



The Standard Bearer

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

Summer and the Sabbath?

Rather, summer *against* the Sabbath, and the Sabbath *against* summer.

Among many Reformed people, as among many other professing Christians, summer wins out. The summer-pleasures of the people breach the Sabbath day as the swelling seas pierce a great dike.

See "Summer and the Sabbath," p. 437

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In This Issue ...

The third installment of Rev. Jay Kortering's intriguing series on demon possession appears in this issue. He writes, obviously, out of his own experience as minister-on-loan to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. His analysis of the possibility and nature of demon possession today is guided by careful attention to the teaching of Scripture. Kortering proposes that there can be, and is, demon possession of "non-Christians" today and that "the preaching of the gospel includes the authority of Christ to cast out demons." The previous two articles ran in the January 1 and April 15, 1997 issues of the *Standard Bearer*.

A reader questions the strong tradition in the Protestant Reformed Churches to condemn movie-attendance. See "Another Episode in the Movies-Issue" in our "Letters" column. I refer our correspondent, as well as all who are interested, to the recent series on drama by Rev. Barry Gritters in volumes 69 and 70 of the *SB*.

The letter on Andrew Fuller (Baptist preacher in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) raises a controversy that is of interest to many of our readers. The controversy is that over "hyper-Calvinism." Although "raging" would be too strong a term (indifference to doctrine makes it well-nigh impossible for controversy to "rage" anywhere today), the controversy is lively in the British Isles. The question about Fuller is whether he provided the biblical corrective to John Gill's "hyper-Calvinism." At issue is the call of the gospel. Those who are interested should read George M. Ella's new book, *Law & Gospel in the Theology of Andrew Fuller* (Go Publications, 1996).

We publish Prof. Robert Decker's address at the graduation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary last month. See "The Reformed Minister: A Biblical Profile."

Rev. Gise VanBaren informs the readers of the *SB* of decisions, issues, and actions at the 1997 synod of the Christian Reformed Church. See the column, "All Around Us."

—DJE

Our Delight in God's Law

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalm 1:1, 2

Blessed! Thrice blessed is the man whose delight is in God's law!

He does not consort with the ungodly. The ungodly are those who, according to the original, are careless, ruthless, filled with hatred against God and His just commandments.

They counsel together in their ungodliness. God is not in all their thoughts, for they banish Him from their hearts and minds. They think and plan, desire and crave only that which is contrary to God's holy will.

They boldly choose their own idols before His very face. This is not ignorance, as if they know no better. This is deliberate defiance of the Most High. They know that God is the only true and living God, but they banish Him from their thoughts.

God is a righteous God, a God of justice. His righteousness demands that He maintain His name, His honor, and His praise. His righteousness demands of all mankind that they love and serve Him alone. He would cease to be the just, holy, and righteous God if He were to love the sinner or to ig-

nore his rebellious heart. He punishes ungodly men by giving them over to their ungodliness.

These ungodly are sinners. All that is in their heart and mind becomes manifest in their daily walk of life. Again, not as if they do not know the difference between right and wrong. They know very well that when their neighbor takes something from them he is stealing and that anyone who takes the life of another is a murderer.

But they rationalize their own sin. If others were to do the things they do, it would be wrong, but for them, under their circumstances, it is excusable or even necessary. Though their conscience accuses them, they deliberately suppress their conscience until it is too hardened to speak anymore.

These sinners serve their idols — maybe a husband or wife, a son or a daughter, a home or an automobile — which they love rather than God. In defiance of God's law they commit every conceivable sin. One sin leads to a worse sin, for they are completely enslaved in the bondage of sin and death.

Even that is not the worst. They not only do those things but they take delight in and seek the company of those who do them. They are scornful. They jest and mock with all that is holy. Their language is besmirched with cursing, swearing, and blasphemy in the company of sinners.

Although they know no real joy, they try to convince themselves that they are having a good time while they are engaged in their sinful revelries. Actually they are most miserable, for already they experience the anger, the wrath of

the Most High; yet they refuse to recognize it, drowning out their misery in sordid carousing.

In all that, they reveal their hatred of God and of all that is holy. God's law is an offense to them, because it condemns them. The word "sin" has been wiped out from their vocabulary. If they possibly could, they would banish God, His law, and His people from the face of the earth.

There is development in sin. Sin breeds sin unto death. Each individual sinner fills his cup of iniquity and perishes forever in torment under the wrath and sore displeasure of a righteous God.

Woe unto the man who commits himself to the path of sin. Woe unto him who allows sin to have dominion in him. The text says that he walks, he stands, he sits corralled in the bondage of sin and death. He who sins becomes enslaved in sin even unto death.

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The righteous person is in every sense the very opposite.

No, not as if he is naturally better, nor because he has Christian parents who create a healthy, spiritual atmosphere in the home, nor because he is a member of the church by baptism.

According to his natural birth he is born of sinful parents, he has their ungodly nature and traits, for he is conceived and born in sin. He is wicked, depraved, incapable of any good, and inclined to all evil.

It is only by the grace of God and the renewal of the Holy Spirit that the righteous man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

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

He loves God and seeks Him in prayer.

He does not stand with sinners. Not as if that were no struggle. He fully realizes that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good. He is prone by nature to hate God. He must pray, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.... Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:12, 14).

He shuns the scorner's seat. In his heart he declares: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those who rise up against thee?" (Ps. 139:21).



His delight is in the law of Jehovah.

Jehovah is the covenant God of His people. By His Word and Spirit He assures them: "Ye are my people." And He raises the response in their hearts: "Thou art our God forever and ever." The love of God is spread abroad in their hearts.

God's law in the broadest sense is His Word, the entire Scripture, which is the lamp before our feet and the light upon our pathway. God has given us the perfect rule of life, the sure guide, which shows us in His Word the narrow way that leads to heaven.

We have that law spelled out for us in the ten commandments that were written on two tables of stone. Jesus sums up the demand of the law by teaching us: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole being and in all that you say and do. You shall love Him above all else. This is the first and great commandment. And from that follows: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." We cannot love God and hate our neighbor, nor can we love our neighbor — family or friend — without loving God.

But, you counter, my neighbor

next door is very nice, even though he wants nothing to do with religion. He and his wife seem to love each other. Their children are well cared for and well behaved. They even willingly help those who are in need.

That is very well possible. To all outward appearances they live according to the second table of the law. It may seem to us that there is a certain restraint of sin in their hearts, and that as a result of this restraint they live a respectable life and are good neighbors.

But our God tells us that it is impossible to keep the second table and ignore the first. God is *God*, who created us and upholds and sustains us every moment. He does not exist for us, but we are created for His sake, to love, serve, and glorify Him. That is the chief purpose of mankind. He tells us that "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do it all to the glory of God." For "all that is not of faith is *sin*."

That which may appear to be "good" to us is still evil in the sight of God. It is true, as Scripture teaches us, that there is none that doeth good, no not one. There is none that is righteous in the sight of God, not a single one. I need but search my own heart and life to know that. But, we say, how about those "good" deeds of the wicked? He realizes very well that to be successful he must devote himself to his work, and to be happy he must make a good home for himself and for his family. He must also be a good neighbor. That is foremost in his life. God is not in all His thoughts. Even if he does put on a pretense of religion, this is still a sham, sheer hypocrisy.

The man who loves God takes delight in His law and meditates on that law day and night. He sets himself before the mirror of the law. He sees himself a sinner who transgresses all God's commandments and keeps none of them. He realizes his sinfulness, his guilt; daily he makes himself worthy of

God's just condemnation.

He sees Christ, who bore the wrath of God in hellish agony and torment for the sake of those given Him of the Father. He sees in Christ the High Priest who brought the perfect sacrifice for His people.

He is drawn by the voice of Jesus calling, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

By the renewal of the Holy Spirit, God's law is written in his heart and becomes his guide on the path of true thankfulness to God for all His boundless benefits He bestows on him.



O the blessedness!

Jehovah, He is God, and He alone! He is my God and I am His forever and ever!

I experience that "the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes." I know myself as a wretched, guilty sinner, prone by nature to hate God and the neighbor. No "common grace" brings improvement in my life. I am incapable of any good and inclined to all evil.

My only refuge is in Christ. Every day anew I must flee to Him, confessing my sins and guilt, seeking forgiveness through His atoning blood. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

Thus, for me, the law becomes a power unto salvation, my sure guide on the road of sanctification that leads to eternal life. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter than honey and the honey comb."

I love those who love God and am a friend and companion of all

those who fear the Lord and keep His precepts.

When soon I stand before the great white throne, naked, wretched, laden with guilt, all my

righteousness will be in His merit and by His grace in me.

I will be judged only as I am in Christ and according to what He accomplished in and through me.

In Him I receive the blessed assurance: "Come, thou blessed, and inherit the kingdom."

O how love I Thy law, it is my meditation all the day! □

Editorial

Summer and the Sabbath

Summer is the time of vacations. The people travel. They are gone from home for weeks. Some go abroad. Throughout the summer, families leave home on the weekends to camp in the parks and at the beaches. Especially is this true over holiday weekends. Others spend the weekends in their trailer or cottage at some distant lake.

More and more, this is summer also for the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The Lord gives to many such riches and luxuries that they can be away from their work for weeks, travel widely, and live more or less comfortably elsewhere than in their home.

Against this nothing is or can be alleged, but this is the summer.

The Sabbath is the day which the Lord has set apart from the other days, to be devoted to Him by His people. The Lord requires that on this day they "diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38). For the sake of this worship of God, they are to lay aside their everyday work and their ordinary earthly pleasures. The public worship of God issues in personal and family prayer, singing, study of Scripture, and edifying reading, during the rest of the day. In keep-

ing with devotion to God in public, family, and private worship is the doing of works of love: fellowship with God's people in their homes; hospitality to the lonely; visits to the sick, burdened, grieving, and aged.

The day of merely 16 or 18 waking hours is far too short. At the end of it, the godly pray, "Lord, give us the eternal Sabbath; 'O, send the day of joy and light.'"

The people's summer conflicts with the Lord's Sabbath. Travel plans make it impossible to attend church. The nature of the vacation requires that they travel on the Sabbath. The boat leaves early Monday morning. Or the vacation ends on Saturday, and they must be at work on Monday morning. Or there is so much more to see in such a short time that they must use Sunday to see the sites and the scenery.

In some Reformed circles, many regularly and openly devote the greater part of the Sabbath to their recreations. They swim, sail, and sun. Their sons and daughters play in the Gus Macker basketball and Little League baseball tournaments.

Where there is still some fear of God, or, probably, hesitation to give up the tradition of Sabbath observance totally, the people go to church in the morning. The second service is neglected. Attendance is pitiful. It is surprising that these lovers of pleasure rather than

lovers of God have not yet learned the ways of the Roman Catholics, who have a mass on Saturday night in order to free up the entire Sabbath for themselves.

The Lord's Sabbath, on its part, interferes with the people's summer. As the people look ahead to the summer, there stands the Sunday squarely athwart their vacation plans. It spoils this trip. It rules out that cruise. It curtails the weekends. It deprives the people of the gloriously sunny afternoons. It cuts into the full week's vacation by demanding that the vacationers leave for home on Friday in order to attend church. It keeps the young people out of the popular summer games.

Summer and the Sabbath?

Rather, summer *against* the Sabbath, and the Sabbath *against* summer.

Among many Reformed people, as among many other professing Christians, summer wins out. The summer-pleasures of the people breach the Sabbath day as the swelling seas pierce a great dike.

The churches and their officebearers share the guilt of the desecration of the Sabbath by the people. They cave in to the pressure of the people's lust for pleasure and disgust for the praise of God. The minister fears to instruct and warn. The elders dare not visit, admonish, and discipline. The churches cancel their evening

service. At last, they do away with the second service altogether.

A remarkable instance of this sorry sacrifice of the Lord's Sabbath on the altar of the people's pleasure was a decision by the 1995 synod of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod changed the article of the church order that required the congregations to "assemble for worship at least twice on the Lord's Day." It replaced the words, "at least," with the word, "ordinarily." The article now reads: "The congregation shall assemble for worship ordinarily twice on the Lord's Day...."

"Ordinarily!" Because the people no longer care to come to church twice on Sunday, especially in the summer.

"Ordinarily!" Whenever the church feels like it, and whenever the people find it convenient to come.

"Ordinarily" sounds the death knell for the second service in those Christian Reformed churches that may yet hold it. With its "ordinarily," synod killed the evening service.

How radically different was this synod's reaction to the people's dislike to attend church twice on Sunday from that of the Synod of Dordt. Confronting widespread opposition on the part of the people to a second service (at which the Heidelberg Catechism would be preached), Dordt told the consistories to hold the second service even if the minister preached only to his own family. Dordt's decision breathed the zeal and courage of the church with her first love.

For the faithful church there can be no dislodging of the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day is established, blessed, and hallowed by the Lord God. It is established, blessed, and hallowed in the fourth commandment of God's law: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

That the fourth commandment at its very heart is still God's requirement that the covenant people

observe one day in the week—Sunday—with special uses is the clear, emphatic teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. Lord's Day 38 explains that God in the fourth commandment requires "that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God...."

The fourth commandment is still binding under the new covenant.

The fourth commandment still sets aside one day of the seven as special: the day of rest.

In the fourth commandment, God still requires the man, woman, young person, and child whom He has redeemed from sin, death, and hell and taken into His covenant to devote the day to Him. Under the new covenant, the friend and servant of God does this by diligently frequenting God's church.

Implied in the Catechism's explanation is that the Sabbath day is now the first day of the week. God has perfected His work and fulfilled His rest in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Sabbath is now also the "Lord's day," that is, the day of the risen Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:10).

The Synod of Dordt reaffirmed this understanding of the fourth commandment. It declared that "a definite and appointed day has been set aside to the service of God, and that for this purpose as much rest is required as is necessary for the service of God and for hallowed contemplation." From this it follows that "this day must be so consecrated unto the service of God that upon it men rest from all servile labors, except those required by charity and present necessities and likewise from all such recreations as prevent the service of God." And this, said Dordt, is the meaning and requirement of the fourth commandment of the law of God.

The importance of the observance of the Sabbath day, therefore, is that it expresses the love of the church for God. The fourth

commandment belongs to the first table of the law. Obedience to the fourth commandment fulfills the first and great commandment: Love the Lord your God!

Those who fail to come to church diligently, using the Sabbath for their own pleasures, signal their lack of love for God.

What ingratitude! With the very riches and luxuries God gives us, that enable us to take vacations, travel, and live away from home (against which nothing is or can be alleged), we forget His day, His worship, His gospel, and Him Himself. Against this, everything must be alleged.

The church that connives at the people's profaning of the Sabbath demonstrates that she loses, or has lost, her first love.

Love the Lord your God who, in Jesus Christ, gives you both eternal life and the good things of this life with His blessing. Love Him by remembering the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Fifty-two weeks a year, every year as long as you live.

Including summer.

The Sabbath day controls and shapes the summer of the saints, that is, the law of God directs our lives in the summer as always. It makes certain trips impossible. It prohibits some activities. It cuts into vacation-time. It crosses our will, disappoints our desires, and changes our plans.

The law of God has a way of doing this. It is the authoritative, unyielding will of the sovereign God.

It is also for our good.

We need the spiritual rest that is enjoyed at church through the gospel and sacraments of Jesus Christ. We also need relief from our wearisome earthly labors and our often frantic pleasures. We need rest and relief weekly. Our Father and Creator knows us.

We do *not* need this particular vacation, or that specific trip.

Have a restful summer! □

— DJE

■ **Andrew Fuller, No Calvinist**

Never before have I written a letter to the editor of any periodical, nor did I intend to do so this time, thinking that surely someone else would "take up the cudgel." Having waited several months, however, with no one else having addressed the problem that troubled me, I felt I should write.

I refer to the article in the April 1, 1997 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, entitled "If God Is Sovereign, Is Evangelism Urgent and Necessary?" I wish to make it clear that I have no problem with the theme of the article or its conclusion, but with several statements made in the article.

In the first place, Brother Allen Brummel suggests that Andrew Fuller was a Calvinist and a teacher of Calvinism: "Due largely to the theological influence of Andrew Fuller, a fellow Particular Baptist minister, Carey came to see that evangelism and Calvinism could be reconciled" (p. 297).

Now it is certainly true that evangelism and Calvinism can be reconciled, and it may even be that William Carey truly saw how they could be reconciled, but if he did, he did not learn this from Andrew Fuller. Fuller was most emphatically neither a Calvinist nor a teacher of it, but an enemy.

If Carey learned anything from Fuller, he learned Arminianism, Amyrauldianism, Grotianism, and Neonomianism, not Calvinism. Fuller's views of man's natural condition were Arminian; of the atonement, Grotian; of the extent and efficacy of the atonement, Amyrauldian; and of the law, Neonomian.

In the quotation on page 297 of the *Standard Bearer* Fuller's errant views of man's condition are

plainly stated. It is not clear from whom the quotation is taken, Carey or Timothy George (the author of the book referred to). In any case it does represent Fuller's views.

The last part of the quotation states: "The failure to believe stemmed not from any physical or 'natural inability,' but rather from a 'moral inability' which was the result of a perverted human will." This is nothing but regurgitated Arminianism, straight from the gullet of Fuller.

He taught, as the quotation shows, that man's depravity consisted *only* in an unwillingness to obey God's law and to heed the gospel summons. As far as his nature was concerned he was perfectly *able* to do so, he only *would not* do so. This has been well expressed in the phrase "he could if he would."

Thus Fuller emphatically rejected man's "natural inability" and denied thereby also the biblical and Reformed doctrine of total depravity. This was the cornerstone of a whole aberrant system of "theology" which rejected substitutionary satisfaction for sin, a strictly particular atonement, etc.

While we certainly need articles in the *Standard Bearer* on missions, please let us not have Andrew Fuller held up as Calvinist or even as a friend of Calvinism, nor his views represented as a proper biblical "reconciliation" of God's sovereignty and missions.

(Rev.) Ron Hanko

Kells, Northern Ireland

■ **Another Episode in the Movies-Issue**

In a letter entitled "Movies: Where do we stand?" (*Standard Bearer*, May 1, 1997), H. Boonstra, Jr. raises a most interesting and up-

to-date question, but in doing so, appears to have missed the woods for the trees. It is my contention that drama is but one facet of a much wider subject area: that of the proper use of the human imagination.

It seems to me that to question the validity of drama is also to question whether it is consistent with godly, Christian behavior even to read novels and plays, let alone participate either passively, as a spectator, or actively, as an actor, in their dramatization. Seen in this light, the question of drama is only the tip of an iceberg which includes the propriety of the "let's pretend" play activities of our children to the painting of landscapes.

Might it not be possible that in outlawing acting because of the implicit deception involved, many other forms of sophisticated make-believe are, thereby, also reprobated? One may well criticize abstract art for conveying no information about the world, but it would be equally naïve to suggest that the events depicted in Constable's rural English landscapes ever happened. Is it, therefore, wrong to look at Constables because they are the elaborate inventions of one man's romantic imagination?

In this letter, much appeal is made to "tradition" as represented by the writing of Herman Hoeksema. Is it satisfactory in a Reformed denomination to analyze an important contemporary situation on the basis of the words of a theologian, no matter how great? We may be relieved when we find that we have come to the same conclusion as a great mind like Calvin's, but his testimony alone is not the reason why we cleave so strongly to the Reformed world and life view. Might it not be that we Reformed have become a little too used to calling great men to our

aid in the defense of the faith which we profess, at the expense of sober and dispassionate examination of the Word of God?

In conclusion, could I then throw in my penny's worth, and encourage the editor to include a series on this broader agenda. I for one would be glued to every episode.

Allister Pattison
Kells, Northern Ireland

Response:

The issue for the Protestant Reformed Churches is not imagination.

The issue, rather, is the ungodliness and moral filth that are overwhelmingly the content of movies, whether in the theater or on television. Movies are a powerful means of Satan to develop the depravity of the world and to corrupt Christians.

With this, the issue is the unlawfulness of impersonation, act-

ing. No human may act out the life of another. If he acts out the life of the godly, he plays at holiness. If he acts out the life of the ungodly, he plays at unholiness. Those who watch amuse themselves with the playing at one or the other. But neither holiness nor unholiness may be the object of playing. The holiness of God forbids it.

The reason, then, why the theater and movies have always been gushing fountains of spiritual, moral sewage is that the curse of the holy God rests on the enterprise itself of acting.

The command to the saints, young and old, more urgent in 1997 than ever before in the history of development of wickedness, is: Avoid movies! "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

Read books.

Good books.

— Ed.

■ **Heretical Gospel**

The May 1st issue of the *Standard Bearer* contained an excellent article titled "Free-Willism: Another Gospel." It has been a long time since I have seen in print (or heard, for that matter) such a forthright denunciation of this heretical gospel. With your permission, I would like to reprint copies of this article to place on our book table. The article will be reproduced in full, and the article will have both author and source listed on a title page, giving full credit to the *Standard Bearer*.

Lee Carl Finley
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Response:

Permission granted.

— Ed.

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When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Current Threats To Raising God's Covenant Children*

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*This is the substance of a speech delivered to the Parent Teachers Association at Heritage Christian School.

It is difficult to live a godly life. It is difficult for all of God's people, but it seems especially difficult for young people (and for their parents).

It has been said that it is harder to be a godly young person today than it was in the past. From one perspective this is not true. The people of God in every age live in a spiritual battle. This battle began

when God separated the seed of the woman from the seed of the serpent. The devil has been unrelenting in his efforts to destroy the Seed of the woman. This makes for constant spiritual warfare. The Heidelberg Catechism, while explaining the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, declares that every believer faces three mortal enemies against which he has to fight all

his life. These mortal enemies are the devil, the world, and his own flesh. Believers have always been in this same spiritual battle, which manifests itself a little differently in each generation. And in every age believing young people fight this same spiritual battle, but they do so without a high level of spiritual maturity. The devil knows of this weakness and makes every effort to take advantage of this lack of spiritual maturity. So today's believing young people face the same mortal enemies their parents and grandparents faced when they were young.

However, from another perspective the battle is more severe today than in the past. With the return of the Lord ever closer, the devil knows that his time is short. His efforts to destroy the cause of Christ are more desperate. With craft and guile the devil makes use of this present evil world as an instrument to attack and destroy the people of God, either individually or collectively. But believing parents and their believing young people must not fear. They have no more reason to fear today than God's people ever did. God's grace is always sufficient. Even in the last days, immediately before our Lord's return, we find I Corinthians 10: 13 to be true, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

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The devil uses many forces to attack God's young people. These forces vary depending on the age and personality and position of that young person. The devil is extremely crafty and most wise (worldly) to use what he knows to be the most effective instrument to make each elect stumble and fall. Believing young people and their believing parents must be aware of

those instruments of the devil which threaten a godly walk.

A great threat to a godly walk in our day is *substance abuse*. By that I mean the use of tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs. I learned that researchers found marked increases in the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs during the past five years among eighth and twelfth graders in the state of Michigan. These researchers believe that the rise in cigarette smoking among teens may have contributed to a parallel rise in marijuana use. It is believed that attitudes and beliefs about the dangers and consequences of drug use continue to soften among teens, which softening is largely responsible for the increased use. These researchers found that teens today know less about drugs and the dangers of drug use than the previous generation of teens. This is due in part to a significant drop in anti-drug messages. It is also a fact that more of the music industry is blasting out a pro-drug message in their music, words, and titles.

Another threat to living godly as a believing teen is ungodly *music*, and the influence of *television* and *videos*. In these media horrible sins are portrayed without any expression of God's righteous judgment. Take only the one example of the taking of God's name in vain. How frequent is not the name of the holy God misused or damned?! Then consider how the Spirit directed the Reformed fathers when they said that there "is no sin greater or more provoking to God," (Heidelberg Catechism, q. 100). Our silence "makes us partakers of these horrible sins in others" (q. 99). Also we must be aware of the fact that Walt Disney has deliberately shifted away from "family values" toward acceptance and approval of homosexuality and of New Age values. Ungodly music,

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television, and videos are also serious threats to godliness in young people. Believing parents must ever be on guard against the devil's use of these instruments to cause the less mature to fall into sin.

Parents must be alert to another instrument the devil is using to attack godliness in young people, namely, the evil uses of *Internet*. It is not uncommon that young people and also children know their way around computers and the Internet more than their parents. There are three particular uses of the Internet which I will mention here as threats to godliness. First, pornography and nudity are readily available. Also, the cults make use of web sites, in which they present themselves in the best light and where they recruit members. Finally, on the Internet are chat lines, where one can easily connect with others who can assert an ungodly influence. Parents must be aware of these evil uses of the Internet and must monitor their children's use of the Internet.

Another threat to godliness is an excessive attention to *sports*, whether by participation or by spectating. It would seem that

sports is an innocent alternative to all the other threats.

That it is, when, like most other things, it is used in moderation. All things without moderation are sins, and it takes spiritual maturity to exercise moderation. Already as believing teens we must be aware that "bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things," both for this life and for the life to come (I Tim. 4:8).

The last threat I would mention in this article is that of an increasing *disrespect* for those whom God has placed in authority over us. Teachers report that, while there has always been the sin of disrespect, today the disrespect seems to be more blatant than in

previous generations. I wonder if this is not in part because school-aged children no longer fear that they will "get it worse" from their parents than from teachers. (The world seems to be influencing the church concerning the use — rather, lack of use — of the rod.) Also, in the world about us there is an increasing disrespect for those in authority, for example, for the President of the United States. It is believed that disagreement with the President's policies and politics gives license to disrespect. The Scriptures demand otherwise. And the Heidelberg Catechism is again a wise guide in teaching that I must "show all honor, love and fidelity ... to all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand" (q. 104). Our Reformed fathers were well aware of the human tendency to be disrespectful to those in authority when we see their weaknesses and sins. As parents we must ever be mindful of the necessity and importance of our showing only respect for all in authority over us, so that we might be good examples. Also, we must not weary to place before our children and teenagers the demand of their heavenly Father's law that they honor those He has placed over them. And this demand must be enforced.



There are threats to godliness in our believing young people and children. How do we respond to the threats and how do we respond to our children when they fall before the threats?

First, are we aware of the real power of the threats? Their power is what the Heidelberg Catechism calls the mortal enemy of "our own flesh." The strongest and fiercest foe of the trio of mortal enemies is our own flesh, which in Scripture is called our "old man" and "the

body of this death." Godly parents, young people, and children must fight this war in the consciousness that this trio of forces is greater than we can withstand in our own strength. But through Christ we can do all things. So let us constantly be striving to know what it is to fight in the strength of the Lord. Parents must guide their young people and children in the effort to fight in the might of the Lord.

Another source of the power of these threats is peer pressure — especially for school-aged children. Peer pressure — the desire to be liked — is a tremendous power in every age, but especially when one is young, whether a believer or an unbeliever. The desire to be loved and noticed makes each threat so powerful.

The awareness that the power of the threats lies more within us than outside us in the instruments the devil is using should influence believing parents as they nurture their children in the fear of the Lord. This means that the banning of these threats is not really fighting the battle where it has to be fought. Believing parents must constantly be teaching their children to fight against their own flesh and the desire to be wanted or liked by others. This must receive the focus of godly parents' attention as they strive to teach their children to be godly.

Secondly, godly parents must pay much attention to the kind of life which is being lived in their homes. Is it the setting for good communication between parents and children? Parents, as the more mature, must not stop trying to establish rapport. This they can do by listening when their young people do talk and by showing they understand even when they disagree. Parents should talk about non-threatening subjects; and they should avoid constant criticism and nagging. They should speak to a

problem and behavior instead of personality traits or the child's value as a human being. And remember that we are *always* showing them how to respond to the threats — by our example.

And thirdly, do we keep the big picture in view? Remember that we are the adults and they are the children. Do not make their experiences yours, so that you live their life or you live your life through them. Parents must be aware that this is a constant danger arising from their own flesh. It is so easy for parents so to identify themselves with their children that they forget that they are the adults.

Remember the nature and limits of our calling as parents, because believing children are God's children. They are God's far more than they are ours, from the viewpoint both of salvation and of creation. This means that we are not to hold them too closely.

We must love them as God's children with a biblical love which is unconditional; and we must love them as our children conditionally. We are not to be conditional about their person or obedience. We must be able to let them go if they show themselves to be unrepentant and unresponsive to our repeated admonitions and those of the church.

As parents we teach and teach and teach, and we pray and pray and pray. Instruct constantly in God's Word, which is the armor which protects and equips them for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6). Most simply, teach them God's commands. Demand unconditional honor for those by whose hand God is pleased to govern them. The purpose of our instruction is that our children be disciplined, i.e., that they be able to say "No" to their own flesh, be ready to repent quickly, and be able to grasp quickly the truth of forgiveness in the blood of Christ. □

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■ The Christian Reformed Synod

There were several issues at the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan on June 14-21, which should be of interest and concern for those of us who observe from the sidelines. The first was the election of their president — and his comments about the situation in that denomination today. The following quotations are from the reports of the URNS of Darrell T. Maurina:

In a highly unusual move, the Christian Reformed synod elected two Holland area pastors as its president and vice-president.

Meeting yesterday at Calvin College, the broadest assembly of the 285,000-member Christian Reformed Church voted to elect the Rev. Michael DeVries of Pillar CRC as its president and the Rev. Wayne Brouwer of Harderwyk CRC as its vice-president.

DeVries' congregation is the convening church for this year's synod, meaning that he served as temporary president until the permanent officers were elected. DeVries will also conduct today's synodical prayer and praise service at 4 p.m. at his congregation, founded 150 years ago by the Rev. Albertus VanRaalte as First Reformed Church of Holland, the "mother church" of the rest of the West Michigan congregations that formed the Christian Reformed Church and the Midwest wing of the Reformed Church in America. DeVries has pastored in Holland since 1980, and until 1993 served the Harderwyk church now pastored by Brouwer....

...The election of a synod president often provides an early indication of the tenor of the synodical delegates. DeVries, who described himself as a theological moderate, said he would "aim for

the center" in his conduct of synodical sessions.

"My prayer is this will be a unifying synod, unlike some of the ones we have had," said DeVries. "I hope that it is one of harmony. I believe in openness, and hopefully that's what will happen."

According to DeVries, the major issues at synod will include whether CRC members may address God as "Mother," structural issues in Canadian ministries, and possibly abortion.

DeVries said he was deeply saddened by the secessions that had occurred from the CRC in recent years, partly in response to issues such as abortion and feminine language for God but mostly due to women's ordination. Since 1993, the CRC has lost over 30,000 members.

"I'm saddened by it, deeply saddened," said DeVries. "The main focus should be Christians seeking and ministering to the world."...

One must be surprised at the "deep sadness" of DeVries. Where was the "main focus" of the CRC synods when they adopted a clear statement showing from Scripture that women can *not* serve in office—then on the following synod, without altering the earlier decision, declare that the Church Order article forbidding women to serve in church offices could be set aside so that in some churches and classes women could nevertheless serve. To change the direction of the churches in such high-handed fashion is hardly the way of "Christians seeking and ministering to the world." One wonders how the CRC can "minister to the world" while maintaining such a duplicitous position.

One might question too DeVries' "aim for the center" as he led the synod. Ought not the guide be, not the "center," but Scripture and the confessions?

■ Two Denominations Break Relationship with the CRC

Both the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America have ended their relationship with the CRC on the issue of women serving in office. The *Christian Observer* reports:

While the OPC cited a number of reasons for concern in recent years, the formal motion cited only the 1995 decision to allow the ordination of women to office. Responding to CRC concerns, the General Assembly passed a motion without audible dissent noting that last year's decision "was carefully worded to avoid saying that the CRCNA is not a true church of Jesus Christ" and that "no OPC General Assembly has ever made such a judgment."

... After breaking with the CRC, the Assembly established "corresponding relations" with the largest group seceding from the CRC, the United Reformed Churches, and voted to express "thankfulness to God for their love for the truth of God and the purity of the church of Jesus Christ, welcome them to the family of Reformed churches, and pray for the blessing of God on their ministry."

The *Christian Observer* reports also the reaction of Leonard Hofman, administrative secretary of the CRC's interchurch relations committee, under the heading, "Leonard Hofman had a second bad day":

Rev. Leonard Hofman said he was "stunned" by this week's actions by the PCA and the OPC. "I'm obviously emotionally moved when churches in close fellowship with us in a period of a week remove ties with us," said Hofman.

Observers in Grand Rapids weren't surprised. John Suk, editor of the official CRC *Banner*, suggested in the June 9 issue that it was time to rethink relations with

the PCA and the OPC and explore relations with other denominations.

■ Theologically-identified Classes?

Overtures to establish "theologically-identified Classes" were presented to synod. It was supposed to be a way to keep in the CRC those who opposed women in office but wanted to remain in the denomination. Since, for the present at least, women were not to be delegated to synod nor serve on synodical committees, such classes could allow those to remain in the denomination who could not in good conscience serve in classes where women were delegated. (Doubtlessly, it is but a matter of time before a change at synod takes place also — the matter is to be reviewed in the year 2,000.) Many waited the outcome of this recommendation, thinking this to be the solution to living within a severely divided denomination. The URNS reports:

Would allowing Christian Reformed opponents of women's ordination to have their own theologically-identified classes be a "terrible thing and a death blow to the church" or a way for conservatives and progressives to live with each other despite their disagreements?

Those two visions led to heated debate at synod June 19 on a proposal that approximately four dozen conservative churches be allowed to organize four new classes which would remain members of the CRC but adopt a set of conservative theological affirmations on such subjects as gay marriage, women's ordination, worship, and feminine language for God.

Numerous delegates warned that failure to grant theological classes could lead to even more secessions from a denomination that has lost over 30,000 members in the last five years.

"I came inclined to vote against theological classes, but you have convinced me we need each other," said Rev. Larry Meyer of Faith Community CRC in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin.

"If we do not make room for those on the right, I am afraid we are going to lose that voice," said Meyer. "I fear that if we do not make room for those on the right we will make a hard turn to the left."

Elder Marlin VanSchepen of Classis Minnesota South urged delegates to consider the consequences. "I think all of us realize we are at something of a defining moment for the Christian Reformed Church," said Van Schepen, noting that some churches believed they were not being served effectively by their current classical affiliation and looked to theological classes as an alternative to denominational realignment.

That reasoning didn't appeal to Dr. Jeff Weima of Calvin Seminary, who said one delegate had told him he would be voting for the proposal to stave off a secession despite believing the proposal was a bad idea. "I am firmly convinced that theological classes are a terrible thing and the death blow for the church," said Weima. "We either are a model of the family and work through our differences or we aren't."

Others reminded synod that only one day earlier they had approved transferring three churches — including Pine Creek CRC of Holland which opposes women's ordination and Trinity CRC of Mt. Pleasant which wants to ordain its female pastor — from one classis to another due to factors unrelated to geography. "The mechanism is in place; if churches want to go to a classis that is of like mind, the mechanism is there and in place," said Elder Larry Baar of Classis Muskegon.

In the end, synod rejected the proposal to create theologically-identified conservative classes on a voice vote. An earlier procedural motion showed a 125 to 59 margin against considering a report favoring theological classes.

■ Other CRC Synodical Decisions

The synod did firmly reject the use of feminine or neutral pronouns when speaking of God. One delegate emphasized, "Our synod opened two doors already; one is wide open for those women who want to be ministers and elders, one is slightly open for those who want to be homosexual," said Rev. Kenneth Cho of Immanuel Korean CRC in Rowland Heights, California. "There are some delegates who want to open the door to calling God female. I appeal to you to close that door, and close it tightly; do not debate this long, close it tightly, or there will be a big, big storm come in."

The Synod also dealt with the question of ministers who leave the CRC. Should they simply be "dismissed," or deposed? The various classes have dealt with this in differing ways—leading to confusion and opposition. Also, there was a question whether CRC ministers ought to participate in the installation or ordination of officebearers in those churches which left the CRC.

Another knotty issue was that of the articles of incorporation. The synod recommended changes in these articles so that it is clearly stated that the property belongs to the denomination. If there is a division within a congregation, the classis would determine that the group which remains faithful to the CRC position would retain the property. All newly organized churches and those receiving denominational support would be required to adopt this change. Self-supporting churches would be urged to adopt the same change.

Dr. Hessel Bouma, a professor at Calvin College whose views on abortion have been questioned, was not rebuked by the synod as several classes requested. The synod rather decided that it was not necessary to appoint a committee to study the issue of abortion or to review Bouma's beliefs. □

The Reformed Minister: A Biblical Profile

Delegates to the Synod of 1997, members of the Theological School Committee, esteemed colleagues of the faculty, graduates of the class of 1997, and fellow saints in Christ: Beginning with his first convocation service and throughout his four years in the seminary a student hears certain themes repeated over and over. Tonight I present without apology to you who graduate some of those themes one last time.

There are certain characteristics of a Reformed minister. He must be committed to the truth of Holy Scripture, the faith once delivered to the saints. He must be committed to the truth as summed in the Reformed confessions, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. And he must be committed to this truth as it is, by God's grace, taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches. And to be a Reformed *minister* he must be called by Christ. Christ is the Good, the Chief, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Christ cares for His sheep through those whom He calls to this office. To be a minister a man must be authorized and qualified by Christ to minister to the people of God. And if the minister is faithful to Christ who calls

him, he will shepherd the people of God with the Word of God. This call of Christ to the ministry comes through the church.

All this we assume to be true. You are committed to the Reformed faith. If not, resign your candidacy, leave the churches, and go elsewhere. But you are committed to the Reformed faith and, the Lord willing, Christ through the church will call you to the ministry. The question we propose to answer in this address is: What ought a Reformed minister look like in the light of Scripture? What are the gifts, talents that according to Scripture must characterize the Reformed minister? We must be selective, we cannot be exhaustive. I Timothy 3:2-9 and 4:11-16 list the fundamental, indispensable gifts which every bishop (minister or elder) must have. We will consider some of these.

There are certain natural gifts (we all realize that there's a certain spiritual dimension to these natural gifts) necessary for the minister. The first are *intellectual gifts*. A minister needs a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. What we mean is that he must know the Scriptures; he must be "at home" in the Bible. But more than this, the minister must know the doctrines of the Word of God and he must know how these doctrines are related to each other. He must know and apprehend the truth of Scripture and be able to defend that truth against the many errors and heresies abounding especially in our day.

The minister must know the

history of the church. He must know how God gathered the church throughout the ages. The minister must know the battles in which the church was engaged and how the church developed her understanding of the doctrines and truth of the Word of God. He must have a good grasp of historical theology.

The minister must be able to work with the original languages of Holy Scripture, the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New. Only having a thorough knowledge of these will the minister be able to bring out of the Scriptures things old and things new.

All this means the minister must have the desire and ability to spend many hours with the books! The fact that you have completed four years of seminary instruction, the fact that you have successfully completed a six-month internship and that you have done some preaching in the churches, the fact that you have successfully sustained your oral, comprehensive examinations before the synod, all this does not mean that you have arrived! All this doesn't mean that you are theologians or even good ministers. The most that the seminary can give you are the tools which you need to use in a lifetime of study. This is what God calls you to do when He says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee.... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them..." (I Tim. 4:14-16). Hence, plan on a

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* This is the text of the commencement address given at the seminary graduation of Daniel Kleyn, James Laning, Darren Thole, and Martin VanderWal on June 16, 1997.

lifetime of serious and diligent study of the Word of God. Learn from the giants of the past and be a lifelong student of theology.

This is what the Reformed minister looks like. He's a student of the Word!

Then there are those gifts relating to the people of God. The Reformed minister must have a *sympathetic understanding* of the people of God entrusted to his care. By "understanding" we mean that the minister must know, not just human nature in general, but the human nature of the children of God. The minister will know then that the people of God are sinners, saved in Christ, but sinners. They have but a small beginning of the new obedience and, therefore, will manifest all kinds of weaknesses and sins. They will be involved in a daily battle against their sinful natures, and in this way they need to grow in sanctification. But the minister must also have an understanding of the individual members of the congregation. He must know their strengths and weaknesses as well as their individual needs and circumstances.

But that must be a *sympathetic understanding*. The word "sympathetic" means to "feel with." The minister represents Christ, and Christ is "touched with the feelings of the infirmities" of God's people (Heb. 4:15). The minister, then, after the example of the chief Shepherd, must feel with God's people. This means, for example, that he must not merely know that they sorrow, but must weep with those who weep. He needs to rejoice with those who rejoice. He's got to bear with the weak. He must have sympathetic understanding of their fears and doubts, their struggles and temptations. Only then will the Reformed minister be able to bring to bear the Word of God to the needs of the people of God both in his public preaching and teaching and in his private counseling of God's people.

This is what the Reformed min-

ister looks like. He's a man of sympathetic understanding.

The Reformed minister must also be *apt to teach* (I Tim. 3:2). Literally he must be skillful in teaching, i.e., he must be able to teach. This means that the minister must be able to make clear what Scripture teaches. He must have the gift from God to unfold the mystery of the gospel. The Bible calls ministers "pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). The minister is a pastor, i.e., one who shepherds the flock of God, and he is a teacher. This doesn't mean the minister is both a pastor and a teacher; he's a pastor/teacher. This is one office. The idea is that the minister shepherds the people of God by means of teaching them out of the Word of God. Hence, the Reformed minister is always teaching. When the minister preaches, he is teaching. He's teaching in the catechism classes and when he leads the Bible study societies. Not only so, but when he admonishes the wayward he does that by teaching them from Scripture the right way of faith and repentance. When the minister comforts the dying and sorrowing, he does so by teaching them from the Word of God. When he encourages the sick or the aged, he does that by teaching them from Scripture. This is in harmony with the nature of inspired Scripture. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). If God's people are not instructed in righteousness; if they're not taught the doctrine of the Word of God, they will be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6).

The Reformed minister must be a skillful teacher. This is what he looks like.

Among the *spiritual gifts* a minister must possess we mention first the fact that he must be a *child of God*. It's certainly true that God can bless His church through an ungodly man. Scripture speaks of

those who preach Christ from spurious motives in Philippians 1:15-18. Some were preaching Christ out of envy and strife, some out of contention and not sincerely, while others were preaching out of pure motives. But the apostle doesn't care, because, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being preached, and in that he rejoices. God even used a wicked Balaam, held up in II Peter 2 as the example of a false teacher, to bless His people. And Jesus sent Judas along with the other disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10). So, in the objective sense, God can and has used a reprobate to minister to His people.

But we take the subjective viewpoint and emphasize that the Reformed minister must be a child of God. This means he must be characterized by a genuine spirituality or piety. The minister must have a deep sense of his own sinfulness and his need of the grace of God in all his work among God's people. He must be deeply impressed with the holiness, the goodness, the greatness of God! The minister must be a man who *fears God*! He, in fact, must be an exemplary Christian, one who is a worthy example to the people of God. This means the Reformed minister will be a man of prayer. He will set aside time each day to spend in personal private devotions. He will meditate on God's Word and he will pray daily for God's grace and Holy Spirit to enable him to shepherd the people of God. The minister will do this because he knows that "God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, q. 116).

This is what the Reformed minister looks like. He's a godly, spiritual, pious man who fears God and is given to much prayer.

The Reformed minister must also be a man of *patience*. He needs this gift because of the sinfulness

of the people of God. He needs to bear long with the weaknesses of God's people. Especially does the minister need patience with those who are quick to criticize him, particularly his preaching. The Scriptures require of a minister that he not strive, but be gentle and patient (II Tim. 2:24-26).

The Reformed minister must be *truthful* with the people of God. He must always speak the truth — publicly in his preaching and teaching, privately as well. He must speak the truth even when it hurts. If all of God's people are called to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), how much more isn't that necessary for the minister!

The minister must also be *faithful*. He must not waver in his love and commitment to God and His truth. Neither must the minister waver in his love and commitment to God's people and his calling to care for them.

The Reformed minister needs *boldness*. He needs boldness to take a resolute stand for the truth even in the face of opposition. He needs boldness to make known the "mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19).

In all of this the minister must be an example to the believers. Scripture requires this of ministers. The inspired apostle tells the saints in Philippi to "follow us as your examples," and he exhorts Timothy, the preacher, "Be thou an example of the believers" (Phil. 3:17; I Tim. 4:12). So it is with the Reformed minister. He must be a model of the Christian's life for the people of God to whom he ministers. He must never contradict by ungodliness what he preaches and teaches. The minister must be able to say to the people of God, speak as I speak, do as I do, live as I live, train your children as I train mine, love your wives as I love mine.

This is what the Reformed minister looks like.

But the greatest gift the Reformed minister needs is the *love of God*. The love of God, according to Colossians 3:14, is "the bond of

perfectness." Love is a bond, it unites, makes one. In other words, God's love is fellowship. And it's a bond of perfectness. Love exists only in the light. God's love cannot flourish in the darkness of sin. In sin there's no love, only hatred and lust.

That bond of perfectness is in God. God is love, says Scripture (I John 4:8). This is the chief virtue of God's being, He is love. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit live together in the bond of perfect love. The wonder of it is that God in His perfect love chose us and all of His people in Christ before the foundation of the world to be His beloved saints. In love God sent His only begotten Son into the world to suffer and die on the cross to redeem His chosen from sin and death. And God shed abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so that we love Him and reveal that love of God to one another in the communion of the saints.

Holy Scripture carefully describes God's love as self-denying and self-sacrificing. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" ... (John 3:16). In love, therefore, we always deny ourselves and seek the good and salvation of our fellow saints. I Corinthians 13 speaks of God's love: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never fails."

The gift of God's love is indispensable for the Reformed minister. He must have it or he cannot be a minister. This is plain from the emphasis Scripture places on this gift. Love, Jesus taught us, is the fulfilling of the law of God. It's the fundamental mark of Jesus' disciples, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have

love for one another" (John 13:35). Love is the fruit of the Spirit, according to Galatians 5. It's the more excellent way, according to I Corinthians 13. You may speak with the tongue of men and angels, but without love you're only making noise like a cymbal. You may have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, you may have all faith so as to be able to move mountains, but if you have no love you are nothing! Nothing profits you without the love of God.

The Reformed minister has a heart filled with the love of God! And because he does, the Reformed minister is a humble man. He has a deep sense of his own sins and sinful nature. Daily he struggles against the weaknesses of his faith and the evil lusts of his sinful nature. And he has a deep sense of God's greatness, and goodness, and glory. He fears God! He stands in awe before the Almighty. He knows that he cannot function without God's grace. He can't preach one sermon, comfort one sorrowing soul, encourage one sick or dying child of God, admonish one wayward saint, teach one class without the grace of God.

Knowing this he is a man of prayer. Daily he seeks the grace and Holy Spirit of God to enable him to be a faithful Reformed minister to the people of God. And, strengthened by means of the Word and prayer, gladly in love to God and for His people, humbly as before God's face, he spends himself and is spent in the ministry of the Word!

No one put it better than the late Rev. Gerrit Vos did in a letter to me shortly after he became emeritus, "My son, of all the things I counseled you, remember this, be humble. There is a humility which is feigned, that's abominable in God's sight. Be humble from the heart, and God's people will bear you up in their arms."

This is what a Reformed minister looks like. □

Language: God's Gift (2)

A Reformed view of language must begin with the assertion that the ability to express thoughts by means of language comes from God. This means that the original language which Adam spoke was not invented or discovered by Adam, but was given by God to Adam. This means also that God created man with the ability to use language.

That language is a gift from God is a matter of our faith. In the last article I mentioned three theories regarding the origin of language which do not proceed from the starting point that God is the creator and giver of language. Each theory looks to science to explain the origin of language. I mentioned also that each theory is an instance of unbelief. For a sure explanation of the origin of language, we must look to God's revelation. Now we will do that — we will look to God's Word.

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In the first place, God's Word tells us that God is a communicating God. He uses language.

To understand what is meant by the statement, "God uses language," remember that in the last article I said language is "the manner in which we express our thoughts so that others know and understand those thoughts." Furthermore, I said: "Language is the means of communication. It does

not matter whether this communication takes place by speech, by writing, or by sign language." (I might add, "or by any other method.") Only rational, moral beings can use language. Bearing all this in mind, we can say that God uses language.

God's use of language is greatly different from our use of language. This is true in the first place because He is perfectly righteous, and we are not. We can and do use language in sinful ways; God never does. God's use of language is greatly different from our use, secondly, because He is Spirit, while we are flesh and blood. We use our tongue, lips, voice box, and hands to communicate. God does not have such physical organs. He communicates in a different way.

Nevertheless, God communicates.

The three Persons of the Trinity communicate among themselves. So we read in Genesis 1:26, in connection with the creation of man: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And again in Genesis 11:7, in connection with the destruction of Babel: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Communication is part of God's covenantal life within Himself.

The Triune God communicates to rational, moral beings outside Himself. He speaks to angels. Job 1 and 2 show that He spoke to Satan. He sends His elect angels on their missions. I Chronicles 22:27 speaks of Jehovah commanding His angel. The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister" to the

heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). That they are sent forth to minister (that is, to serve) indicates that the Lord has spoken to them, and they are obeying His Word.

Jehovah spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8ff.). Apparently He spoke to Adam before the fall as well. He spoke to Noah, Abraham, and other prophets by means of dreams and visions. In the Old Testament, dreams and visions were His ordinary way of communicating His Word to His prophets. God spoke to Moses, not simply in dreams and visions, but "mouth to mouth," as He said to Aaron and Miriam in Numbers 12:6-8: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

God also spoke and speaks to creatures which are not rational and moral. He called forth this creation and all creatures (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6, 9), and through Christ He upholds them by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). The difference between God's speech to these creatures and His speech to rational, moral creatures is that, while all creation glorifies and praises God, inanimate creatures are incapable of having fellowship with God. Only rational moral creatures can have fellowship with God.

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

So God uses language.

We should understand how God does so. He is not a man, so He does not speak as a man. He speaks by condescending to make Himself known to men in such a way that men can understand Him.

God has used and uses different methods to make Himself known. He speaks in and through creation; every creature in some way testifies of God. In the old dispensation He used prophets, speaking to them through dreams and visions (cf. Heb. 1:1). He also used the written word, particularly the law, which He gave to Israel through the prophet Moses. At the end of the old dispensation He spoke through the person and work of Christ (Heb. 1:2). Christ was, and is, the "Word" (John 1:1). In the new dispensation He speaks through Christ (Heb. 1:2) and the complete written revelation of Scripture.

Ultimately we can speak of one way in which God makes Himself known. That way is the Spirit. The different methods mentioned in the last paragraph are all means which the Spirit has used or still uses to reveal God to His people. Men cannot understand God's speech,

whether in creation or in Scripture, if the Spirit does not enlighten their minds.

That God is a communicating God is significant. It is possible for such a God to have fellowship with man. It is also possible, for this reason, for man to have fellowship with God through Christ.



God's Word tells us, secondly, that God gave man language.

The creation account in Genesis shows this. That God created man is really proof enough that He also created language, for He made man a rational, moral creature. That God spoke to Adam after creating him (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:16-17) indicates that Adam was capable of understanding what God said. Genesis 1 and 2 show Adam using language soon after his creation. He named the animals. Soon after that, God formed Eve out of Adam's flesh and bone, and Adam named her "Woman" (Gen. 2:23). Did Adam discover this language which he used so soon after his creation? Did he invent it quickly? The answer is clearly "No." There can be no doubt, then, that he was created with the ability to use lan-

guage. Language is a gift from God.

To deny that God gave us language, one must deny more than Genesis 1-3. Moses, reluctant to go to the Israelites in Egypt to deliver them, said to God: "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." God put Moses' argument to rest with a question: "Who hath made man's mouth? ... have not I the LORD?" (Ex. 4:10-11). Jehovah made the mouth and hands, the parts of our body which we use to communicate by speech or writing. He also gave us the ability to communicate by these means. Language is His gift.

God gave us this gift in order that we might fellowship with Him. Through this gift man is able to understand God's speech and speak to God. In addition, man is able to have fellowship with other humans, especially with fellow saints of the body of Christ.

It is a marvelous gift which we have been given! We have a duty to use that gift properly. In a future article we will examine that duty. Before doing so, however, we will turn our attention in the next article to the interesting phenomenon that happened at Babel. □

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

Demon Possession (3)

We should consider in a little more detail how we know if a person is actually demon possessed? This is necessary to consider in connection with the method of deliverance.

Rev. Kortering is a Protestant Reformed minister-on-loan to Singapore.

There are so many far-out and wild-eyed books about demon possession and deliverance that I can understand why a Reformed man would simply throw up his hands and deny its existence. That is an easy way out of the mess. The Charismatic and Pentecostal movement has not helped in this regard either. We all know how they go about seeing demons in every dis-

ease and attributing character faults to demon possession. I personally have had to minister to a man who had been worked-over for five days as attempts were made to deliver him from the demon of self-seeking. The poor fellow was a physical and mental wreck. Interestingly, all during those five days his would-be healers never once opened their Bibles

to read what God has to say. For that matter, neither has the Roman Catholic glamorization of exorcism helped one bit. Abuse spreads even further. I suppose you have read of the episode in California where a Korean woman was killed by her own husband in the process of exorcism. He was joined by a Presbyterian deacon in their local church who also participated in her death. In their exorcism ceremony they literally stomped the woman to death in an attempt to force out the demon. This went on for some five hours. One is inclined to use such incidences to declare belief in the presence of demon possession to be illegitimate and wrong.

Yet, we cannot do this. A far more sober approach is suggested to us in the book by Merrill Unger entitled, *Demons in the World Today*. If you are interested in this subject, you do well to read it. His description of demon possession is as follows:

Demon possession is a condition in which one or more evil spirits or demons inhabit the body of a human being and can take complete control of their victim at will. By temporarily blotting out his consciousness, they can speak and act through him as their complete slave and tool. The inhabiting demon or demons comes and goes much like the proprietor of a house who may or may not be "at home". When the demon is "at home", he may precipitate an attack. In these attacks the victim passes from his normal state, in which he acts like other people, to the abnormal state of possession.

When this takes place, Unger suggests, we can look for definite distinguishing marks. These are collated from the scriptural accounts of demon possession, and they are in turn confirmed by reports of many missionaries and others who have had to deal with this. He suggests that the chief characteristic is the automatic pro-

jection of a new personality in the victim. During the attack, the victim's personality is completely obliterated, and the inhabiting demon's personality takes over completely — so completely that the demon refers to the "possessed" in the third person, an element which Unger observes to be entirely lacking in cases of insanity. Such persons imagine themselves to be Jesus Christ or other characters.

In various degrees, three more things take place. First, the demon possessed has supernatural knowledge and intellectual power. Unger gives examples from both the Bible and mission history. Second, supernatural physical strength is evident in the possessed. Third, there are evidences of moral depravity. The demon causes the possessed to speak in a vile manner or even to delight in violence or in sexual excesses. From a different point of view, they frequently rave at any spiritual activity such as Bible reading and prayer. This was evident when the demons expressed their rage against the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Because Jesus Christ defeated the devil and all his hosts through His death and resurrection, He is also the One who is able to defeat him in the arena of battle. This is important for us to remember. No human being can deliver another human being from the throes of the devil. This is the work of our Sovereign Lord alone.

We must also remember that Satan never is allowed to take possession of the Christian. He is able to influence and tempt the Christian, but not take possession as we described it above. This observation is deduced from the teaching of Scripture which speaks of the work of salvation in the child of God. II Corinthians 5:17 calls one who is saved a "new creation." In Ephesians 1:13 we read that we are "saved with the Holy Spirit of promise." The words of Colossians 1:12,13 form such a promise: "Giv-

ing thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Because of this change, our response to Christ is not fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father (Rom. 8:15).

From a little different point of view, we look at Matthew 12:24-32, where Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub, a demon. Jesus calls this "blasphemy," for that constitutes a divided house. How much more that would be true if Jesus would allow a demon to be enthroned in the heart of one of His dear children where He reigns. It is impossible to conceive of this. This must in no way detract from the clear teaching of the Bible that we Christians "wrestle against demons" (Eph. 6:12). Satan goes about as a "roaring lion" whose attack is focused upon Christians (I Pet. 5:8). He even buffets us through our "thorns in the flesh" (II Cor. 12:7-10).

Since non-Christians are the ones who are possessed, it fits the purpose of God to deliver such from demon possession for the sake of the gospel. Such deliverance is the prelude to salvation. This was evident in the biblical accounts and also witnessed by many missionaries bringing the gospel to the lost. Such deliverance is not only for the sake of the individual (which in itself must be unfathomable relief), but even more so is for the furtherance of the gospel. Such a display of power has a moving effect upon those who receive Christian missionaries into their midst. The same is true in a culture such as America, where there is a transition from secularism and scientism to spiritism and mysticism.

How must such casting out of demons be done?

The first thing we ought to emphasize is that the concept and

practice of exorcism is fraught with dangers. Even the heathen go through magic rites to cast out evil spirits. Most of the time this is accompanied with inflicting pain on the possessed. We must have none of the chanting and magical blood which marks the abuse of this activity by many Charismatics. As in most of their "worship," they grieve the Holy Spirit. It is better that we not use the term exorcism, because of the abuse that is associated with that practice.

The place of casting out demons in the New Testament, as recorded in the New Testament itself, must caution us so as not to elevate it to some place of distinction and power. It can be demonstrated that the casting out of demons was almost completely limited to Jesus and His disciples (see Luke 10:19, 20). Also, we must observe that in the great commission as expounded both in Acts and in the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, there is no explicit instruction to cast out demons, nor is there mention of such activity in the early church. From this point of view, the casting out of demons was part of the special phenomenon such as miracles, speaking in tongues, etc. which were done away with when the Holy Spirit gave the church the completed revelation of God in written form, the Bible. What does this tell us? It seems to me we learn this, that there was no special "gift" given to some person to cast out demons. Rather, the deliverance from demon possession is connected with the preaching of the gospel. The word of the gospel and the power of prayer is that which God uses to deliver from demons. The ministry of the Word is that which delivers one from demons (Col. 1:13). The power of the Word preached is that of continual prayer, even as Jesus told His disciples that certain demons can be cast out only with much prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21). The prayerful preaching of the Word of God is the vehicle for

the deliverance from demon possession.

This is important for mission work. The preaching of the gospel includes the authority of Christ to cast out demons in the name of the living Lord. That preaching is the word of the exalted One, who has defeated Satan, who also, in the bringing of the gospel to the heathen, demonstrates His great power over all evil forces by delivering captives of Satan through the word and prayer of the missionaries. When missionaries stand in the presence of one who is possessed, they must bring the good news of the gospel to him or her, declaring that in Christ there is deliverance. They must call such a one to repentance of sin and to fall before the cross of Jesus in whom alone is life everlasting. Such a one must be called to embrace Christ and forsake all evil. He must turn to God in humble confession of sin and seek deliverance.

This brings up yet another interesting side question. In bringing the gospel to such a possessed person and in praying for him/her, should the demon(s) be personally addressed? Should the missionary or pastor speak directly to the demon and command him to come out in the name and authority of Jesus Christ? In my search for an answer to this question, I find that Christians have divided views. In Singapore there has been quite a controversy in local churches over this issue. The point at issue is this, is it giving too much credibility to the demon and too much power to the pastor if he sets forth such a direct confrontation? It is argued that Jesus had the authority to do this, and He knew His own intention, so that when Jesus made such a command it was effectual and always delivered the possessed from the demon. It seems that the disciples had this power as well, as they reported to Jesus upon their return (Luke 10:17). Morrison, in his book *The Serpent and the Cross*, suggests that even Jesus did not

just command them to "come out," but ordered them into the abyss, making an exception at the time when the demons begged to enter pigs instead. Over against this point of view, there are many instances cited in mission accounts where demons left the possessed just because they were commanded to do so in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I frankly have to admit that I haven't come to a conclusion on this issue. It seems to me the issue is this: May the missionary/pastor say, as part of the gospel message to the demon possessed, "In the name of Jesus, come out!" He does have the authority to speak in the name of Jesus. That is what makes the preaching of the gospel distinctive. It is also true that he has the authority to command men everywhere to repent and believe, that is, to issue the command to more people than it may please Jesus to save. Would that also be true if the missionary/pastor addresses a command to a demon to come out as part of the gospel to the demon possessed? There is a difference, obviously. If it does not please Christ to use it for deliverance, the effect is the same as all gospel preaching, a double effect. At least we can do more reflecting upon this issue.

Finally, we must remind ourselves that, even though Christians cannot be "possessed" by demons, the spiritual warfare is sharp and decisive. How can we best equip ourselves in this spiritual battle?

We don't have to go around marking off territory and people with holy water, claiming that they are thereby protected by the blood of Jesus. Such foolishness smacks of the darkness of heathendom, caught in the web of superstition.

The best safeguard against the wiles of the devil is to stop playing with him. Years ago, when I was a student at Calvin, I made a chapel speech entitled, "The devil on the leash." The point of that speech was that, though we never

want to give complete control to Satan because we know his wiles, we do like to have him for our "pet," like a dog on a leash. We imagine that he is then under our control. We allow him just so much influence in our lives as we please. We do this when we mess around in his territory. Today's movies that deal with the extra-sensory and extra-terrestrial just play into the devil's hands. Anything that has to do with fortune telling, the occult, and games

which involve using the power of the mind to do wonders (and there are so many of these that entertain today) put the devil on the leash. We Christians must know that the horror of Satan's deception, as seen in those "possessed," must teach us that we are to be in dead earnest when we deal with him.

More positively, and it is good to leave on a positive note, the best guard against any temptation and allure of the devil is to walk close

to God. Holiness is exemplified by wearing the protective armor (Eph. 6), and using the offensive weapon of the Word of God to speak to ourselves and to others as to how we are to live in this world to the glory of God.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 2:16 and Lev. 11:44). There is no more effective safeguard against the wiles of the devil.

Thanks be to God for such deliverance and salvation in our Lord Jesus. □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

God's Way ... Or No Way

In the past couple years there has been a stirring controversy in the Reformed Church of America concerning one of its ministers. Richard Rhem, a pastor in Spring Lake, Michigan, has taught publicly that faith in Jesus Christ is not the only way to salvation, and that Jews, Muslims, and those from other religious backgrounds may be as likely to enter heaven as those who profess faith in Christ.

The periodical *Christian Renewal* reported in September of 1996 that the case had even drawn the attention of the *New York Times*. What struck me as interesting was that the *Times* reported that Rhem, who supposedly began his ministry as a theological conservative, changed his outlook "after he studied during the late 1960s at the University of Leiden in the

Netherlands, where he became a disciple of Hendrikus Berkhof, a Dutch Reformed theologian."

That report was telling to me.

Hendrikus Berkhof has been a very influential contemporary theologian in the *Hervormde Kerk* (the Reformed Church or State Church) in the Netherlands, where he served for many years as the Professor of Theology at the University of Leiden. But through his writings Berkhof's influence has reached into an even wider circle in the Reformed church world on the continent and in the United States.

That he has had such an influence only shows how apostate the broader Reformed church world has become, and how the lack of true spiritual knowledge has left many in Reformed churches throughout the world aimlessly tossed about with every wind of doctrine.

Hendrikus Berkhof is a theologian whose teachings are contrary to the truth of the historic Christian faith.

But because his teachings have gained a fairly broad influence, especially by Eerdmans' publication of the English translation of Berkhof's dogmatics, *Christian Faith*, we do well to consider briefly what this man taught. Then perhaps we can begin to understand how it is that a minister in the Reformed Church of America can teach that Christ is not the only way to salvation.

Hendrikus Berkhof's "Christ"

Berkhof's stated aim in his dogmatics was "to present a restatement of the gospel." It soon becomes evident that the reason Berkhof needed such a "restatement of the gospel" is that he rejected the very foundation of the faith, namely, the inspired Scriptures. He needed a "restatement of the gospel" because the gospel unveiled in Holy Scripture is a gospel he found repulsive and unacceptable.

We believe, as our Belgic Confession puts it in Article 7, that the doctrine of the Scriptures "is most

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perfect and complete in all respects." We believe, further, that the Bible is the infallible and complete written record of God's revelation in Christ to His people.

Every portion of the Word of God reveals *Christ* to us. To lose the Scriptures, therefore, or to reject them as the Word of truth that they are, is to lose the entire foundation of Christianity and the gospel itself! It is to lose *Christ*!

Hendrikus Berkhof was very critical of the traditional view of the doctrine of inspiration. The Bible to him was something other than the infallible, organically inspired, and authoritative Word of God.

For that reason he was left to search for the historical Jesus, turning to higher criticism and ultimately denying the very deity of Christ. In Berkhof's words, "The New Testament shows us a history in which the man Jesus, because of his total obedience even to death, may share in the life and rule of God."

The virgin birth of Christ was, to Berkhof's mind, a myth. He viewed it as regrettable that the virgin birth received a central place in such confessions as the Apostles' Creed, thus making it a touchstone of orthodoxy. This gives you but a taste of Berkhof's doctrine of Christ. One thing is sure: Hendrikus Berkhof's doctrine left him without the Savior revealed in Scripture. Jesus as Jehovah salvation, Immanuel, God with us, was lost to him. His "Lord" is not the Lord God. His "Lord" is a man — more powerful than all other men, but a man. While the Christian church throughout the ages has confessed with Thomas (John 20:28), "My Lord and my God," Berkhof refused to confess this, nor could he. He was blinded to the Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

One more thing: In his treatment of the ascension, which he also considered a regrettable article of the Apostles' Creed, Berkhof denied that heaven is a place. He

called it instead "one form of existence."

Take these things into account, and you can begin to understand how a Reformed minister, enamored with the teachings of the professor he esteemed so highly, would deny Jesus as the only Savior.

No New Thing

This denial of God's Christ and the biblical doctrine of salvation in Christ alone is no new thing.

It is a denial that began from Christ's very birth and has continued throughout the ages.

A number of heresies arose in the early New Testament church, from the first to the fourth centuries. And by the time the church fathers had dealt with them and set forth the truth over against them, those heresies had occupied much time and controversy.

Finally, at the Council of Chalcedon, in the year 451, the Christian church faced the Scriptures and declared that Christ is the Person of the Son of God in human nature, and that these two natures — human and divine — are without change, without mixture, without separation, and without division. The doctrine of Christ was fixed, and the measure of biblical orthodoxy was clearly understood.

What is frightening, however, is not that such attacks upon the biblical doctrine of Christ would continue; but that they have now reached into the Reformed church world. In fulfillment of the Bible's warning, certain men have crept in unawares, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who sees the seriousness of this error?

There is no new thing under the sun.

Just as Satan from the beginning of history labored bitterly to prevent the coming of Jesus Christ, and just as in the apostolic era and the years of the early New Testament church Satan labored with bitter hatred to rob the church of

Jesus Christ, so he does today!

And if Satan and his false teachers were to succeed in any way to rob the church of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, of *God's* Christ, they would rob the church of *everything*.

Our salvation cannot be accomplished except by the Mediator who is revealed in Holy Scripture!

Deny that Christ is eternal God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, and you have no salvation left! Deny that Christ is very man, born of the virgin Mary, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, and you lose the Christ of God and all possibility of your salvation!

If the church is robbed of the Christ of God, the church has nothing left, absolutely nothing!

The philosophies of men may teach all kinds of ways to everlasting happiness and peace, all kinds of ways to "salvation," whatever that means. They may lay claim to a Jesus of their own imaginations, and even confess to be "Christian." But the end of those who reject the Christ revealed in Scripture will be everlasting damnation, as all the deceitfulness of man's depraved heart is revealed for the abomination that it is in God's sight.

The lesson? We must know the truth of the Word of God. And we may not assume a sympathetic attitude toward those who would introduce false doctrine into the church of Christ.

What says the Scripture?

It is either God's way, or no way.

There is absolutely no salvation outside of Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ is not a figment of man's imagination, but the Christ of God, God become flesh, that we might be saved.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of God's providing.

He is the *only* Mediator.

Salvation is God's way ... or no way. □

Minister Activities

Highlights of this year's Synod were many. But perhaps the one that will have the most impact on us as churches was the graduation of three seminarians: Mr. Daniel Kleyn, Mr. James Laning, and Mr. Martin VanderWal. We pass along our congratulations to each of them and add our prayer that our heavenly Father will appoint them a place in our churches.

Rev. B. Gritters, pastor at our Hudsonville, MI PRC, declined the call he had been considering from the Hope PRC in Walker, MI to serve as their next pastor.

The Council of South Holland, IL PRC discussed the ever-increasing workload of a minister in their congregation and then appointed a committee to study the concept of their calling two pastors. However, after study of this matter, the Council decided to call one minister and to consider areas of assistance to reduce his workload. South Holland's Council presented the trio of Rev. A. denHartog, Candidate J. Laning, and Rev. G. VanBaren. A meeting to call was set for July 14.

Candidate Cheah Fook Meng accepted the call to serve as pastor of our sister church, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. He was ordained and installed as their pastor on Sunday, June 22.

We pass along our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. R. Smit, who were blessed with the birth of a baby boy, John William, on June 19.

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

Mission Activities

Our Hull, IA PRC formed a new trio from which they were to call a missionary. This trio was made up of the Revs. S. Key, K. Koole, and J. Mahtani. From these three, Hull extended a call to Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX.

Rev. R. Hanko, our churches' missionary to Northern Ireland, and his family returned home in July for a few weeks of vacation. A tentative schedule called for the Hankos to travel from Ireland to Houston, TX to visit and renew past friendships at Trinity PRC. Then on to Michigan to spend time with the family, followed by a week of meetings with our Mission Committee and the Council of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, the calling church, concluding with a Pig Roast and get-together with the congregation at Hudsonville, where Rev. Hanko was to be given an opportunity to promote his work and report on the field.

Evangelism Activities

After much consideration, the Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA has decided to suspend its sponsorship of the Reformed Witness Hour on KPRO because of a lack of response to the program.

Hope's Consistory has also decided to discontinue the Bible Study it was sponsoring, at least for the summer, to Victorville, CA. One of the key families has dropped out, and attendance has not been good. Hope has conducted more than two year's of Bible study in Victorville, including a doctrinal study on the doctrines of grace. Though this is discouraging, nevertheless we believe God's Word will not return unto Him void.

Congregational Activities

Several parents from our Hope PRC in Redlands, CA recently discussed with their Consistory the need of instruction in church history for their young people, and approval to go ahead was given. It was felt that this instruction could best be given through a special society for this purpose, and two men, Mr. Doug Pastoor and Mr. Steve Feenstra, volunteered to teach the class. Curriculum materials were obtained from our Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI. This instruction will be given to eighth and ninth graders at Hope. The class began on June 13 and will met every two weeks year-round.

Recent bulletins from our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada contain progress reports on the construction of their church sanctuary. With only one issue of the *SB* each month in the summer, it is impossible to keep up with progress, but that does not make it any less interesting. And since most of us cannot take a little drive and have a look, we include here that the foundation and walls have been poured, the heating/electrical work is under way, and a new well has been dug. By now the concrete floor has also been poured, and carpenters have begun framing the walls.

Immanuel's Ladies' Guild also sponsored a Garage Sale the last two days of May to raise proceeds to help stock the kitchen of the new church.

On Sunday, June 8, the congregation of our Loveland, CO PRC welcomed to their services Dr. and Mrs. Morton Smith, Rev. and Mrs. Charles L. Wilson, and Rev. and Mrs. Eugene Case from the Presbyterian Church in America. These couples were in the area in order

to attend their church's General Assembly (Synod) to be held in Colorado Springs.

At the request of Loveland's Consistory, Dr. Morton Smith kindly consented to give information concerning the Presbyterian Church in America after their evening service.

Sister Church Activities

The Lord's Day, April 27, was a special one. On that day at First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, six infants were received for baptism, four adults were baptized, and another three made confession of their faith in the Lord. We rejoice with our sis-

ter-church in the wonderful way in which the Lord continues to add to His church in their midst.

Food For Thought

"Of love there are two principle offices, one to give, another to forgive."

— John Boys □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 1997 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than August 11, 1997.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 20, 1997, we will rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. GERRIT HOLSTEGE,

as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to our heavenly Father for His sovereign care over them. We are also thankful to Him for the godly parents He has given us and for the Christian example they have set for us. We pray that God may continue to bless them and care for them in the years that lie ahead.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ✿ Gary and DaVona Holstege
Mical, Nathan, Ross
- ✿ Doug and Mary Jane Prince
Hilary
- ✿ Allen Holstege
- ✿ Don and Nancy Vanderlest
Britton and Nicole, Daniel,
Justin, Alex
- ✿ Joyce Holstege
- ✿ David and Sharon Kraker
Jared

Grandville, Michigan

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet at the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois, on Wednesday, September 3, 1997 at 8:30 A.M., God willing. All material for the classical agenda is to be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before the Classis convenes. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of Peace's consistory. An officebearers' conference is also planned for Tuesday, September 2.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Jacoba Lenting in the death of her husband,

MR. ADRIAN J. LENTING, SR.

May she and the family find comfort in the Word of God in II Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Gil VanBaren, Vice-Pres.
George DeJong, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Seminary Convocation will be held on Thursday, September 4, at 7:45 P.M., in Byron Center PRC. Prof. Dykstra will be the speaker. Show your support of our seminary by your attendance at this important occasion.

NOTICE to

College Students

Please remember to let us know your college address as soon as possible. We would like to send copies of the **Standard Bearer** to each of you who are living away from home while in college.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 8 our parents and grandparents,
GEORGE and EPKE JOOSTENS,
celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for the years He has given them. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

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

- ✿ Rev. Meindert and
Beverly Joostens
- Dan and Faith Bult
- Tim, Steve, Joy, Paul
- ✿ Bill and Alice Joostens
- Rachel, Rebecca, Joseph,
Sarah

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 15, 1997, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. STUART
BYLSMA,**

will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We give God thanks for blessing their marriage these many years, for giving them to each other in the bond of marriage, and for giving us to them in His covenant faithfulness. We are deeply grateful also for the covenant home they provided and for the covenantal instruction we received in the truth of God's Word. We pray that God, in His grace, may continue richly to bless their marriage in the future and that we, together with them, may walk in faithfulness to Him.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:1, 5, 6).

- ✿ Gary and Marilyn Bylsma
David and Chris Linker,
Steve, Dan, Amy, Andy,
Ryan, Brett
- ✿ Rev. Rich and Marcia Flikkema
Tammy, Tricia, Heidi,
(Kyle in glory)
- ✿ Carole tenHaaf
Mike, Jon and Sharon tenHaaf,
Brian, Carolyn, David, Gary
- ✿ Phyllis Bylsma
- ✿ Tim and Sharon Rus
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