



The Standard Bearer

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



Children of Galilee Church in Myanmar

See "Go Ye Into All the World" — p. 91

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A Damnable Inference

For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

Romans 3:7, 8

In the immediate context, the apostle removes from the sinner a last possibility of excuse. This is the purpose of the preceding four or five verses. The apostle presently intends to elaborate upon the positive message of the gospel. This message is that man is justified by faith through the righteousness which is of God and which He realized in Christ. If the sinner is to receive the positive message of the gospel, he must have nothing left that is of himself. There must be no possibility left for him to be justified by works.

Not only those works which we might call the works of the law, but also our religion, our piety, our Christianity must be taken away. They are no good as a basis of righteousness. But also every excuse

of the sinner, that he shall not appear in the judgment, that God has no right to execute judgment upon him, must be taken out of the hand of the sinner, who always lies about God. He must stop lying about God.

Now in the context the apostle answers a possible objector, who lies about God to excuse himself.

Let me use an illustration. A judge passes sentence upon his own son. That son has committed murder. He is tried in that father's own court. That judge expresses the verdict of the death sentence upon that son. By that verdict of that judge, the sentence becomes the occasion of commending the righteousness and integrity of the judge. The son, hearing that the judge is praised for his righteousness and integrity, turns around and says, "Because my sin commends your righteousness, you cannot condemn me to death." But the judge answers,

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer.

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"How shall I judge then?"

What is the flaw in the reasoning of that son? This, that although his sin becomes the means of the sentence and, thus, of commending the righteousness and integrity of the judge, that sin does not become meritorious. That sin remains sin. Therefore, it is to be condemned.

So the apostle reasons in the context and in the text. The apostle had said that the faith of God is not affected by the unbelief of the sinner. He had said: What if some do not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid. But their unbelief must show that all men are liars and that God is true.

The unbelief of them who have the oracles of God shows that although man may have the Word of God he is still a liar. When they have the Word of God, this Word serves to bring out the more, that all men are liars. But God gives faith to them who are heirs of the promise.

Now the objector states, "If this is true, if my unfaithfulness commends the faithfulness of God, then God is unrighteous, if He brings wrath upon me." Or, as in the text, "If my lie must serve to bring out His truth, then I cannot be judged as a sinner." In this case, the safest rule is this, "Let us do evil that good may come out of it." This, says the apostle, is a damnable inference.

The Inference

The objector draws a conclusion. He draws a conclusion from Paul's doctrine. This is often done. How often do you not hear this conclusion, if you insist upon preaching the sovereignty of God: If you insist that even sin and the devil are there by the will of God, you make God the author of sin! This is not the conclusion of them who hold to the sovereignty of God. This is the conclusion of the enemy. This, we have in the text. From the doctrine of the apostle,

the objector draws this conclusion: let us do evil that good may come.

The question is, from what doctrine of Paul does the objector draw this conclusion? The answer is that he draws this conclusion from the teaching of Paul that even sin, evil, and all the powers of darkness exist, operate, and must redound to God's glory. He draws this conclusion from the teaching that all the lies of men must bring out the truth of God. This was the answer of Paul to the objector who had said, "What if some do not believe?" The apostle said that God must become ever increasingly true and man must become ever increasingly a liar. This must be the outcome. This will be the outcome. But the apostle had stated that this was the purpose of God when He did not give faith to all. This was the question. Faith is included in the promise. Why then did not God give this faith to all? The apostle answers that God did not give faith to all in order that it might become evident that God is true and that every man is a liar. This is the particular teaching of Paul from which the objector draws the conclusion, "Let us do evil that good may come."

There is a general principle at stake here. Sin has no purpose, no end of its own. The only purpose, the only end, which sin can reach is the glory of God. That is, God's purpose with sin is that it may become evident that He is God, that He is God alone, and that He is the only good. The powers of darkness must serve this purpose, and they must serve this purpose alone.

This is an important principle. To deny this truth is to deny the antithesis. This denial leads to dualism. You do not believe the antithesis if you do not explain sin and the devil out of God. Not to explain sin and the devil out of God leads to heathen dualism. This, the apostle does not teach. The apostle says that sin is there to glorify God. The unrighteousness of man must bring out the

righteousness of God. The lie of man must bring out the truth of God. This is God's purpose. This truth, we must never surrender. This is the truth of truths. It is the truth that God is God.

Now what is the inference? The apostle says, "I speak as a man." It is the inference of a man. What is the inference of man? It is not the inference of an apostle. It is not the inference of a Christian. But "I speak as a man, as a *sinful* man."

What does sinful man say? He says this. If that which you have been teaching, Paul, is true, then this is also true, that my lie bears good fruit, that it serves a good purpose, that it serves to bring out the truth of God. Therefore, my lie is really a necessary element in the glorification of God. If I do not lie, God will not be glorified. My unrighteousness commends, by way of comparison, the righteousness of God. All can see that I am unrighteous and that God is righteous. But my unrighteousness serves to bring out the righteousness of God. Hence, this is also true that God cannot judge me as a sinner. "Why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" If the truth of God abounds more through my lie unto His glory, God cannot judge me as a sinner. Do you not see, Paul, that I am excused? Even though I am a liar, and unrighteous, I cannot be judged because my lie must redound to the glory of God.

There is one more step. From the doctrine that God is sovereign, this also follows: "Let us do evil that good may come." This is the conclusion of the enemies. For the apostle says that these objectors said that this is what he taught: "As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say," declares the apostle. This is an old method of opposing the truth. There were some who actually said about the apostle's doctrine that the apostle taught, "Let us do evil that good may come." The apostle did

not teach this. This was merely a conclusion of the enemy. The apostle calls it a damnable inference.

Its Absurdity

For what is the error? What is wrong with this conclusion? In the first place, they who draw this inference do not present the matter quite correctly. They say, "Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God." This is not quite correct. They make just a little mistake. But this little mistake is a serious error. The objectors state: "God's glory must abound through our lie." But this is not exactly the case. It should be put in a slightly different form in order to be true. But this difference results in a devilish error. The lie of man does not commend the truth, but opposes it. The unrighteousness of man does not commend the righteousness of God, but opposes it. In other words, man does not glorify God when he lies. He does not glorify God when he commits unrighteousness. Man does not intend to glorify God when he lies or commits unrighteousness. His lie is not a work that can be put to his credit. For it was not his purpose to glorify God. A lie is always a lie.

Therefore, the truth must be put this way. God glorifies Himself through my unrighteousness. God glorifies His truth through my lie. My lie does not glorify God. God glorifies Himself. God always glorifies Himself. He glorifies Himself in the elect. We are not the meritorious glorifiers of God. God glorifies Himself. Even as He glorifies Himself in the elect, so He glorifies Himself in the reprobate. God does it. God uses man's lie and unrighteousness to His own glory.

The inference of the objector is absurd. God's glorification is a self-glorification. It is a glorifying of Himself, in spite of sin and the devil. How then can the sinner ask, "Why am I judged as a sinner?"

His lie does not glorify God.

If a man throws a child into the water, and that child becomes the occasion for another man to show his bravery, and he that had thrown the child into the water should want the credit, would he not be deemed mad? Or, if the Jews who crucified Christ should say to God, we are the cause that the blood of atonement was shed and we want the credit, would that not be deemed insane? This is the absurdity of the objection of all the wicked. In the day of judgment, the wicked shall see and acknowledge that they have served nothing but the glory of God. Then they will not say, "This was our work." But they will say, "We were the most absurd fools that ever were." The sinner is absurd. The devil is absurd. He is foolish. The absurdity of the fool will be acknowledged by the fool himself, when it shall appear that God is true and that every man is a liar.

Its Damnable Character

It is also a *damnable* inference. O, we hear these things doctrinally. We hear people say, "You teach that God willed sin." This is true. But they add, "If this is true, then this is also true, that God is the author of sin." When they say this, we must not withdraw our teaching. But we must say, "Your damnation is just."

When the apostle says that their damnation is just, he does not merely mean to express a general truth. But he means to say that of those who say these things about our doctrine it is already evident that their damnation is certain. It is evident that they are hopelessly in sin. When the gospel is preached to them and when it is preached to them that they can do nothing with a view to their salvation, it is evident that their damnation is just, because they turn this Word into a word of the devil. When men hear the gospel and subvert this gospel into the damnable doctrine, "Let us do evil that

good may come," then their damnation is evident.

In the second place, the apostle means that the damnation of those who thus slander the gospel and us is just. Why should they spread this slander? Was it a mistake? Was it a matter of intellect? Not at all. Their deepest purpose was that they wanted to lie about the living God. When they heard the truth, they wanted to show that it could be led to an absurdity. Their purpose was to lead people away from the truth.

People do the same today. When we teach that God is sovereign, also with respect to sin and the powers of darkness, people say that we make God the author of sin. Is this a mistake? No, their purpose is to oppose the truth. Their damnation is just.

Every excuse is gone. God glorifies Himself. He does so whether you believe or not. Evil is not to be put to our credit. There is no excuse left. There is not one who can appear before God.

Our salvation is that God brought light out of darkness, not we; that God brought righteousness out of unrighteousness, not we; that God brought life out of death, not we.

God is true. He is true when He became manifest in Christ. Him, He sent into death. Him, He raised from the dead. In Him, He revealed a righteousness with which we can appear before God, a righteousness which is of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Believe in Christ. Believe in Him. That is, throw away all that is of self, something which we must do everyday. It is not so easy to believe in Christ. Every day we must throw away all that is of self. When everything that is of self has been cast away, we will cast ourselves on Christ. Casting ourselves on Christ, we will be clothed with His righteousness, and we will say, "We then being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." □

The Scandal and Silence

The ethical scandal in evangelical and Reformed churches today is unbiblical divorce and the remarriage that almost certainly follows. By "scandal," I do not only mean iniquitous conduct that blatantly violates the clear command of Holy Scripture. But I refer to behavior that gives occasion to the ungodly to mock and reject the gospel and that causes many to stumble into sin and perish everlastingly. It is scandal such as Jesus had in mind in Matthew 18:6: "But whoso shall offend (Greek: *scandalize*) one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

This warning is especially fitting regarding the scandal of divorce and remarriage, for innumerable children of professing Christians are the spiritual casualties of this sin.

About this scandal, there is almost total silence in the evangelical, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches. In view of the prevalence and destructive power of the evil and in view of the importance of marriage and the family for both state and church, the silence is eerie.

The world of North America maintains similar silence about the same evil. Divorce and remarriage are rampant. The consequences for nations and society are disastrous, particularly the ruin of the children, surely a nation's most valuable resource. Divorce (with remarriage squarely in view) is the main social evil in the United

States. Not racism! Not sexism! Not poverty! Not the environment! But divorce! The destruction of marriage and, with it, the destruction of the home and family! By the institution of God at creation, the family is fundamental to human life on earth, and marriage is basic to the family (Gen. 1, 2).

Of late, a few officials in government acknowledge the problem. They propose remedies. One is that the state frown on "no-fault" divorce. Another is that those who intend to marry be encouraged to opt for a special, lifelong "covenant" of marriage (as though every man and woman who marry are not, in fact, bound to a lifelong marriage-covenant by virtue of God's institution itself).

For the most part, however, the social reformers and the vocal advocates of "family values" have nothing to say about divorce and remarriage. The reason is that the evil is widespread and entrenched. Condemnation of divorce and remarriage would be unpopular. It would lose votes for the party and the candidate. Besides, many of the social reformers, advocates of "family values," and politicians are themselves divorced and remarried.

Unbelieving teacher and educational critic, Allan Bloom, called the attention of North America to society's strange silence on divorce in his bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind* (Simon and Schuster, 1987). Lamenting the harmful effects that the divorce of their parents have on the bright young people who attend the University of Chicago, the University

of Chicago professor wrote:

Of course, many families are unhappy. But that is irrelevant. The important lesson that the family taught was the existence of the only unbreakable bond, for better or for worse, between human beings. The decomposition of this bond is surely America's most urgent social problem. But nobody even tries to do anything about it. The tide seems to be irresistible. Among the many items on the agenda of those promoting America's moral regeneration, I never find marriage and divorce (p. 119).

The silence of the foolish world may be understandable. But have the churches nothing to say? Have evangelical and Reformed churches nothing to say about wickedness that dishonors the God who is faithful in His covenant with His people and that devastates the lives of professing Christians and their children, not to speak of the disordering of life in society?

The churches keep a shrewd silence because of the prevalence of divorce and remarriage among their own membership. The rate of divorce and remarriage in evangelical churches, we are told, is at least as high as in the world of the openly ungodly.

Leaders in the "mainline," that is, apostate, churches admit their craven silence. In an interview published in the August 11, 1997 issue of *Christianity Today*, Roberta Hestenes of the Presbyterian Church in the USA said:

To say in our church today that divorce is wrong is extremely dif-

ficult because we are morally compromised since so many are divorced. We are experiencing the psychological captivity of the church—the feel-good, therapeutic culture has become the operating theology of the church.

William H. Willimon of the United Methodist Church agreed:

A number of Methodist bishops are divorced and remarried; so when asked about that issue, I have to say, somewhat cynically, "When you're trying to attract the affluent upper-middle class, it's tough to take a stand on that particular issue" (p. 17).

The evangelicals, Reformed, and Presbyterians are equally silent, and for the same reason. The periodicals never mention divorce and remarriage. Books that expose and condemn the evil are rare, extremely rare. The preaching studiously avoids it. It was an open secret at the meeting of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago in 1986 that the attempt to address the evil of divorce and remarriage with a strong, biblical statement was scuttled in the back rooms of power by the prominent pastors whose large evangelical churches are full of divorced (and divorcing!) and remarried (and remarrying!) members. This was the meeting of ICBI that was to *apply* inerrancy to life. So much for application! So much for inerrancy! So much for life!

That which claims to be the church of Jesus Christ in the world cannot defend the basic ordinance of God for human life. It is unable to condemn infidelity to the most basic and sacred of all human relationships. It cannot find in itself to require of those who profess Christianity that they keep their marriage vows. It silently tolerates the same treachery and unfaithfulness that characterize those who do not know the Lord.

This scandalous silence concerning *the* ethical scandal of our

time renders the loud outcries of these same churches against abortion hypocritical. The murder of unborn babies is the world's problem, not the church's. The destruction of multitudes of children of professing Christians by divorce is the church's problem. About this, the churches are silent.

How different from the prophet of Jehovah. In a covenant community in which many, including powerful church leaders, were divorcing and remarrying, Malachi spoke out uncompromisingly. Jehovah hates divorce (2:16). The one who thus deals treacherously against the wife of his covenant will be excommunicated by Jehovah Himself from His fellowship (2:12). Where divorce and remarriage go on and are tolerated, all worship of Jehovah is placed under divine interdict (2:13).

How different the silence of the churches from Christ Jesus Himself. In an ecclesiastical climate that permitted divorce, with a remarriage to follow, for any cause, Jesus upheld the divine will and ordinance, that marriage is a one-flesh bond for life made between the two who marry by the Creator Himself. He prohibited divorce. The one exception is the fornication of one's mate. Even in this case, remarriage is forbidden. Jesus upheld marriage and prohibited divorce in the very faces of the religious leaders who were responsible for the marital laxity in Israel (Matt. 19:3-9).

How different from the apostle of Christ. In a world as licentious as our own, he boldly proclaimed the gospel of marriage as a bond that is broken only by death (I Cor. 7:39). He commanded Christians not to divorce or leave their mates. He dared to require that a woman who did leave her husband, evidently because of his fornication, must "remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband" (I Cor. 7:10, 11).

This was Christianity with steel in its backbone. This was Chris-

tianity that did not abjectly conform to the world, but that courageously confronted the world with a message that both condemned the world with its ways and created in the midst of the world, in the elect called out of it, a new life of truth, fidelity, and chastity. For the Christianity of I Corinthians 6 and 7 was the gospel of God, zealous for the glory of God rather than for the attracting and stroking of self-indulgent church members.

Today, the churches say nothing.

There is a deep, deliberate silence about *the* ethical scandal.

Not only do the churches say nothing against the iniquity, but they also are quick to speak out in defense of divorce and remarriage when a lonely voice makes itself heard condemning the evil. With the rare exception, the books and other writings on divorce and remarriage that do appear in evangelical and Reformed circles have as one of their chief purposes, if not their chief purpose, to justify divorce and remarriage against the objector.

Officebearers and teachers are silent.

Where are the people?

Now and again, a cry is heard from the people of God, lamenting the misery to which the corruption of marriage by the churches exposes the people. For it must not be supposed that playing fast and loose with marriage is an act of love that promotes true happiness among the saints. Rather, it inflicts unspeakable agony on husbands, wives, children, grandchildren, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and the whole congregation. Nor is the agony limited to the time of the offense. It perpetuates itself from generation to generation. Unforgettable was the haunting plea that was voiced once in the Christian Reformed *Banner*:

What had once been the high point of our family experience for the year (the family Christmas

party) we now ritually observe, a hollow shell, a ghost-like mockery of what once was and what might still be except for divorce.... The divorced member of the family and his new wife will be absent from our party, knowing that if they do attend other members will not. The divorced wife and her children will be absent because they feel the dissension within the family and would rather be missed than face the antagonism.... In somewhat more than a week I will return to face five classes of students a day in a Christian school. Each class contains students who are the sad, living testimonies to the "happiness" which results from divorce and/or remarriages.... I have seen students face the prospects of long illnesses and even death ... with less pain and anxiety than those facing the breakup of what had seemed a secure home. Oh, the hurt in their eyes! ... Convince me,

if you can, that those who, in the name of love, smash to bits the happinesses of father, mother, sister, brother, child, pastor, and church are keeping the law of love! Convince me that a denomination which baptizes such actions by silence or by a subdued reprimand is acting out of love! ("Where are We? Where are We Going?" *Banner*, Dec. 9, 1977, pp. 18, 19)

There was never an answer—not by the editor in that issue of the magazine and not by the church in her synodical decisions. It was too late. The tide of divorce and remarriage had already rolled over the church, and the church herself, under pressure from some of the people, had breached the dike by her official decisions.

Only silence.

What of us, the Protestant Reformed Churches?

In the goodness of God, we have the biblical message of marriage, to the great blessing of our churches and families. This is the message of marriage as a bond between one man and one woman for life in reflection of the unbreakable covenant between God and the elect church in Jesus Christ. Such is the teaching of our ministers, the discipline of our elders, and the lives of our members that we are able to speak out, with the voice of the prophet, of Christ, and of the apostle, against the wickedness of divorce and remarriage.

Are we thankful?

Are we determined to hold the message and maintain the testimony?

Members as well as ministers?

At all cost? □

—DJE

Editorially Speaking

About books.

About forthcoming books published by our own Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA).

Two books are to appear before Christmas of this year, God willing.

One is a reprint of Herman Hoeksema's *Believers and Their Seed*, now subtitled, *Children in the Covenant*. This is Hoeksema's definitive, ground-breaking treatment of the covenant of grace and the place of the children of believers in the covenant. The reprint is an attractive hardcover volume which was newly typeset. It runs a little longer than 200 pages. Included in this reprint edition for the first time is a preface that traces the interesting history of this work by "HH" on the covenant and that analyzes the significance of the doctrine set forth in the book. The book also contains a brief biography of the author.

Since the book is a reprint, it will not automatically be sent to

the book club members. They will have to order it. Even though they may have the old edition, they will want this new, enlarged edition.

The other book is new. The title is *Ready to Give an Answer: A Catechism of Reformed Distinctives*. It contains two, related catechisms that give instruction concerning two important doctrinal controversies in the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The first main part consists of the questions and answers by Herman Hoeksema on the controversy of 1924 over the doctrine of common grace. These were first published in the old, red history of the PRC, now out-of-print. The second part consists of questions and answers by Prof. Herman Hanko on the controversy of 1953 over the doctrine of a conditional covenant. A brief introduction establishes the historical and doctrinal setting for the struggles of 1924 and 1953. Also included are the complete text of the "Declaration of Principles" which the PRC adopted in connec-

tion with the struggle of 1953, and an index of scriptural and creedal references. This is a very valuable "catechism," not only for all members of the PRC but also for those outside the PRC who desire to know exactly what the PRC believe concerning particular grace and an unconditional covenant.

Since this is a new publication, all book club members will automatically receive it at a healthy discount.

I encourage our readers to order both of the forthcoming books, using the cards that are found in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Consider giving the books as Christmas presents, as fine a gift as one can give.

Those who are not members of the book club are urged to become members. This gives you the new RFPA publications at a significant discount and helps the RFPA to publish—a worthy consideration.

Yet one more announcement about books. The RFPA plans to publish Herman Hoeksema's 96

sermons on the book of Romans, from the Martin Swart collection, as a commentary. Therefore, sermons from this series will no

longer appear as meditations in the *SB*. The sermon in this issue is the last. No doubt, the sermons that we have published have whetted

the appetite of every reader. Look for the publication of the commentary. □

—DJE

Letters

The RCA and "The Formula of Agreement"

As a member of the RCA, I read with much interest your editorial, "The Sacraments are Still an Issue" (*Standard Bearer*, Oct. 1, 1997).

Over the last years, the Lord has steadily drawn me to what I am convinced are more biblical viewpoints on several issues than what my home denomination professes. Consequently, the recent approval of the "Formula" dis-

tresses me greatly ... to the point that I can no longer be "at home" in the RCA.

You are right, the "resisters" emphasis has been the UCC stand on the homosexual issue and, as a result, there has been only marginal discussion on the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper. Your critique is welcome news for me.

Those in the RCA favoring the "Formula" would probably react to your assertion that "By this decision, the RCA made itself and every member of it fully responsible

for the unbelief and ungodliness of the other denominations...." They would argue that you do not comprehend the definition of "full communion." They would be distracted by that and miss the point of the "accursed(ness) in every union where there is no regard to God and to His Word" ... even trying to clarify that this is *not* a union! This is my only caution when you write on this issue.

Thank you again, for your editorial.

John Moerman
Chatham, Ontario Canada

Address at Annual RFPA Meeting

Rev. Mitchell Dick

The RFPA and Religious Stew (2)

Manna and the RFPA

All this leads us to the exclusivist, particularist position.

We have presented the religious stew, pluralism, and the mush, inclusivism. We have spit both out.

But now, what do we eat?

What shall we eat? What food shall we publish?

Manna! Manna is the food of the gospel. It is Jesus Christ, the bread from heaven. It is the only wholesome, saving food.

Exclusivism promotes this Manna. It refuses to sell stew, or typeset mush. It publishes Manna only, and faith in Jesus Christ only as the only way to God. It is the promotion of one religion and the necessity of preaching that religion. It is the promulgation of the power of the gospel through which faith

is worked and made conscious so that God's elect repent and turn from idols and Buddha and Mohammed and works righteousness and cling by faith to the living God and the righteousness of Christ only for salvation.

Exclusivism is the promotion of biblical, historical Christianity.

Religious pluralism and inclusivism have men's philosophy making their stew and mush and making it palatable to the proud masses who will stomach anything but one God. Exclusivism has the

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

Word of God, a Manna for sinners who hunger and thirst after a righteousness from heaven.

Old Testament: all Manna! Not many gods, not many salvations, no stew or mush. Just Manna! For it testifies of salvation in the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. It prophesies of the need of this: sin, great sin! It prophesies of the need of a divine and perfectly human Mediator and satisfaction through His blood. It prophesies; it typifies ... Manna! Old Testament Scriptures: these are they which testify of Jesus!

New Testament: more Manna! Hear the proclamation:

*John 3:16: God, love, Christ, faith in Him! One way!

*John 14:6: The way!

*I Timothy 2:5: one Mediator!

*Romans 1:16: the gospel of which I am not ashamed!

*Acts 4:12: None other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved! None other name: preached against the Jews; in rebuke of Roman religions and Greek gods! None other name! in the face of the pluralism and inclusivism, the stew and the mush, the atheists, the polytheists, the skeptics, the philosophers...the whole nine yards of self-righteous religiously wicked men!



What of this Manna and the RFPA? What of exclusivism and the RFPA?

What is your calling? Serve up the Manna! Publish it! Herald it! Here and abroad!

You are in a unique position to do this. For you are, by the grace of God, particularists, exclusivists. The gospel you publish is a particular, powerful gospel!

Your stated *purpose* is, according to Article II of your constitution: to witness to the truth of the Word of God and expressed in the three forms of unity and to reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto.

Your doctrinal *position* is particularist: a position, a stance which guards against the mush and stew being served up in the ecclesiastical restaurants of the land.

Your watchword is Scripture alone, Christ alone, faith alone!

Your position is based on the truth of an exclusivistic, holy, sovereign God, who does not lovingly intend to be pluralistic, nor inclusivistic, but in holy hatred intends to cast into hell those He has reprobated by a sovereign decree in the way of their wicked rebellion! Who has not provided for the atonement of all men in a universal atonement! Who will not accept all men on the basis of their own self-established righteousness! Whose saving revelation is in the gospel only! Who is omnipotent and sovereign and who will now, and in the end, be exalted in the preeminent Son of His Love, our Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Mediator, whose is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved!

Unique, your position!

It is the Reformed position!

Avowed Arminians, such as Clark Pinnock (editor of the book *The Case for Arminianism*, and himself a staunch leader of the inclusivist movement), and the semi-Pelagian false church of Rome have a soteriology of the weakness of the cross and of grace in the gospel, and of the ability of man to work a righteousness acceptable to God. Not surprising that they would posit other ways than Jesus to God!

Many so-called Reformed have capitulated, in principle, to pluralism. This they have done by their cheapening of grace and opening wide the mercies and cross of Christ to everyone. As Pinnock has reasoned: "If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation" (quoted in Carson's *Gaging of God*, p.289). This is why, I predict, that it will not be long, if

it has not happened already, before the chickens of the common grace doctrine of 1924 in the CRC will come home to roost in the mush and then in the stew....

But you, the RFPA, are exclusivist! Be that! Continue to be that!

Be thankful for the heritage of the Reformed faith and the legacy of sovereign and particular grace. Feast on this! By no means "bite" into the stew and open your mouth for the mush, and by all means warn your readership about poison theology!

God, one God. Salvation, particular in intent and design, in fulfillment, and in the way to fulfillment.

Print this!

Specifically, as to your writing:

I encourage you to treat this subject in a future special issue of the SB: Pluralism, religious stew, religious mush, manna!

Be bold and courageous and antithetical: sharp polemical pens writing all the counsel of God, all the doctrines of grace, including the offensive ones.

Be *biblical pluralists*, in the sense that we can be, recognizing the church universal among the nations and of all ages. We ought to be this in several ways:

First, republish the fathers' writings. By all means! Herman Hoeksema's writings, for example, ought to be reprinted again and again, in this form or the other. It is good, therefore, that the *Standard Bearer* is publishing HH's sermons on Romans!

But then remember, we live today, we publish today, and the Spirit leads us from yesterday to today. So encourage your writers to be faithful to the faith of our fathers, *but not stuck on* the past. I mean by this that today's writers for the RFPA must not be mere mimics, writing, perhaps, canned clichés of clerics of the past. Today's writers must give evidence of their own study, and constant development in the truth, and a

concern, always, that the truth be applied to today and to today's people. Your writers must show, by their faithfulness, their thoughtfulness, their careful, exegetical analysis, their timeliness...that they have been, not with men, but with Jesus!

Thirdly, recognizing *biblical pluralism* the RFPA will welcome and even solicit others of the Christian community, if they are biblical particularists with us, to publish their good work through us.

All this, this *biblical pluralism*, my friends, I urge you to consider because, in this day of apostasy, we certainly need *true* unity, and strength in unity, also in our publishing ventures, in order that we might be helped to stand strong.

Another thing, very important: publish in love. The accusation of people preaching "tolerance" is that those who are biblical are unloving. Let us prove the accusations false! Let us do this by humble demeanor and patient instruction. Let us empathize and not show grand pedantry and condescension, but realistically, lovingly appreciate the case; that most people have been raised on either mush or stew; and that there, eating right along with them but for the grace God, go we!

This love, the patience, the long-suffering, the firmness of love, we must show even to those who disagree with us. As for example, love was shown in the September 15, 1997 response of the editor to one who wrote disagreeing with our stance on particular grace. There was a (necessarily) firm rebuttal of error. But it was not mean. It was instructive. And it offered a good challenge to the man to go to the Scriptures himself, and to write again to prove us wrong if he can.

So let us love. Publish with love. Adorn truth with love, and love with truth. Let us not throw Manna at people, but present it humbly, in all its beauty, with loveliness! Let us have a winsomeness

and a zeal for souls, never seeking to hoard this great meal, Jesus Christ, or to imagine that He chose the best when He chose us, but to share it as those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and gracious to us miserable sinners!

Let the RFPA's message be: Manna! Manna by grace! Manna by love!

The Feeding of the Seven Thousand

Not many will hear this message; many will reject this food.

Why? No appetite for it. No taste for it. Translation: no love for God in Christ. Even hate for Christ.

This antagonism to Manna was seen long ago. Cain hated Christ. Lamech hated Christ. The heathen who attacked the nation which declared God to be with them and with no other...they hated Christ. Carnal Israel in the wilderness which grew tired of the manna and longed for Egypt's fare tired of Christ. Carnal Israel which attacked the prophets and forsook the Word attacked Christ and forsook His revelation.

Then Manna was crucified. Then the early New Testament Church was quickly infiltrated with heresy. Then there was a famine of the Word. Then there was a going after saints and popes.... Now ... there is a mighty, devilish attempt to gag God, and to silence the publishing of the true gospel!

So, RFPA, your books may not sell. *Standard Bearer* subscriptions will be nothing compared to that of other magazines. People will protest the distinctiveness; some dissenting voices heard, even, from our own churches. You will be labeled and libeled as anti-progressive, anti-democratic, anti-Christian, and religiously incorrect! Or worse: you may be censored. You may be hauled off to prison. You may lose your lives!

But God, I believe, will bless you! For it is means such as the RFPA that He is pleased to use to

feed His church! God will bless! And that is all that matters!

Witness the blessing already!

Increased sales and subscriptions as never before; people writing in thanking God for the feast; faithful writers; a faithful and gifted editor of the SB; a tireless and dedicated staff of the RFPA and SB...seeking ever to be Reformed and always Reforming *as publishers* according to Scripture's revelation, both as to content and method, so that what is presented is true, and how it is presented can help to lead people into the truth.

So, RFPA: press on! Knowing the blessing of God!

Stand strong in the courage of faith. Print against the unbelieving media and the national and ecclesiastical "print elite" and its religious stew.

Be warned: Israel today is not above Israel of yesterday, who, given manna, grew weary of it, and developed a taste for mush, and then stew.

Be as Peter, who took a stand for Jesus and no other. Feast yourselves on the Manna, so that, in the publication of it, you will show to all that you have been with Jesus.

Be prayerful! Call upon God to be with you!

Be confident that God, even through you, is gathering the remnant of His elect which one day will feast at the marriage supper of the Lamb in glory, nevermore having to reject or even to smell the wretched religious stew of devils, ever more dining with Jesus.

Thank you for your attention, and may God, the one God, in and through the only Savior, Jesus Christ, bless and establish all your work! □



The Remnant Shall Be Saved

That God saves only a very small remnant of mankind is one of the greatest of all mysteries of God's work of salvation. This truth is proven throughout the history of the world. It contradicts all human reason. It debases all human pride. Man himself would say that God must save the majority of the human race. Most, after all, according to the opinion of man, are good enough that they deserve to be saved. Liberal and apostate Christianity insists that the majority of mankind will indeed be saved. Some even openly teach that in the end God will save all men without exception. Others have modified this opinion somewhat. They say that God will save everyone except perhaps the grossly wicked, such as Adolph Hitler, Charles Manson, Pol Pot, Jeffrey Dahmer, and such like terribly wicked men. Some have said that God will finally save all men except those who openly reject Christ in their lives. The heathen who "never had a chance to hear the gospel" will be saved. Even professing Christians who live an ungodly life will be saved, as long as they did not openly reject Christ in their lives. According to this latter opinion there are very few men who actually do this in their lives.

But the Bible teaches otherwise. Even during the times when there were many Christians on the earth,

perhaps millions, in comparison to the rest of the world, the world of unbelief and ungodliness, Christians were still but a small fraction of the population of the world. The Bible is very plain that God will judge with eternal destruction the wicked and ungodly who do not repent. Romans 1 teaches that even the heathen to whom the gospel was never preached will perish everlastingly. They shall be judged because, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God neither were they thankful. They are in this without excuse, because God revealed Himself also to these heathen. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1: 19 and 20).

The majority of the human race will be eternally lost. This is a fearful reality. Millions and millions of men throughout the history of the world will be eternally lost. From man's point of view, the reason why so many shall be lost is the devastating fall of man into sin, man's willing disobedience to God and his foolish and wicked alliance with the devil. How much did Adam and Eve understand of this? What a horrible event the fall was, and how terrible are its consequences in the history of the human race.

Man strenuously objects to this teaching of Scripture. According to

him, God is obligated to save most, if not all, of mankind. God is unjust, they say, He is a cruel monster if He casts the majority of the human race into the eternal destruction of hell. But those who say such things know not the awful power of sin and the perfect justice of God in condemning the sin of man. Those who speak this way know little of what it means that God is infinitely and absolutely and perfectly holy, and that He maintains His own holiness and glory over against all the wickedness of man. God is just in condemning the world. To the objector to these great truths of God the Word of God says, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" God is under no obligation to save anyone. If God were only just, then He would cast all mankind, without even one single exception, into destruction. If God would have done this, there could not in the end have been a single objection to it from wicked man. "... that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

As someone once said, the amazing thing is not that God saves relatively few in comparison to the millions of men that will live and die on the earth, but the amazing thing is that God saves any at all. The only reason why He saves those whom He has chosen is because of the wonder of His sovereign grace and mercy. The love of God in saving even the remnant is so great that man will never be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love which

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passes all understanding. The glory of God's love is not revealed in the multitude of men that God saves. Rather it is revealed in that God saves men by His sovereign grace and mercy who are in themselves so desperately wicked. Centrally, the greatness of the grace and mercy of God is seen in that He gave His only begotten Son to the death of the cross, to such depth of humiliation, agony, and sorrow, in order that He might save unworthy sinners.

Let us trace the truth of the salvation of the remnant briefly through the history that is recorded in the Scriptures. The first astounding example of this is the history of the flood. By the time God sent the judgment of the flood on the earth (1500 years after creation) there were by conservative calculations, using the genealogies recorded in the Bible, already more than a million inhabitants on the earth. God destroyed the entire world with the flood. He saved only Noah and His family, eight souls altogether.

Consider a second astounding example. God in sovereign grace chose His people Israel, one nation out of all the nations of the earth at the time. Concerning Israel, Moses says: "For the Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers..." (Deut. 7:7). This Word of God was spoken to Israel in connection with the calling that she should be a holy and peculiar people unto the Lord, a special people above all people that are on the face of the earth. Furthermore, there is mention of the absolute sovereignty of God's love in choosing Israel to be His people.

In the wilderness the people of Israel rebelled against the Lord, they murmured and complained against the Lord. Concerning this

the inspired apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians that "with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (I Cor. 10: 5). This is written for our warning example.

In the history of Israel it happened that the nation was divided. Because of the sin of Solomon, ten tribes were taken away from the house of David. The ten tribes soon became hopelessly apostate. But God kept His promise to David. He preserved the tribe of Judah, that David might always have a light in Israel. It was only because of the sovereign mercy of God and His faithfulness to His covenant that that one tribe was preserved.

Before the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah speaks the word of God concerning even Judah. God loathed the sacrifices and offerings and the feast days of the multitudes in Judah even though they were zealously offered. They were an abomination to Him because of the wickedness of Judah at the time. And God said, "And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a *very small remnant*, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Is. 1:18).

The theme of the salvation of the remnant is very prominent in the prophecy of Isaiah. I learned this again through preparing a series of sermons on this wonderful prophecy. Isaiah prophesied concerning the dreadful judgments that were about to come upon Judah and Israel. However, He also repeatedly comforts the remnant in Zion that the Lord will preserve them and restore them again after the captivity and finally save them in Christ in the last day. The prophecy of Isaiah speaks also very graphically and fearfully of the judgments of the Lord that would come on all the nations of the heathen around Israel. Yet, in almost all of those prophecies, even those

of the destruction of the heathen nations, there are contained beautiful promises of God's purpose to save the remnant. This remnant shall be brought to Zion and shall by the grace of God be made partakers of the glorious blessings of salvation that God will give to Zion through the Redeemer He will raise up in her midst.

When the promise of God was finally fulfilled in the fullness of time, God sent His Son into the world. He was born the King of the Jews. He came to His own and His own received Him not. The vast majority of the Jews rejected the Messiah whom God sent to them. The apostle Paul in his preaching-journeys experienced great sorrow concerning this. He longed for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh to such an extent that he wished himself accursed of Christ for his brethren's sake. But Paul found his comfort in the truth that God would save the remnant. "I say then, hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I am also an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:1-4).

Our Lord Jesus referred to this truth of the salvation of the remnant when He declared concerning those entering into the kingdom, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which

leadeth to life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

In His own ministry Jesus experienced this truth of God's working. He preached once to a multitude of five thousand men, besides also women and children. By the time Jesus finished preaching, the entire multitude left Him, as incredible as this may seem. Only His disciples were left, and Jesus said to them, "Will ye also go away?" In this situation Jesus declared the sovereign word of God. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:37-39).

Jesus prophesied that in the last days, in the days shortly before His return, there will be few on earth that will still be faithful to Him. Many will say, "Here is Christ, and there is Christ." Many will depart from the faith. Before the return of Christ, there will be a great apostasy in the church world. Paul speaks of this also in II Thessalonians 2. This will be one of the great signs of the days very shortly before the return of the Lord. There will not be mass conversions to Christ in which the whole world will turn to the Lord, as some imagine. Rather there will be great departure from the faith. In the last days many shall be deceived, so much so that the question shall be asked, "Will faith yet be found on the earth?" We believe that we are presently living in these last days of great apostasy.

What is the reaction of God's people to the truth that God saves only the remnant? Their reaction must first of all be that of fear and trembling and great amazement and deep humility. Certainly this truth does not give God's people reason to boast and pride them-

selves that they alone are the people of God in the world. It is not because God's people in themselves are better than the ungodly world. There is nothing that distinguishes us from the majority of the world that shall perish under the just wrath of God, except the grace of God's election and His sovereign love to us in Christ Jesus. The Canons of Dordt say this about God's purpose of election. "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, 'For known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world,' Acts 15:18. 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of His will,' Ephesians 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect..." (Canons I/6).

Until the end of the world the gospel must be faithfully preached in all the nations of the world for the gathering of the remnant of God's people. A small remnant shall be gathered out of every nation before the nations are destroyed. The church of God, God's people in their individual lives, must ever be zealous in the preaching of the gospel. Their desires and fervent prayers are for the salvation of the remnant of God's people. The church joys and glories in God's wonderful grace in saving His church, while in justice judging and destroying the wicked world. And indeed God will save the remnant of His people. Not one of them shall be lost. That is the comfort of the Word of God for the church of all ages.

The truth that God saves the remnant will give God's people the proper biblical perspective on the position of the church in the world. The church in the world will almost always be small. She will never be made up of the majority of mankind. She is despised because of her smallness. God's people must not be ashamed of belonging to a small church. Concerning this truth Jesus says: "Fear

not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Though the church is small in the eyes of the world, she is glorious in the sight of God. God does not despise the smallness of the church. He is pleased to show His infinite glory in her. He saves her by His almighty power. The world's nations and organizations of this world will be destroyed. All their greatness and glory will soon be gone. God will cause His church to inherit the everlasting glory of the new heavens and earth.

The modern-day church often tries so hard to change the fact that the church is small. She devises methods by which she might increase her numbers. Rather than faithfully preach the gospel, she adopts methods of the world. She holds rallies and draws masses of people by offering entertainment of every sort. She no longer tells people that they are sinners in need of the salvation that is found alone in Christ Jesus. The apostate church of our day is throwing out the great truths of God's Word, for fear that they will offend men when they are preached. We must do all in our power to avoid turning men off to religion, even if it means compromising the truth of God's Word and denying the glory of God. Holiness and serious obedience to the law of God are forgotten. The term "Christian" has lost all of its meaning because virtually everyone imagines himself to be "Christian" no matter how he lives. The so-called church is filled with more and more ungodly people, and consequently she is becoming more and more corrupt. It can hardly be distinguished from the ungodly world because it agrees with the world's evil philosophy and lives the world's corrupt and immoral life-style.

This will continue until this apostate church appears as the great whore mentioned in the book of Revelation. The apostate church preaches a "feel good about your-

self" religion. She promises carnal things to those who will join the church: health, wealth, and prosperity. By all means she will increase her numbers, in order that she might have power and glory in the world and boast before men. Many are deceived by the large followings of the great movements of our day, as though the very largeness and sensationalism of these movements prove that they are of God. Few there are in the world of Christendom who examine what great movements of our day really teach and what it means to be members of these mega-organizations. Anyone who criticizes these movements is immediately condemned for being judgmental and unloving and many other things. If so many people are following

something it cannot be wrong. This reasoning sounds so good but it is so contrary to the Scriptures. In fact, when we examine the Scriptures, we find that, repeatedly, the majority were wrong, in spite of all their pretense of glory and greatness. One thing for sure, when tested by the truth of God's Word, many of these mass movements are not the true church of Jesus Christ, no matter what they may claim.

As the end approaches, it becomes more and more urgent for the Christian that he be able to distinguish the true church of Christ from the apostate church. In most instances this true church will be small. But we must not be ashamed of being a member of her. The calling of the Lord is to remain faith-

ful to the Word of God even though this offends carnal members of the church and often causes the church to lose members. We must be zealous and uncompromising in our love for the truth of God. We must stand together with all those who love this truth of Christ Jesus in sincerity. But we must also be ready to separate from the multitudes who are apostate, and we must not be deceived by outward sensationalism and large following.

Though the church in any given time and nation is but a small remnant, she will still appear finally in glory as a host that no man can number, gathered from the beginning to the end of the world and out of all the nations of the world. May the Lord help us to remain faithful to Him. □

Guest Article

Rev. Doug Kuiper

Language and Salvation

Having considered the effect of the fall on language, we must now examine the relationship between language and salvation. Two distinct aspects of this relationship must be noted: first, God uses language to save us, and second, we must use language to show Him our gratitude for that salvation.

That God uses language has been demonstrated in an earlier article (*Standard Bearer*, August 1997). How does He use language for our salvation?

He did so, first, in sending Christ, the Word of God (John 1:1). The fundamental idea of this profound concept is that Christ is the expression of God's counsel. Central to God's counsel is the decree to glorify Himself in all His works. He determined also that the chief way to realize this glory was the salvation of His people, on the basis of the atoning death of His only begotten Son on the cross. Just as we reveal our thoughts to others through words, so God also revealed His thoughts—His eternal counsel—to His people through the Word, that is, Christ.

In addition to revealing the counsel of God, Jesus Christ, the Word, revealed Jehovah God Himself. Jehovah God is a God of mercy and grace, a longsuffering

God, abounding in goodness and truth, forgiving elect sinners on the basis of Christ's death, and justly punishing those who do not repent (Ex. 34:6). In His person and in His work, Jesus Christ revealed these attributes of God—thus revealing the glory of God Himself! Therefore the apostle John says, in speaking of the Word: "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

God uses language to save us, secondly, in giving us the Scriptures, His written Word. Scripture is the fuller and more complete revelation of the triune God in Christ. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). In brief, this means that Scripture

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teaches us all that is necessary to know in order to enjoy our salvation and to live a godly life. God uses language—written words—to teach us these things.

Third, God uses language to save us by means of the preaching of the Word. The preaching of the Word is the speech of Christ Himself, according to the proper translation of Romans 10:14 (“how shall they believe in him whom [rather than ‘of whom’] they have not heard?”). Christ speaks through His Spirit, whom He bestows upon men called to the work of preaching. This speech is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). God’s speech, then, not only tells us *that* we are saved, but actually works that salvation in us; He works faith in His people through the preaching.

God’s use of language, especially in Scripture and in the preaching, effectually works in us the consciousness of our salvation. His language can work this consciousness in us because the content of His language is *truth*. We know, of course, that God could never speak anything other than truth; He cannot lie! His Word is reliable and trustworthy. So we can believe it, unto salvation.

Here we can notice the similarity and the difference between how God saves us, and how Satan attempts to prevent God from saving us. The similarity is that both God and Satan use language to accomplish their purpose. Through language, Satan brought the whole human race into bondage. By the same means of language, God saves us from that bondage! The difference is that Satan spoke the lie, while God speaks truth. It is the truth which makes us free (John 8:32). This is freedom from the guilt of sin, and the freedom of knowing God. Through the truth, God draws us into covenant fellowship with Himself.

This similarity and difference remind us of the righteousness and

holiness of God. Although God and Satan use language to accomplish their respective purposes, God uses it righteously and holily, while Satan uses it wickedly. In our use of language, therefore, we reveal ourselves either to be like God, or to be like Satan.

It is the calling of redeemed saints to use language in a way which shows gratitude to God for salvation. But can we do this? We saw in the last article that, due to the fall, and apart from grace, we cannot use language to convey truth, in righteousness and holiness, as God does. By nature we can use language only as Satan does, to lie and to show our hatred of God and the neighbor.

The saving, atoning, sanctifying work of Christ, however, makes it possible for the child of God once more to use language properly. Christ took away the guilt for all our sins, including those of lying and speaking wickedly. By restoring to us the image of God, He enables us to know and to speak the truth again. We can, and must, use language in the service of God!

Let us examine some specifics in that regard.

First, being sanctified, we can speak the truth. This is our calling, in obedience to the ninth commandment. Are we doing this?

Speaking the truth involves more than simply being sure we never lie. We must actively *promote* the truth, by speaking it. In our homes to our children, in the factory or office to fellow workers, in the church to fellow saints, we must tell what God has done for His people. Speaking the truth requires that we confess Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, to be our Lord and Savior. In this way we show gratitude to God for our salvation.

Second, being sanctified, we can use our tongues to show love for the neighbor. The Heidelberg Catechism’s explanation of the ninth commandment teaches us how to do this: we must abstain

from false witness, slander, backbiting, and rash judgment, and must defend and promote the honor and good character of our neighbor.

In addition, we show love to fellow saints by fellowshiping with them. This requires us to use language. With our speech we build up the brother or sister in the faith; we comfort the fellow saint who is grieving or ill; we encourage the brother or sister who is discouraged; we rebuke the one who must be admonished. Such is the proper use of our tongue in the communion of saints.

Third, being sanctified, we can use our tongues to show love for God. Particularly we do this by worshiping Him, whether publicly or privately, corporately or individually. This is why singing and prayer are serious matters: we are coming into God’s presence, to speak to Him! Using our tongue to show love for God also means that we do not take His name in vain, but always use it with fear and reverence.

What has been described is the proper use of the tongue both antithetically and covenantally. We must use our tongues to fight sin and to show ourselves separate from the ungodly, as well as to live righteously and to show ourselves to be one with God and His people. This is the practical importance of God’s gift of language. Is that how you speak? The child of God must show, also (especially!) by his language, that he is a Christian, a partaker of Christ’s anointing, a prophet, priest, and king of God.

Salvation is experienced in this life, but perfected in the next. Accordingly, while the child of God can begin in this life to glorify God through his speech, he cannot do so perfectly until he is in heaven. We close this article and series of articles, therefore, by considering what will be true of our use of language in heaven.

We must note, first, that those

who love to speak lies on earth will not be in heaven. The apostle John says that all liars "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). He says also that those who do not do God's commandments, and specifically "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," will not enter the gates of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:15). In the day of judgment, God will justly punish these people! It is true that John has not described those who love the truth by God's grace, but has described those who hate the truth and impenitently persist in speaking the lie. Nevertheless, we must examine ourselves: do we love to speak the lie? Those will enter the gates of the new Jerusalem who loved the truth in this life.

Second, those who loved the truth in this life will speak it *perfectly* in heaven. The child of God cannot speak the truth perfectly on earth, while the old man of sin re-

mains in him. When he is taken to heaven, that old man will be completely destroyed! We will speak only the truth! God teaches this in Zechariah 3:13: "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth." Zechariah is speaking of the day of the Lord, the day of salvation. Because that day has come in Christ, what Zechariah says about Israel is true of the citizens of the kingdom of God already now, in principle. But this prophecy will be finally and completely fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth. The knowledge of this must kindle in the heart of the child of God a fervent desire for the perfection which is promised us.

Third, our use of language in heaven will show perfect unity with fellow saints, and perfect love for God. Speaking again of the day when God judges His enemies and saves His people, Zechariah says: "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all

call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent" (Zech. 3:9). With this language—the language of unadulterated truth—we will show perfect love for God by calling upon His name and serving Him. This language will manifest the unity of the whole church, in that all saints will join together as one body in calling upon God's name. In heaven, we will use language to manifest the covenant relationship which God has established with us! So the proper, Reformed use of language will continue in heaven.

The reason we will speak the truth is because God will give us the truth to speak. He will "turn to the people a pure language." Earlier in this series we showed that earthly language is a gift from God, making it possible for us to know and speak the truth. Also that pure language in heaven will be God's gift to His people.

Such is a Reformed view of language. □

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Administration of the Lord's Supper

"The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months."

Church Order, Article 63

"The administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of elders, according to the ecclesiastical order, and in a public gathering of the congregation."

Church Order, Article 64

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

Frequency of Administration

Article 63 of the Church Order concerns the frequency of the administration of the Lord's Supper. It establishes a

minimum requirement: "... at least every two or three months."

Nowhere do the Scriptures lay down a rule as to how often the Lord's Supper is to be adminis-

tered. In his *Institutes*, Calvin encourages a frequent celebration.

What we have so far said of the Sacrament abundantly shows that it was not ordained to be received only once a year—and that, too, perfunctorily, as now is the usual custom. Rather, it was ordained to be frequently used among all Christians in order that they might frequently return in memory to Christ's Passion, by such remembrance to sustain and strengthen their faith, and urge themselves to sing thanksgiving to God and to proclaim his goodness; finally, by it to nourish mutual love, and among themselves give witness to this love, and discern its bond in the unity of Christ's body (*Institutes* IV, xvii. 44).

Calvin favored a weekly celebration of the sacrament; however, the authorities in Geneva consented only to a monthly celebration.

Whether or not the sacrament is administered more often than every three months is left to the discretion of each consistory. Most of our churches adhere to the minimum requirement and administer the Lord's Supper four times a year. A few of our congregations celebrate the Supper every two months, or six times a year.

What must be avoided in administering the sacrament frequently is that it competes with the preaching of the Word as the chief means of grace. This is a real danger in our day, in which there is a heavy emphasis placed on liturgy and ceremony. Invariably the outcome is that the preaching is reduced. Rite and ritual replace the sound exposition of the Scriptures.

In the past it was often the custom to administer the Lord's Supper on the Christian holidays: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The original Article 63 of the *Church Order of Dordt* encouraged this.

The Lord's Supper shall be administered once every two months, as much as possible; and it shall be

edifying wherever the circumstances of the churches allow that the same be done on Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas.

Although this practice of the past no longer prevails in our churches, if consistories believe it to be edifying, the Lord's Supper may surely be administered on these special occasions.

Nowhere does the Church Order speak of preaching a preparatory sermon on the Sunday before the administration of the Lord's Supper, nor of an applicatory sermon at the service following the administration. This practice, however, is of long standing in the Dutch Reformed churches and is prescribed by the "Questions For Church Visitation." One of the questions put to the full consistory is: "Is the Lord's Supper celebrated at least four times a year, preceded by a preparatory sermon, and followed by an applicatory sermon?" Some ministers preach preparatory "sermons," devoting both services the Sunday before the administration of the Lord's Supper to preparation for the upcoming administration. This is to be left to the individual minister and his consistory.

In some congregations, at least in the past, a second administration of the sacrament was conducted in the evening. This was regarded as a continuation of the morning administration and was intended for those who were unable to attend the morning worship service. Abbreviated "Forms" were even adopted by Reformed synods. For the most part, this practice has ceased. This is as it should be. The sacrament is to be administered in the congregation and for the congregation as a whole. That the sacrament should be administered and only a few in the congregation participate is out of keeping with the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

No mention is made in Article 63 of a "thank-offering" in connec-

tion with the administration of the Lord's Supper. Calvin encourages such thank-offerings in his *Institutes*, IV, xviii. 16. This practice is followed in many of our churches. Usually the thank-offering is for benevolence or for some other worthy kingdom cause.

The Original Article 64

The original Article 64 of the *Church Order of Dordt* was quite different from our Article 64. Rather than to be concerned with the supervision of the sacrament by the elders, it concerned the vesper or evening prayer services that were held in many of the churches.

Since the evening prayers are in many places found to be fruitful, each church following this practice shall do what it deems to be most edifying. But whenever there is the desire to eliminate them, this shall not take place without the judgment of classis, together with that of the authority for the Reformed religion.

The vesper services were a carry-over from the Roman Catholic practice of evening Masses. In many of the Dutch Reformed churches a brief prayer service was held in the late afternoon at the close of the work day. At these services a passage of Scripture was read, followed by a brief exposition and prayer.

As early as 1574, decisions were taken by various synods discouraging the practice of vesper services. In churches where they were not in place, they were not to be introduced. Where they were in place, consistories were encouraged to discontinue them, without however unnecessarily disrupting the peace of the congregations. VanDellen and Monsma give three reasons why the synods favored the discontinuance of vesper services.

1. In order that the regular Sunday services might be attended more diligently;

2. In order that family worship might be maintained more diligently;

3. In order that the common prayers held on days of fasting might be used more diligently and zealously (*The Church Order Commentary*, p. 266).

Although in time the vesper services disappeared, the article in the Church Order was not replaced until the Synod of Utrecht, 1905. That change was adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in its 1914 edition of the Church Order and subsequently by our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Supervision by the Elders

Our present Article 64 requires that administration of the Lord's Supper "... shall take place only there where there is supervision of elders...."

This requirement is in keeping with the duty of the elders to oversee the administration of the sacraments. The elders must see to it that the Lord's Supper is properly administered and prevent any possible desecration of the sacrament.

In close connection with the requirement that the elders oversee the sacrament's administration is the stipulation of Article 64 that the Lord's Supper be administered "... in a public gathering of the congregation." It is in the public gathering of the congregation that the elders exercise their oversight. Besides, the administration of the sacrament is to be joined to the preaching of the Word, which belongs to the public worship of the congregation. That the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of "communion" demands its administration in the fellowship of the gathered congregation.

Expressly forbidden by the Church Order are private administrations of the Lord's Supper, either in homes or institutions. Past Reformed synods, as for example the Synod of Middleburg in 1933, ruled against such a practice. Some churches today have abandoned this provision of the Church Order and under certain circumstances permit private administrations of the sacrament. Our churches continue to adhere to the stipulation of Article 64.

Although Article 64 can be said to presuppose that it is in an established church that the Lord's Supper is administered, it is not true that such a restriction is absolute. Our churches have made provision for the dispensing of the sacrament on the mission field.

If possible the organization of a congregation shall precede the administration of the sacraments. However, if the conditions are not ripe for the organization of a congregation, such members are to be enrolled in an adjoining congregation, and thus the sacraments can be administered under the supervision of that consistory. However, this shall not be without the accompanying preaching of the Word, nor without sufficient representation of the consistory to have supervision of the administration (Decision appended to Article 39).

This decision is not to be viewed, however, as an exception to Article 64, but as the implementation of the principle of Article 64 in a special circumstance, usually on the mission field. □

Apples of Gold

True Thanks

I thank Thee, Lord, for blessings
Which Thou hast given me;
For health and strength, for freedom
To freely worship Thee.

For food and drink abundant
For body and for soul;
I thank Thee for a Savior
Who cleansed and made me whole.

I thank Thee, Lord, for fellowship,
For hours spent in prayer;
For grace sufficient to the need,
Whatever need was there.

I thank Thee, Lord, for loved ones,
A home and church so dear;
And for Thy loving presence
Each day throughout the year.

I thank Thee, Lord, for all things:
For blessings which I see
And those that go unnoticed,
O Lord, my thanks to Thee.

Annetta Jansen

Our Work in Myanmar

Introduction

Part of the mandate our churches gave to Rev. Kortering is that he is to assist the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS) with their mission work. For some time now the ERCS have been working among the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar (formerly Burma). The ERCS sent Rev. Kortering to conduct a conference in Myanmar. This conference met from January 5 through January 19 in 1996. What follows is a diary of that trip to Myanmar which Mrs. Kortering wrote for her children back in the States. When my wife and I were in Singapore earlier this year, Mrs. Kortering let us read the diary. Our reaction was that, in the interest of promoting missions among our people, it ought to be published in the Standard Bearer.

One thing that struck us is that anyone who wishes to serve the Lord in foreign mission work must "first count the cost" (Luke 14:25-33). It is costly to be a missionary! One must leave the luxury of life in the States or Singapore. He must leave his children, grandchildren, and friends. And he must live among the poor in a culture which is very different from everything he has known. Yet it is a work in which one is blessed by the Lord in so many wonderful ways.

We present the diary pretty much as Mrs. Kortering originally wrote it. We are sure that you will find it to be a moving account of mission work as seen through the eyes of the missionary's wife.

Prof. R.D. Decker

January 5-19, 1996

After experiencing two most wonderful weeks in Myanmar, I hope I will be able to convey in this letter how it has truly enriched our lives. We really count it a great privilege to be used by the Lord for the preaching of the Reformed faith.

Friday, January 5

We left Changi Airport on SilkAir along with two ladies from FERC (Fiona Tye and See Leh Wah) and Fung Dun, a Myanmar citizen returning home after studying in Singapore. The flight went well, very short compared with our travels to the US—only three hours. Myanmar is 1¹/₂ hours behind Singapore, so we were closer to you, timewise. Our very first impression upon seeing the Yangon Airport was that it was better than we were expecting. There were about 50 people at the airport to welcome us. The delegates for the

conference had already arrived, so they came down in a taxi bus. Only about 12 were in the airport itself, the rest waited outside the gate because it cost five kyats (pronounce it chets) to enter.

Myanmar money, incidentally, is all paper. Years ago they also had coins, but those aren't worth much anymore. One kyat is equal to approximately one US cent. Any foreigner arriving in Myanmar has to exchange 300 US dollars, none of which is refundable if he doesn't spend it all during his stay there. You give them the US cash and they give you 30 FEC's (Foreign Exchange Currency) in \$10 denominations, which you exchange for kyats as you need them. You can imagine how much paper you get when you exchange about \$30.00—that's 3000 kyats, and they come in denominations of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 45, 50, 100, 200, 500 kyats. The funny part is that they are gone so quickly because, even though things are not expensive, you have

to fork out quite a few for everything you buy. More about that as we go along.

The taxi bus is a covered pickup truck with open sides and just a simple seat along each side. You would be utterly amazed at how many people can fit in the back of these trucks. It's almost unbelievable! These people are very small—short and thin. They can have eight sitting on each side, and then they stand up in the center, hanging on to a bar across the top. And then, in addition to that, there are some riders hanging on to the back as well. There's a little step at the back for getting in, and one time I actually counted 10 people hanging on the back. They will have only one foot on the step, and then they get a hand on somewhere and off they go. It looks terribly dangerous, but I guess they are just so used to it.

The hotel van was at the airport to pick us up. We first greeted all the people and took some pic-

tures, and then the people all returned to the village and we went to the hotel. The hotel was very nice—not fancy, but certainly very adequate for our needs. It was a small hotel, only 11 rooms, so we became very well acquainted with the staff. They treated us like celebrities—always opening the door for us and bowing. When we came home, they would dash out to the truck to open that door too. When we came to the dining room, they would place the napkin on our lap. It got to be a bit much. I think they gave Dad and me the most convenient room because we were staying two weeks. We had hot showers, electricity, even air-conditioning. Breakfast was provided in the cost. We had to pay \$30US per person per night (good way to use up the leftover FEC's). They really treated us super, and it was almost sad leaving there. When later on we saw how the people live in the villages, it was almost embarrassing how good we had it. We could also take our dinner at the hotel if necessary, at a reasonable cost. Friday night we ate at the hotel with the girls. Each night we spent some time together, talking over the events of the day, sharing insights, making plans, reading the Bible, and praying.

Saturday, January 6

Shortly after 7 A.M. we heard quite a bit of noise outside, like children having recitations; so we thought there must be a school nearby. After breakfast, Fiona, Leh Wah, and I went for a walk and we came across the school. We went onto the campus to look around, and a man came up and asked if he could help us. We told him we were staying at the hotel and that we had heard all the recitations and were a little curious. He was the English teacher, and he took the time to show us around. Nothing like the schools we know. Everything was gloomy—bare wooden walls, poorly lit, very old desks. (The Saturday classes were

for remedial teaching. Regular school sessions are Monday - Friday.) We couldn't believe the library. The books were stacked in piles without the spines showing, so it didn't appear very useful. He said the school was in need of books and that he would appreciate it if we could send some. It would help the children learn their English if they could read English books. I'm going to have a problem describing everything, because you will picture in your mind school grounds and facilities the way you are used to having them, and this is completely different. Everything is very old. The school grounds are dirt, and they are rough. The canteen is just a bunch of old rickety tables.

This proved to be an interesting contact though, because the teacher later introduced us to his cousin's wife, who is a Christian. The teacher was about 50 years old, unmarried, and a Buddhist. He told us that a teacher's beginning salary is 950 kyats per month, and the maximum is around 1,350.

Elder Siew Chee Seng arrived on Saturday morning. In the afternoon we all went to Grace Church for the registration of the delegates. It was quite a procedure, mostly because of the language barrier. We had made registration forms here and also took along name tags. A few people, who knew both English and Burmese or Chin, were able to help us. Elder Siew was our photographer. We first numbered the name tags so that the number would show on the picture, and then we numbered the registration forms, so that we would know which person went with which form. That's another job for this week, getting all this information organized. Just as all the Chinese looked alike when we first came to Singapore, all the Burmese looked alike when we came to Myanmar. Besides that, all the names are strange. So if we're going to get to know these people, we need pictures and names to-

gether, along with other details we asked for. It was fun and a challenge, to say the least. Anyway, we felt we were prepared, so that we didn't have to take precious conference time on Monday morning for registering.

After registration we took a short walk to see the property which the Singapore churches have purchased for a church building. There is a house and a shack on the property. The house is actually what they are using for the church now, and the pastor, who is a bachelor, lives in a tiny room in the back of the church. While we were there, and the crowd was larger, the meetings were held at Moses' house. Moses is the husband of Kip Vel, who studies in Singapore, and he is one of the leaders in the United Reformed Churches of Myanmar. He has a two-story house, rather well built. The main floor is one large room (comparable to a nice-sized living room) with a small kitchen behind (kitchen consists of a hot-plate and a few open shelves for dishes and pans). The whole family, and anyone else who needs a place to stay, lives upstairs. Rooms are made by hanging pieces of fabric on clotheslines.

Sunday, January 7

In the morning we went to Galilee Church, which is out in the village, over many bumpy roads. There were several vehicles belonging to friends of Fung Dun which were available during our stay there. One was a car driven by Stephen, who is a member of the Baptist Church. And then there was a truck owned by a friend and driven by the son of another friend. Talk about having connections! Sunday we used both vehicles. They offered something to eat, but we had just had breakfast at the hotel so we could easily wait until after the service. The church is only a small room made of wooden boards. It has a bare wooden floor. Nothing is painted. And it has a

... Into all the world



Rev. Kortering conducts worship service (Galilee Church)



Worship in Galilee Church



Public transportation, Myanmar style



The dining hall



Enjoying a tangerine-treat



Grace United Reformed Church of Myanmar

thatch roof. Everyone sits on the floor—but they provided chairs for us.

There must have been about 30 people who came from Grace Church in one very crowded taxi bus. There are quite a few children at Galilee, and first the Sunday School children got up and sang a couple of songs. A little boy sang a solo very nicely. And then a Sunday School teacher sang while playing her guitar. Their only accompaniment is guitar, and the people just sing so joyfully. It was really a thrill to be there. Dad preached that morning from Nehemiah—building the walls of Jerusalem. His sermon was interpreted by Fung Dun in the Chin language, and then by another man in the Burmese language.

I had a bag of candy along, and after church, when we were standing outside, I started handing it out to the children. It was so cute. Besides the children of the church, other children started coming from all directions to get a piece of candy. Even some mothers carrying children walked over. The adults were just as eager to get a piece as the children were. There were many times when we thought a video would be fun—but in the eyes of the people simply having a camera was quite a thing already.

We walked over to the pastor's house for our noon meal. They had it set up outside with a canvas over the top for shade. I certainly would not want to criticize, because I'm sure they gave us their best, and probably even extended themselves because we were there, but that was one time when we wondered if we would get sick from the food. We're thankful that the Lord kept all of us healthy during the entire time. The rice was cooked outside over a fire. They even prepared chicken for us. I was glad to spot a piece of white meat I thought I could handle.

After that we went to Grace Church for a service at 3:30. They asked Elder Siew to give a mes-

sage, and this was interpreted by Fung Dun. We had dinner at the hotel and then good fellowship in the evening with the three who came along.

Monday, January 8

The conference began at 8 A.M. Our transportation every day was the truck. I sat in the back a couple of times, but most of the time I rated the front seat along with the driver. Some advantage to being the oldest person around! Lian Te was the driver. He knows very little English but he is trying to learn. When I tried to talk to him, he would usually just shrug his shoulders—but he had the most friendly smile. The ride took approximately 25 minutes, more or less, depending on whether we had to wait to cross the one-lane bridge.

We had taken 50 cheap ball-point pens and a ream of paper along. It was so amusing to us how everything we offered was snatched up so quickly because these people are so very, very poor.

Pastor Lau was the instructor at the last conference on the Five Points of Calvinism. Dad thought he would start out with a little review. It took longer than he had planned, pretty much the whole morning session, because he had to do a bit of re-explaining.

Dad's original plan was to teach three courses during the conference. Then he decided it would be better to treat one course first, rather than three different courses each day. The one on the covenant was top priority, so he began with that. It went rather slowly because it all had to have two interpretations, and he wanted to explain thoroughly and give time for questions. So it wasn't long and he changed his goal to two courses. As it turned out, he covered only one course, and in addition to that, he gave a brief introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism.

Because these people are poor, they eat only two meals a day. The meals consist of rice, sometimes

with a little meat or vegetable, and sometimes plain. Each morning, before the conference, they would have just a cup of coffee along with a piece of something—I don't know what it's called but it's deep-fried and in the bread family. So by the time the morning session was over at 11 A.M., they were good and hungry for their rice.

In the village, all the people and neighbors are friends, so they had arranged to use the next two houses by Moses for the conference. The house right next door was where the women stayed, and the next house was for the men and was also the dining hall. The men's house is still under construction, so no one had to move out. I don't know how it happened that the next-door house was also available. None of these village houses have furniture. The dining hall was set up in three rows. The seats were formed by setting down bricks, only one high, and laying a plank across them. The tables were made the same way by putting two or three bricks on top of each other and then three planks for the table effect. These people sat right next to each other with their knees up against their bodies. Now go ahead, see if you can do that and manage to eat! They had a little temporary kitchen set up between Moses' house and the next one. They had one working table and two or three fire pits on which they could cook large kettles of rice and pots of veggies. After eating, the girls would do the cleanup. They would get down on their haunches to wash the dishes in a pan on the ground. What was cute was that while these girls were cutting vegetables, washing dishes, or whatever, they would sing their hearts out, even trying to harmonize.

They wouldn't think of having us eat with them or eating what they eat. On Monday, Fung Dun, Moses, Tracy (a girl who lived with her aunt and uncle, a Baptist minister, in the US for eight years and who was my private interpreter),

the driver, and the five of us, went to a Burmese restaurant for lunch. It seemed clean enough to us but we wondered about a few of the things which were served. Afterwards we stopped at a stand and bought large apples and tangerines (100 in all) for all the people at the conference.

In the afternoon Dad started on the covenant. Fung Dun first translated it in Burmese, then in Chin. He did a good job, and stuck right with it all week. He also had to listen to the questions and give them back to Dad in English. We could tell, from the questions, that

Dad's teaching was getting translated properly. Dinner at the hotel. Dad went to our room to prepare for the next day, and the rest of us chatted about our impressions and experiences and then had a time of prayer together.

... to be continued. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, has declined the call he received to become pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC. Following that decline, the South Holland PRC made a new trio, consisting of the Revs. A. denHartog and J. Mahtani, and Candidate D. Kleyn.

Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, was scheduled to leave for India on October 20 to speak at the S.W.A.M.I. (Sindhis With A Mission International) Conference in Pune (central part of India). He had been asked to give three messages on the wonder of the resurrection. After the conference, he planned to spend a few days in Madras (south India) renewing contacts made during previous trips to India. He was then planning to make a brief visit to Singapore to preach on November 2 in the ERCS and also meet with some Sindhi believers there. He was to return home, the Lord willing, on November 7.

Rev. M. Joostens, pastor of the Lynden, WA PRC, recently experienced severe pain in the left side of his chest and numbness in his left arm. Tests revealed that there is some blockage. This will require a period of rest for Rev. Joostens. What possible future treatment is required is not known at this time.

Lynden's consistory has arranged to have Candidate Daniel Kleyn there through November to help relieve their pastor of much of his work load.

Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, submitted to hip replacement surgery in October, after which he will need a few weeks for recuperation and rehabilitation.

Denominational Activities

The Fall Meeting of the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League was held on September 23 at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. Rev. C. Terpstra spoke on the topic, "God's Word and Man's Revising: How Must we Respond to Inclusive Language and Gender Neutrality?"

The annual RFPA meeting was also held in late September, at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Rev. M. Dick spoke on the topic, "The RFPA and Religious Stew."

There was a Fall Ladies' League Meeting held on October 21 in the Doon, IA PRC. Rev. R. Smit, pastor at Doon, spoke on the subject, "Luther's Rib."

School Activities

What a blessing the teachers of our children were able to enjoy in early October at their annual Teachers' Convention held in Northwest Iowa. Imagine 95 teachers, out of a possible 135 PR teachers, from 8 states representing 15 different schools, and teaching nearly 1,600 students! This year's convention began with a speech by

Rev. C. Haak entitled, "Teaching our Children to Labor for Meat that Endureth," from John 6:37. Rev. Haak exhorted the teachers to call students not to conform to this world, but to labor for spiritual things—the meat that endureth.

We also rejoice in the advance of the cause of PR secondary education recently seen in Northwest Iowa. On September 29 nearly 70 men from our Doon and Hull, IA and Edgerton, MN congregations became members of the new Midwest PR Secondary School Society. May God continue to prosper them as they work towards the future goal of having a PR high school in Northwest Iowa.

Congregational Activities

On Sunday, October 5, Rev. R. VanOverloop, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, celebrated 25 years of faithful ministry. To help celebrate this special occasion, Georgetown's congregation was invited to stay after the evening service for refreshments.

In conjunction with the PR Teachers' Convention, the Voices of Victory, a men's quartet from our Faith and Byron Center, MI PRCs, presented two concerts of sacred music—the first in the Hull, IA PRC on October 1, and the second on October 3 in Pella, IA, sponsored by our congregations there.

Also in conjunction with the Teachers' Convention, Rev. C. Haak presented a public lecture on October 2 in the Hull, IA PRC. He

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

pads on their pews, installing a new sound system and tape recorder/player, and having some landscaping done around their church and parsonage next spring. Rev. R. Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, CN, writes that dedication for their new church home was

held on October 10. "It was a joyous and blessed evening which we were able to share with our sister church in Edmonton. Our new parsonage is now going up across the parking lot from our church. It should be ready for occupancy around December 1. It is hard to

fathom God's goodness to us as He bountifully provides for our little flock. To Him be all the glory."

Food For Thought

"Sin is a little word with only three letters, but the biggest is I."

—A.S. Wood □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 25, 1997, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JAMES
BLANKESPOOR,**

celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for blessing them with many years of marriage. We thank God for the covenant home provided by them. May God continue to be their guide and stay in the years ahead.

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

- ❖ Peter and Janice Poortenga
- ❖ Todd and Val Terpstra
- ❖ Jerry and Judy Fynaardt
- ❖ George and Ranae Vroom
- ❖ Steve and Joanne McNary
- ❖ Deanna Poortenga

9 great-grandchildren

South Holland, Illinois

Address Correction

The E-mail address of Rev. M. Joostens which is in the 1997 Yearbook should be:

102106.70@compuserve.com

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Kalamazoo PRC express their deepest sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Doug Bishop and family in the death of Doug's father,

JOHN BISHOP.

May they find comfort in knowing that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Bruinsma, Pres.
Jeffrey Steenholdt, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 14, 1998, at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by December 15, 1997.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to their fellow-elder, Mr. Jack VanDyke, in the death of his father,

MR. JOHN VAN DYKE.

May he and his family find comfort in these words from Psalm 33:20: "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield."

Rev. A. Spriensma, President
Cornelius R. Jonker, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI expresses its Christian sympathy to our fellow-officebearer, Elder Bruce Jabaay, and to his wife, Cheryl, and to their children on the occasion of the death of his father,

MR. RICHARD JABAAY.

May the assurance of our covenant God's eternal Fatherhood be a constant source of comfort. "The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Pres.
David Ondersma, Clerk