Prof. Hanko attended the meeting on Friday. During the time that both men were in attendance, Prof. Hanko addressed the Presbytery on behalf of the Contact Committee and of the Protestant Reformed denomination. He conveyed greetings, expressed thanks for the warm hospitality shown, and presented reasons why the PRC would like to maintain and develop contact with the EPC of Australia. The address also informed the Presbytery of the decision of the PRC 1996 Synod which urged the EPC of Australia to continue to send their prospective ministers to the PR seminary. This address was most warmly received.

The spirit of the fellowship and of the conference was excellent. It was most conducive to open, positive discussion of differences. How quickly those who are total strangers can become comfortable with each other when they recognize themselves to be fellow-saints. It was a joy to find total agree-

ment with respect to the distinctives of Calvinism, of God's sovereignty, and of particular grace, and with respect to a rejection of common grace and a free offer of the gospel. Although the differences were not resolved, a better understanding of the respective positions was gained. Conferences such as these are very important for furthering relationships. We thank the Lord that such fellowship and efforts of co-operation can be experienced by those who agree on the fundamentals.

The Lord alone knows to what this contact and fellowship will lead. Already however we see evidence of the wisdom of Synod's having instructed the Contact Committee "to continue to pursue, in whatever ways possible, a good relationship with the fellow-saints of the EPC of Australia." How clear it is that, as synod expressed it in the grounds for the above instruction, our relationship with the EPC "can be a blessing to our churches." □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 6

The Fall of Our First Parents

(concluded)

Vain Coverings: Aprons of Fig Leaves

We next consider the events which followed immediately upon the Fall and which lead up to the first

announcement of the promise of the gospel by the Lord God.

We must bear in mind that at this point sin had become an accomplished fact, and that, too, for the entire world of mankind. This was not accomplished merely through the fall of Eve, but certainly when she had given of the fruit of the forbidden tree to Adam and when he had also eaten with her — in whatever manner her

temptation of him may have taken place. For it was through Adam, not through Eve, that sin entered into the world. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). In Adam's guilt lies the guilt of all. In his corruption lies the corruption of all. In his first sin is the sin of all as a root.*

It is not so easy to construe a

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

somewhat intelligible picture in our mind of Adam's spiritual condition at this time. On the one hand, it is evident that he died. This was, according to the Word of God, connected with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a word which could not fail to be carried out. Death worked in Adam and Eve. Man had lost all his excellent gifts: his knowledge, his righteousness, and his holiness. He had lost the image of God. Not only did he lose that image, but it was perverted into its very opposite. Through his sin man brought upon himself corruption, darkness, misery, enmity of God. As the Canons of Dordrecht put it: "...revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections" (III, IV/1). Gone were man's integrity and happiness. Of the sharp and radical contrast between his fallen estate and his former integrity and happiness, Adam must have been painfully conscious.

On the other hand, there must have been an immediate operation of grace also. This was not an operation of so-called common grace. For the grace of God is never common, any more than God is common. Nor does the fact of this immediate operation of grace imply that Adam did not die, for die he did. Nor do we speak of an immediate operation of grace because of the fact that Adam did not change into a beast or into a devil, or become the Antichrist, or any such thing. All these suggestions — which have sometimes been made — reveal an incorrect understanding both of the nature of man and of his fall into sin and death, as well as an incorrect view of the grace of God. The rational, moral creature, man, remains a man; he

cannot possibly become a beast or a devil, whether in the state of original righteousness or in the fallen condition or the saved state. Sin and death did not change essentially the nature of man, nor the individual human nature of Adam. Man remains man, and Adam remained Adam. Through the Fall Adam became exactly the sinner which he could become in his own place and circumstances at the dawn of history.

But grace, just grace — forgiving, everlasting, sovereign loving-kindness, longing to save the creature in himself lost and dead — that grace spread over Adam and Eve, operating in them as a spiritual power, and serving to maintain God's covenant.

Indeed, the devil must have had the surprise, the first surprise, of his life when he saw what took place after the temptation. Things certainly did not go at all according to the devil's plan after he had succeeded in tempting first Eve and then Adam.

This was because, as we have repeatedly emphasized, God had His eternal counsel. According to that counsel He eternally willed to save His own. Christ, as it were, stood behind Adam to catch him when he fell. It is as our Confession of Faith puts it in Article 17: "We believe that our most gracious God, in His admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into temporal and eternal death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him, when he trembling fled from His presence, promising him that He would give His Son, who should be made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent, and would make him happy."

Both of these elements, that of the reality of sin and yet that of the reality of grace breaking through, must be remembered if we are to understand the narrative here in Genesis 3. Hence, God, not man, is on the foreground

in this narrative. The chief thought of this narrative is that of the Lord coming to seek and to save His own. The various elements in the record of this passage must all be seen in this light.

Scripture calls attention, first of all, to the vain attempt of Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness with aprons of fig leaves. Thus we read in Genesis 3:7: "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons."

This does not mean, as the evolutionary theory would have it, that originally their eyes were closed to their nakedness and that they lived in a condition of a kind of childish innocence and naivete, but that now they passed from this state of childlike ignorance and developed into moral maturity and moral self-consciousness. Or this means as they developed from this state of semi-animal savagery they attained to a state of primitive civilization in which they also began to make and to use clothing to cover their nakedness, sewing aprons of fig leaves for themselves. Thus, this has sometimes been explained. But this is not true, in the light of Scripture. In their original state they also knew that they were naked; but they were not ashamed because there was no sin, because they were conscious of being wholly pure before one another and before the Lord.

But now, after they have sinned, their eyes were opened in the sense that they realized their sinful condition. They became conscious of the fact that their bodies were the instruments of sin and lust, and they sought to cover their nakedness before one another and before God with their self-made aprons of fig leaves. Originally they were holy. In that state also they were naked. But their bodies were the instruments of holiness, and there was no need for shame either before one another or before

God. Through sin their bodies became subject to sin and death; their bodies became the instruments of corruption and lust. Spiritually their eyes became closed, closed to righteousness and holiness, both with respect to God and with respect to one another. As moral, rational creatures, possessing a knowledge of the difference between good and evil and a knowledge of the shameful nature of sin, they became conscious now of this fact that their bodies were the instruments of sin and corruption. They looked upon one another with sinful, lustful eyes. Each was aware that the other thus looked upon him.

Moreover, as Scripture makes plain in Genesis 3:10, they were above all aware of the nakedness of their sin before God. This was, after all, the chief element. Adam himself expresses it when the Lord calls to him: "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And the Lord in His question to Adam very pointedly connects this consciousness of his nakedness on Adam's part with his eating of the tree whereof God had commanded him not to eat. They became aware, therefore, in their inmost soul that they were exposed before the eyes of the Lord in their sin and shame.

But this was also true in their relation to one another. Adam and Eve became polluted in their very bodies by the ugliness of sin and death, and they were aware of it. Adam and Eve mutually were aware that their bodies, corrupted as they were by the spiritual ugliness of sin, were the instruments of sin over against one another. We must remember that, as they were now by nature, Adam and Eve did not love one another any longer. They were filled with hatred, not only against God but against one another. As such, Adam looked upon Eve not in love, but in hatred. He could see in her only an object of his lust,

and could only be aware that she saw him in the same manner.

We must remember, however, that this so-called natural shame is not the expression of any remnant of good that is left in man after the Fall. It can hardly be said that in these first reactions of Adam and Eve, in their attempt to cover themselves and to hide from the presence of the Lord, there were signs of the operation of God's grace. There was fear, not sorrow and repentance, in these actions. It is perfectly true that this fear and this natural shame presuppose a knowledge of the wrongness and the shameful nature of sin. This is a matter of mere natural light, however, not of grace. There is no godly sorrow, no sorrow after God, in it.

Fact is that unless the power of God's grace takes hold of sin, the natural man subverts even that natural light and holds it under in unrighteousness. When, however, the power of God's grace takes hold of that same knowledge of the difference between good and evil and changes the spiritual direction of the mind and will, then a man no longer subverts it in unrighteousness, but he is led to true sorrow after God, to repentance, to contrition, to confession.

And we must remember that this was the direction in which the Lord God, through all these events, was leading Adam and Eve, even though at this point they were not aware of God's grace and did not evince any spiritual knowledge of sin and any hearty confession. First, they must learn to know by experience the vanity of their own foolish coverings of fig leaves.

For sinful and foolish those aprons of fig leaves certainly were, and utterly vain.

Even though the principle of grace was already present in their hearts, and even though they fell on Christ, so that they did not perish immediately, nevertheless the operation of this principle of grace

did not become manifest and was not yet a matter of their consciousness; rather, the power of their sinful nature dominated their actions. Those fig leaves represented the desire and the attempt on the part of Adam and Eve to cover up sin's pollution and death's ugliness by a covering of their own making. This is always foolish and vain. How could fig leaves or any other homemade cloak ever conceal them and make them any less naked before the Lord? Their real problem did not lie in the body, but in their heart. The solution was not the superficiality of an outward covering of clothing for their physical bodies. But the solution was the removal of their inner, spiritual guilt and pollution before the eyes of God who knows the heart and sees the inward parts of a man. This is possible only through the blood of atonement, which man can never provide, but which God provides for those whom He seeks and saves.

But that foolish and vain attempt of Adam and Eve is nevertheless always the foolishness of the natural man. He realizes that something is wrong with him; this, he can never escape. But he attempts of himself to cover up the nakedness of his own sin. He may employ fig-leaf aprons of Pharisaistic self-righteousness and work-righteousness. He may fast, and he may pay tithes, and he may make sacrifices, and he may do many mighty works. He may engage in philanthropy and in humanistic charity, bequeathing the millions that are the fruit of his covetousness in exercising the tender mercies of the wicked, which are cruel. But all his works of righteousness are so many fig leaves. He may employ fig-leaf aprons of his humanistic civilization and his programs of social reform and improvement. He may fight poverty and crime. He may strive to raise the standard of living and improve his environment. He may educate himself and his fellow man. He

may expend mighty efforts for world peace. But in all these he fails. He does not get at the root of his problem, the nakedness of his sin, his guilt and his corruption in which he stands exposed before a holy Lord God. He remains in the vain circle of sin and death. You cannot cleanse and purify a well by washing the pump handle. You cannot deceive the Holy One by covering up the spots of the leopard. You cannot hide the sinner by a nice suit of clothes.

Adam and Eve, according to the purpose of God's grace, must first be made to learn that their own aprons of fig leaves cannot prevent them from being afraid in the presence of the Lord, because they cannot of themselves cover the ugliness of the guilt and corruption of their sin before the eyes of Him with whom they have to do. Their aprons of fig leaves are utterly vain because they are transparent before the eyes of God. The Lord purposes to lead them ulti-

mately along this way to the knowledge that they must be clothed with robes, spiritual robes, of righteousness through the power of His promise and through the blood of atonement. □

* Professor Hoeksema's extended treatment of the relation between Adam's sin and the human race will follow this explanation of the Fall of man as an appendix, "Adam and the Race."

— Ed.

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

"When the Light Shines" (I)

(John 9)

Earlier Jesus had declared His identity as the light of the world (John 8:12). Now Jesus repeats this declaration (John 9:5). Now as well Jesus *shows* He is the light of the world in a most remarkable way. He restores the sight of a man born blind. Such a thing was without precedent (v.

32). This could only be a miracle of Messiah!

But more.

Jesus shines *saving* light. He whom He had healed physically He enlightens in the soul. He gives the man faith to believe in Jesus.

Jesus shines *blinding* light. The Pharisees refuse to believe that this notable miracle of Jesus proves

once more that Jesus is from God. But their blindness is Jesus' judgment. Jesus says: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (v. 39).

Jesus the Christ, the Son of God! Savior and Judge!

When the light shines...!

For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

Jesus the Christ, the Son of God!

☛ What Jesus demonstrates in all of John 9 is what He declares Himself to be in verse 5: **the light of the world.**

We have considered the significance of this title Jesus claims for Himself in our discussion of John 8:12 (cf. the December 15, 1996 *Standard Bearer*). But it does

not hurt to review! What does Scripture teach about Jesus being "light," and the light "of the world"?

☛ Jesus is the light in His **working the works of God** who sent Him (v. 4). What works are these?

☛ Jesus works and shines "**while it is day**" (v. 4), and as long as He is in the world (v. 5). But there is a night coming "when no man can work" (v. 4)! What is the "night" to which Jesus refers?

☛ Jesus no longer is the light

shining by His bodily presence among us. But He continues to shine **in and through His Church!** How does He do this (cf. Matt. 5:14; II Cor. 4:6; I Tim. 3:15)?

☛ We see the Light shine in various ways in this chapter:

First, Jesus illuminates the disciples with regard to the cause or reason for the blind man's blindness (v. 3). The disciples were thinking like Job's friends. They were surmising that either this man or his parents had sinned. The blindness, they suspected, was a judgment of God upon him or

Rev. Dick is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

them for some specific sin. Jesus teaches: sin is not the explanation. Rather, God had brought this blindness about in order that the works of God might be manifest in the man! But this brings up an interesting question: are sicknesses, diseases, or any trials ever to be regarded as coming upon us or anyone because of some particular sin? What other reasons might there be (cf. Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12-21; Ex. 20:5; Ezek. 18:2-4; Deut. 28:15-68; John 5:14; I Cor. 11:30)? Understanding that there are various reasons why God sends trials our way, what should be our reaction to trials — our own and others'? What comfort should we take *and give* in a time of trial? What does Jesus' explanation of this blindness say of the purposes and sovereignty of God in and through all things, even hardships?

Second, Jesus gives sight to the man born blind (vv. 6, 7). It is striking just *how* Jesus heals the man: He spits on the ground,

makes clay of the spittle, and rubs it in the eyes of the blind man. Then He tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam! Concerning the question why Jesus used dirt and spittle to heal the man, various answers have been given. Some think Jesus was taking advantage of the healing qualities of the mud. Some think He was symbolizing the creation of man from the dust, and so at this time "creating eyes" for the man. Others think the anointing with mud and the command to wash in the pool were a test of the man's faith, similar to Naaman's test (II Kings 5:10). Is there an answer? Is Jesus teaching a lesson about *Himself and His healing* when He sends the man to the pool of Siloam? (Hint: look up in a good Bible dictionary the history of this pool; confer Isaiah 8:6; John 4:10, 7:37; note the name of the pool: "Sent.")

Third, Jesus comes to the man whose sight has been restored, and works faith in the man's soul (vv. 35-38). It is a crucial time in the

man's life. He has just been cast out of the fellowship of the Jews (v. 34; cf. v. 22). This would make the man a social outcast and would also most likely mean economic hardship. How does Jesus at this time show that He is the Light who is the Good Shepherd of His sheep? (Hint: one way this is seen is in Jesus *searching out the man in his distress*. He graciously *initiates the contact!*)

Fourth, Jesus teaches that He is come as the light of the world to *blind* those who remain obstinate in their unbelief (vv. 39-41; cf. Is. 6:10; Mark 4:12). How does Jesus' statement, "For judgment I am come into this world," harmonize with His teaching in John 3:17ff. and John 12:47 that He is come *not* to condemn, but to save? Who are those who "see" today? What evidence do we have of Jesus blinding the wicked today?

☛ **Salvation! Judgment! When the light shines! Today!** ☐

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Essentials and Incidentals

Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.

Church Order, Article 62

Article 62 continues the Church Order's treatment of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The article focuses

on those matters deemed essential to the administration of the sacrament and those matters left to the discretion of the local consistory.

Essentials of Administration

Article 62 prescribes certain definite requirements for the administration of the Lord's Supper

in the churches. There is to be uniformity of practice among the churches in regard to these elements.

First, the Church Order requires that "the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed...." The reference here is especially to the elements

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of South-west Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

of the sacrament, bread and wine, and to the liturgical actions involved in breaking the bread and pouring out the wine. These are necessary to a proper administration of the sacrament, and individual congregations are not at liberty to alter the sacrament as it has been instituted by Christ.

At times the question arises whether it is permitted to substitute grape juice for wine in the administration of the Lord's Supper. In many Reformed and Presbyterian churches today this is done. It is argued that the use of wine is not essential to the sacrament. Additionally, the substitution is often justified on the ground that the use of wine may prove a snare to recovering alcoholics (drunkards).

There can be no question about it that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper not with grape juice, but with wine. From apostolic times the church has used wine in its celebration of the sacrament. It was the use of wine at the Lord's Table that led to the abuse of the sacrament among the Corinthians (cf. I Cor. 11).

For good reason the sacrament was instituted with wine. The use of wine, in distinction from water or even grape juice, belongs to the spiritual significance of the sacrament. Since the sacrament was instituted with wine, it must be administered with wine. The church is not at liberty to change the elements of the sacraments. Obedience to Christ demands that the church administer the sacraments as He has seen fit to institute them in the church.

I have personally asked recovered alcoholics whether the little bit of wine drunk at the Lord's Supper poses a real temptation to return to the sin of drunkenness. Without exception the response was that the small sip of wine at the Lord's Table, drunk in those surroundings, posed no threat to them to fall back into their sin. If, however, this is a temptation to an individual, better that he ab-

stain then from partaking of the wine than that the will of Christ for the administration of the sacrament be contravened.

Second, the Lord's Supper is to be administered "at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers...." The fundamental principle honored by this regulation of Article 62 is that the preaching of the Word is the chief means of grace. The sacrament stands in the service of the preaching of the Word. Without the preaching there can be no partaking of the sacrament with understanding. Thus, the administration of the Lord's Supper may never be divorced from the preaching of the Word.

It is customary when the Lord's Supper is administered that the preaching is shortened to allow for the administration of the sacrament within the time constraints of the usual worship service. This is as it should be. The sacrament must get its due. But the administration of the sacrament must never displace the preaching, for divorced from the preaching the sacrament loses its value as a means of grace in the church.

Third, the Lord's Supper is to be administered after reading "the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose...." The adopted form must be used. The form sets forth what we believe with regard to the Lord's Supper and the death of Jesus Christ that is signified and sealed by the Lord's Supper. The reading of the form not only prepares the congregation to partake, but also points to their calling after having partaken.

In connection with the reading of the form the question is sometimes asked whether it is proper to divide the form, so that the first part of the form, which deals with self-examination, is read the Sunday prior to the administration as part of the preparatory service,

and only the second part of the form is read at the communion service.

This is not a good practice. It is not, strictly speaking, in harmony with Article 62, which requires that the form be read after the sermon and before the administration of the Lord's Supper. Obviously the reference is to the form in its entirety. Besides, the form is a whole and was not written to be read in two separate sections on two different Sundays.

This is not to say that at the preparatory service the first part of the form ought not to be read. This is a good practice, which is followed by many of our churches. But when the Lord's Supper is administered, the entire form should be read, also the part dealing with self-examination, even though it may have been read the previous Sunday.

Incidentals of Administration

Although Article 62 lays down certain requirements that all the congregations must meet in their administration of the Lord's Supper, the main point of the article is that "Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification...." There is to be liberty exercised by individual congregations and consistories in the administration of the Lord's Supper.

What are some of the incidentals connected to the administration of the Lord's Supper that are left to the discretion of the local congregation?

Whether a common cup or individual cups will be used for the wine. Whether the congregation shall partake of the elements in unison or individually as they are served. Whether leavened or unleavened bread will be used. Whether the elements will be passed through the congregation so that the members are served as they are seated in the sanctuary, or the members come forward and

approach the communion table, or are served at tables set up in a particular room in the church building. Whether the members shall sit or stand to receive the elements. Whether while the elements are distributed the minister shall read a portion of Scripture (the form suggests this and mentions passages that may appropriately be read), or the organist play, or the congregation sing, or silence be maintained in the auditorium. Whether there shall be a special thank-offering after the administration of the sacrament.

All these incidentals are left to the judgment of the local consistory and congregation. They must be viewed as incidentals. A member of the congregation who favors a certain change in the administration of the Lord's Supper

in regard to the incidentals must not make an issue over these matters. Suggestions may be made, perhaps to the elders at the time of family visitation. Those suggestions ought to be considered by the consistory. But, in the end, the members of the church must be content with the decisions of the consistory or the majority of the congregation as far as the incidentals of the administration of the sacrament are concerned.

Consistories and congregations must be guided by what is "most conducive to edification...." That must be the controlling principle — what best serves to edify. That is the apostolic injunction in I Corinthians 14:26: "Let all things be done unto edifying."

If this is the principle followed by a consistory, then it may make changes from time to time in the

administration of the Lord's Supper. A change may be made, for example, from partaking individually to partaking in unison. A consistory may judge partaking in unison to be more edifying, and thus an improvement in the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Nevertheless, if the controlling principle is the edification of the congregation, then changes in the administration of the Lord's Supper are going to be few and far between. Continually revising the procedure for the sacrament's administration, a consistory's catering to every suggestion and whim, does not serve the edification of the congregation. Decency and order in the administration of the Lord's Supper require a certain constancy in the manner in which it is administered. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Suffering for Christ's Sake

One often hears of the persecution of Christians. Seldom, however, does it seem very close to us. Always persecution is of Christians far away and unknown to us personally. Recently Rev. J. Kortering, from Singapore, sent a letter to our ministers informing them of the difficult situation confronting Rev. Titus, with whom he has had close contact. I quote part of that information to give our readers an idea of the pressure and even persecution some face for maintaining what they believe to be the truths of God's Word.

I have been keeping you posted on (a) situation in the life of Rev. Titus of Myanmar (Burma). I do

this mostly so you can pray for this brother, who is so energetic for the Reformed faith and has to pay such a high cost.

Titus returned to Singapore with the urging of his uncle, who is leader of the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches of Myanmar and also head-master of Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology, that he ought to read other books than by PRC authors and decide where his theological position ought to be. He questioned whether he could be pastor in the EPC or teach in FEFST if he held to the A-mil and 5 points of Calvinism. Titus returned January 2 and felt so guilty for not coming "clean" with his uncle that he decided he had to telephone his uncle and tell him: no more reading, no more study; I am convicted in my conscience of these truths (and) I will bear the consequences.

There follows a report of telephone conversations between Rev. Titus and his uncle and father. The result was that his uncle has

now refused to talk further by phone, and his father relayed the displeasure of his uncle. Rev. J. Kortering reports:

In the Burmese culture, to have a man as important as (Titus') uncle tell his father that he had an unruly and rebellious son was most humiliating. Only yesterday, his father called Titus to tell him the latest. His uncle refuses to talk anymore with him; no more phone calls. Also that Titus will be excommunicated from his church and that he will not be allowed to preach or teach again. His wife has to be out of the apartment at the college by (the) end of February or, as he said, "We will throw her out in the street."

So Titus has some big decisions to make.

1. Should he talk to ... where he is attending school to learn if his scholarship is canceled? More than likely it is.

2. Should he return to Myanmar to defend himself before the churches or let it go?

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

3. Should he stay in Singapore and we help him financially so he can finish his study (he is three months away from completing his MDiv)? Then again, would ... ever give him his degree even if he finishes?

4. Should he go to be with his wife and family, who must be suffering plenty of personal shame in this situation?

Titus' father told him that the family tie was too tight to leave his uncle and join with Titus at this time. He is also dependent on ... for money to run his orphanage.

What Titus has learned is that the only Reformed system of government is that of the local church autonomy and no men in the church should be "leaders" or executive officers. This always leads to hierarchy. Add to that the dependence on foreign money and the situation becomes almost impossible.

Even then, if we take Titus under our wing and lead him into the URC (United Reformed Church) of Myanmar, he will need support, for he doesn't have one penny to feed his family or meet their needs. If we don't give him some money, he would return to Myanmar and eke out a starvation diet from other family members and more than likely become so physically weak that he would die young. It seems God has greater things for him than that. This the ERCS has to sort out now.

The pastors will be meeting with Titus after the Chinese New Year ... next Tuesday.

Pray for the guidance of the Spirit that this young man can find some way to be used for the cause of the Reformed faith in Myanmar.

I asked him how he was taking all of this.

He said, "I have such sweet peace in my heart."

Who of us have had to face such adversity because of that which we confess and believe? And who would respond as that young man did?

■ A "Solution" for a Divided Denomination?

The troubles in the Christian Reformed Church continue to grow. Now there is the proposal presented by Classis California South to stem the "trickle" of churches and individuals from leaving the CRC. Will it work? It appears to be more of a "band-aid" approach to a situation which requires major surgery.

(February 5, 1997) URNS — When Escondido CRC tried last year to get Classis California South to endorse the concept of a classis organized by theological affinity, the classis rejected the overture by a voice vote. This year, a similar overture from Escondido calling for four such classes rather than a single classis passed by a three-to-one margin at Classis California South's January 15 meeting.

Since November 1995, the concept of a classis composed of churches organized on the basis of theology rather than geographical proximity has been a key part of the stated strategy of conservative Christian Reformed leaders who want to remain members of the denomination despite its 1995 decision to allow the ordination of women. Endorsed by the 1995 Interclassical Conference of CRC conservatives meeting in South Holland, Illinois, the concept was endorsed again by the November 1996 Interclassical Conference as an alternative to secession.

Elder Keith VanderPol of Escondido CRC, who also serves as vice-president for development of Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido and has been charged by the Interclassical Conference with implementing the theological classis proposal, said he thought the change in the classical vote reflected a recognition that something needed to be done to keep conservatives in the Christian Reformed denomination. "The positive vote at this point in my opinion merely points out that people are becoming sensitive to that fact that many churches would leave and/or split if they are not provided a haven of rest

within the denomination," said VanderPol. "I think that was definitely on the minds of many people at the time of the vote."

The overture draws a close parallel between the proposed theological classes and the already-existing synodical decision allowing each of the CRC's 47 classes to declare itself in favor of women's ordination by declaring the relevant article of the CRC church order barring women's ordination to be inoperative. If the overture is adopted by synod this June, the CRC General Secretary will be directed to "maintain a list of theologically identified classes as well as those which have declared 'that the word male in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches and will publish that list annually, along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry, in The Banner.' (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 735, item 'e')."

VanderPol said that, based on preliminary estimates, nearly a tenth of the CRC's 841 organized churches could eventually end up requesting to join a classis composed of conservative churches opposed to the ordination of women. "I have 90 churches that have indicated a desire to carefully consider a theological classis," said VanderPol. "With that number, we obviously hope we can have a pool of many more so we can in the end have a significant number of churches and existing classes."

According to VanderPol, the theological classes could take two forms. Just as any of the CRC's existing 47 classes can now declare itself to be in favor of women's ordination, the overture would allow existing classes to declare themselves opposed to the ordination of women and endorse the "United Reformed Affirmations," a series of statements drafted by the Interclassical Conference addressing current issues in the CRC. In addition, the overture provides for Synod 1997 to appoint a committee to implement the creation of new classes when necessary by September 1. If new classes are formed, they would "initially be geographically de-

fined by and consist of those churches which have indicated their desire to join a theologically identified classis as noted in an addendum to be added to this overture prior to Synod 1997" and would "receive until January 1, 1998, without further need for classical or synodical action, any CRCNA church within its geographical boundaries agreeing with the above requirement and wishing to join."

The United Reformed Affirmations, an extended document adopted by the 1996 Interclassical Conference, addresses a number of other issues in addition to women in office. "It sets forth the historical position of the Christian Reformed denomination on issues such as the foundation of our faith and practice, inerrancy of Scripture, the church and its worship, its unity, matters of evangelism, homosexuality, feminine language for God, and women in the offices of the church," said VanderPol.

De Moor warned that the effect of conservative churches joining theologically identified classes

would be that the existing classes would lose theological accountability on the right and risk drifting into positions diametrically opposed to those of the conservatives.

"What you're doing by having a classis of theological affinity is to defeat the very purpose of a classis. It is to be a governing body where the leading of the spirit is discerned in matters that are not clearly taught by Scripture or the creed," said De Moor. "We are saying it is a lovely airplane we have here, and we're going to take the left wing and separate it from the right wing, and we're going to make it fly. It can't fly that way. In the life of the church you need theological accountability."

De Moor proposed the biblical model of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 as an example of how the church should settle disagreements. "I don't think it would have helped the cause of Christ for Antioch to say if Jerusalem insists on circumcision, let's just let them go their own way, we will be in our own classis and they

will be in theirs," said De Moor. "To me it's a biblical model of mutual accountability and mutual deliberation we're dealing with."

The Escondido overture would lead to further fragmentation rather than unity, said De Moor. "What is to prevent the starting of a classis based on the form of worship?" asked De Moor. "There is no stopping at that point. Where do you draw the line? I draw the line at the creeds. If a church goes outside the bounds of the creeds we've got a disciplinary case on our hands, but we never let each other go and we retain accountability to each other."

One wonders: "What about corporate responsibility?" Are those who would become part of "conservative" classes really solving their problems? Their Synod has taken action for which the whole of the denomination is responsible. Do the "conservative" churches really believe that their proposal allows them to escape this responsibility? □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. R. VanOverloop declined the call to serve as missionary in Ghana. Since that decline the Hull, IA PRC, the calling church for Ghana, has formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. Key, Koole, and T. Miersma. Hull's congregation was scheduled to call on March 12.

Rev. S. Key, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, received the call to serve as pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC. And the Hope PRC in Walker, MI extended a call to Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI.

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

Congregational Activities

Two members of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, Mr. Darrel Huisken and Mr. Phil Lotterman, have been appointed by their Council to collect and preserve archives of their church. This includes the archives of the various societies and other memorabilia useful and of interest to their congregation. The committee is looking for any material such as old church directories, pictures of former members, programs of Sunday School or other congregational activities, and such like.

The Young Adults of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI invited their congregation to go along with them on a ski outing to Northern Michigan on February 22.

We could not help but notice

the different conditions (weather-related, that is) between Michigan and California this time of year. Above you have a congregation in Michigan spending a Saturday snow-skiing; and during the same month in California we have our Hope PRC in Redlands scheduling a school and church work day. Plans called for Hope to spend February 1st planting new trees on the school property, building planters, and painting a new church gate. Try doing all that in Michigan in February!

The Council of Edgerton, MN PRC decided that to enhance the spiritual preparation of the Council for worship services, each member would take a turn reading a brief portion of Scripture or a short meditation along with their prayer, prior to each service.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Society of the Byron Center, MI PRC sponsored a series of Bible Study classes on the subject of "Call the Sabbath a Delight." This series of three classes was planned for mid-February into early March. The first class, held on February 19, entitled "Public Worship," was led by Byron's pastor, Rev. Doug Kuiper. The second, planned for a week later, was entitled "Private and Family Worship on the Lord's Day." It was led by Prof. Robert Decker, from our Seminary. And the third and final class followed on March 4 with Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, pastor at our Kalamazoo, MI PRC, leading the discussion on "Works of Necessity and Mercy on the Lord's Day."

School Activities

Members of the PTA of the Hope PR Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI were encouraged to attend a special PTA meeting in mid-February to look at learning disabilities, and receive some practical instruction and advice on instructing children when these problems arise.

On February 10 the Adams Christian School Association met to consider the long-term needs of their school. You may remember that last fall Adams moved from their original location in Grand Rapids, MI to their current building in Wyoming, MI. Work began already last summer with the addition of three classrooms. At this latest meeting, Adams approved Phase 2 building expansion and

renovation plans. This project calls for three new classrooms, a parking lot, re-roofing the existing structure, the re-modeling of offices, teachers' lounge, and library, and putting a two-hour fire wall between the existing structure and the 1996 expansion.

Food for Thought

"How many of you would be in church today if you knew that you would be flogged for it in the marketplace tomorrow? and if you were flogged for it tomorrow, how many of you would be here next Sabbath?"

□

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 21, 1997 our parents, **MR. and MRS. ALBERT VAN DEN TOP**, observed their 50th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are thankful to our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together, and for the covenant care and instruction they have given us. It is our prayer that they may continue to experience the blessings of our faithful God.

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

- * John and Jean Wynia
- * Gerald and Bertha VanDenTop
- * Robert and Geraldine Blankespoor
- * Wesley and Hester DeGroot
- * Ronald and Deborah Hoksbergen
- * Sharon VanDenTop
- * Duane and Sandi Alsum

33 grandchildren
10 great grandchildren

Doon, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Please join us in extending congratulations to our parents,

DONALD and BERDINA LOTTERMAN, who will celebrate, D.V., their 50th wedding anniversary on March 19, 1997. We thank our heavenly Father for preserving them for both us and the church. "And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 4:37).

- * Janice and Clare Kuiper
- * Ed and Mary Lotterman
- * Mary and Harry Vandenberg
- * Mike and Grace Lotterman
- * Marcia and Harv Verbeek
- * Steve and Maria Lotterman

30 grandchildren
8 great grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of Synod, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1997, are hereby notified that all material for the 1997 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to the Stated Clerk:

Mr. Don Doeze
4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418.

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, California 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.