



# The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

## In This Issue:

- Meditation — *Rev. Cornelius Hanko*  
Dwelling With God ..... 242
- Editorial — *Prof. David J. Engelsma*  
Preaching in Worship:  
Voice of God, Voice of Christ (4) ..... 244
- Go Ye Into All the World —  
*Rev. Thomas C. Miersma*  
Preaching and Missions without a  
Debilitating Offer (2) ..... 246
- That They May Teach Their Children —  
*Prof. Russell J. Dykstra*  
A New/Old Rubric ..... 249
- Marking Zion's Bulwarks —  
*Prof. Herman C. Hanko*  
The Battle Against Heresy ..... 251
- Special Article — *Rev. Arie denHartog*  
The Philippines an Open Door? ..... 253
- When Thou Sittest in Thine House —  
*Rev. Wilbur G. Bruinsma*  
The Covenant of Marriage  
2. Courtship Within the Covenant ..... 258
- Decency and Order —  
*Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga*  
Special Days of Prayer ..... 260
- Book Reviews ..... 262
- Report of Classis East — *Mr. Jon J. Huiskens* 263
- News From Our Churches —  
*Mr. Benjamin Wigger* ..... 263



## Conference in the Philippines

See "The Philippines an Open Door?" — p. 253

**Vol. 74, No. 11  
March 1, 1998**



# Dwelling With God

*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*

Psalm 15:1

**L**ord God, who is worthy to enter into Thy house? Who is fit to stand in Thy presence on Zion's holy mount?

Every sincere believer of the old dispensation was confronted with this question. Whether he lived in Jerusalem or was approaching the holy city of God from afar, he felt the need of doing some soul searching.

We can well ask ourselves today: Who of us has the right to submit his or her child to baptism, or who has the boldness to partake of the supper of our Lord?

But that raises another question: Who is worthy or fit to enter into the presence of the Lord on the Sabbath day to worship in the communion of saints under the ministry of God's holy Word?

But then also: Who has the right to approach God in prayer? Who is worthy or has the boldness to address Him who dwells in the high and lofty place, far beyond all that is creature—the eternal, ever-blessed, adorable, living God?

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

At times we are so concerned with our own cares that we approach God as if He were in heaven to serve us, rather than that we are on earth to serve Him. James warns us: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3).

Do we come to the public worship service on the Sabbath day merely because of custom or habit, but not to worship? God warns Israel, "I hate, I despise your solemn feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21).

We may even partake of the Lord's Supper without giving

thought to the fact that he who eats or drinks unworthily eats and drinks condemnation unto himself, not discerning the Lord's body (I Cor. 11:29).

But the psalmist takes every form of worship seriously. He counts it a privilege to enter into the presence of the highly exalted, living God, to abide in His presence, to worship and adore Him as God above all, who is blessed forever, but he also considers it a serious responsibility to do so with a proper attitude.

♦♦♦ ♦♦♦ ♦♦♦

Who, O Lord, with Thee abiding, in Thy house shall be Thy guest?

The psalmist knew the answer, and so do we.

To us are entrusted the covenant and the promises, but above all the oracles of God, that is, God's holy and infallible Word.

From that we know, as did the psalmist, that he who comes into

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

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

#### REPRINT POLICY

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

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. David J. Engelsma  
4949 Ivanrest  
Grandville, MI 49418  
(e-mail: dje@iserv.net)

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
Don Doezema  
P.O. Box 603  
Grandville, MI  
49468-0603  
PH: (616) 531-1490  
(616) 538-1778  
FAX: (616) 531-3033

#### CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

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

#### NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

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

#### UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Simon Cresswell  
62 Moat Road  
Ballymena, Co. Antrim  
BT42 4DA Northern Ireland

#### SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

#### ADVERTISING POLICY

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

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



God's presence does not make himself guilty of backbiting, nor of slandering his neighbor. But he speaks the truth in love.

He does not seek his companionship among vile persons. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat with the scornful. Of wicked men he says: Shall I not hate them who hate Thee, O Lord? I hate them with a perfect hatred. His friends and companions are those who fear the Lord.

When he swears to his own hurt he willingly suffers the consequences. He does not take advantage of the poor, of the widow, or of the orphan, but rather comes to their aid.

In one word, he walks uprightly, keeps God's commandments, and works righteousness!



Yes, Lord, I know, even in the depths of my heart I know. But that gives me the more reason to ask, "Who has the right to abide in Thy tabernacle, who is fit to dwell in Thy holy hill?" Certainly not I!

When engaged in conversation, or spending a few hours in fellowship with family or friends, I find that my conversation so readily turns to criticizing or condemning my fellow saints. Gossip, backbiting, and slander are common evils that I seem to slip into almost unawares.

How much easier it is, especially to avoid trouble, to associate freely with an unbelieving neighbor who lives next door, or whom I meet in the factory, office, or business establishment. If he will be a bit careful about his language, I will be silent about my faith.

I know the second table of the law so well. I hear it read every Sunday in our church. Like the rich young ruler I am inclined to say that outwardly I have known and kept these things from my youth—but when I search my

heart, that is quite another matter.

When I put my hand in my bosom, it comes out, as it were, leprous. I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor. Of myself I am incapable of any good and inclined to all evil.

What right have I, how can I lift my voice in prayer to God, to worship in the beauty of His holiness on the Lord's day, or to partake of the sacraments that He has instituted for the strengthening of our faith.

Yes, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?



But, Jehovah, Thou knowest. And Thou hast revealed to us in Thy holy Word that there is One who does have the right and who possesses the worthiness to enter into Thy presence, to dwell with Thee in Thy eternal dwelling place.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who from all eternity was appointed for that very purpose, came in the likeness of our sinful flesh, became like unto us, yet without sin, begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary.

He dwelt among us, witnessing by His Word and by signs and wonders that He was given the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary.

The Lord opened His ear, and He was not rebellious, neither turned He away back. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to those who plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

He who had no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Even in all His sufferings, bearing the torment of God's wrath unto the dark agonies of hell, He stood the test. He had clean hands, and a pure heart. He did not lift up His soul to vanity. Nor did He swear deceitfully (Ps. 24).

He conquered all the powers of darkness: Satan, sin, death, and the grave; and He ascended to heaven for us.

At His ascension a section of the heavenly choir sang: Lift up your heads, O ye gates! And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in!

Another section asked: Who is this King of glory?

To which arose the powerful response: The Lord, strong and mighty! The Lord, mighty in battle!



He breaks into our hearts by His Spirit, makes us partakers of His new, spiritual, heavenly life. We are made new creatures in Christ. We have the gift of faith that is wrought by the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Wonder of wonders! I can say with conviction: I believe! I believe in God, the God of our salvation, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord! And by that bond of faith and love I am united with Him forever. I am righteous in Christ and sanctified by His blood. God sees me not as I am in myself, but as a new creature in Christ.

As our Mediator our Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary on the basis of His atoning work. His prayer is heard, so that in Him we have access to, and boldness to approach, the throne of grace in prayer, to dwell in His presence in the communion of saints under the ministry of the Word, and to partake of the holy sacraments.



That explains some remarkable statements I read in the Scriptures concerning the saints of old. God says of Enoch that "he walked with God." The same is said of Noah. Scripture speaks of Abraham as a friend of God; of Job that he was a man who "was perfect and upright,



and one that feared God, and eschewed evil"; and of David that he was a man after God's heart. Yet all these men were sinners, conceived and born in sin, even as we.

I now realize that God eternally sees us as we are *in Christ*, as we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He regards us no longer as we are in ourselves, but He sees us as new creatures in Christ, clothed from head to foot in the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

Now before my consciousness I stand before the judgment seat of God. The question is put to me, Are you guilty of transgressing My commandments?

I hang my head in shame: Yes, I have transgressed, not one, but all Thy commandments. I have

even grossly transgressed them all.

Hast thou at some time kept any of them perfectly?

No, not one.

Will you promise henceforth to keep all My commandments?

No, I cannot, for I am still inclined to all evil.

The verdict of the Judge rings into the depths of my soul: Without any of your merit, but purely of grace, I grant and impute to you the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ.

I stand before the face of God, "as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all the obedience which Christ has accomplished for me" (Heidelberg Cat-

echism, Lord's Day 23).

Lord Jehovah, through faith in the infallible truth which Thou hast sealed in my heart that I am justified and sanctified in Christ Jesus, Christ's worthiness is mine! Christ's fitness is mine! I can, I may, I will, I must abide in Thy tabernacle and dwell in Thy holy hill in prayer and worship!

One thing have I desired of the Lord: that I may forever dwell in the house of my God with Christ in His glory.

That will I seek after.

To behold the beauty of the Lord!

And to inquire in His temple, constantly growing in the riches of His grace even unto endless eternity. □

## Editorial

# Preaching in Worship: Voice of God, Voice of Christ (4)

**T**he preceding editorials in this short series demonstrated that the faithful preaching of Holy Scripture by an ordained man is the living voice of God in Jesus Christ. The preaching of the gospel is the Word of God. This concluding installment draws the conclusion that preaching has the central place in worship.

Surprisingly little has been done in Reformed theology, specifically in Reformed liturgics, to develop the place of preaching in worship and the relation of preaching to the other aspects of worship. Reformed theologians have developed preaching as *means of grace*, but a study of liturgics, homiletics, and even dogmatics reveals that

there has been little development of preaching *as worship*.

In his contribution to the volume on Presbyterian and Reformed worship, *Worship in the Presence of God* (Greenville Seminary, 1992), Thomas G. Reid, Jr., remarks on this startling lack: "The relation of preaching to the concept of worship and to the other elements of worship remains a relatively unfallowed field" (p. 367; "*fallow field*" must be intended, that is, a field that has not been worked). Reid's contribution to the book is a review of "Recent Writings on Worship of Particular Interest to Reformed Christians." The paragraph that lists writings on "Preaching in Worship" is the briefest paragraph in the chapter.

In contrast, the chapter on "Singing of Psalms" goes on for ten and a half pages.

This lack of development of preaching as an element of worship is surprising for two reasons. First, the Reformed churches have been of one mind, that preaching is the main element of public worship. One would think that their treatment of public worship would reflect this importance of preaching.

Second, if preaching is, in fact, the voice of God (as the Reformed faith insists), it is not immediately plain that preaching is part of public worship at all. Is not worship *our* activity of praise and thanksgiving? But preaching is *God's* activity. Through the office of the ministry, *God* is active in speaking



His Word to the church. How is God's speaking part of our worship? How is God's speaking the center of our worship?

Exactly this is the objection that modern religious people have against the traditional Reformed worship service with its emphasis on preaching. Most of the service consists of one man's reading and expounding the Scriptures. The congregation is inactive—as passive, one has said, as chickens sitting on their roost. Such worship services are detrimental to lively, active congregational worship.

If we are successfully to resist the pressure against the centrality of preaching in public worship, as injurious to lively, active worship by the people of God, we must give account of preaching as the very heart of worship. It is not enough to argue that preaching is the voice of God. We must also show that and how preaching is the central element of the public worship of the people of God.

Preaching is, and must be, the heart of right worship exactly because it is the activity of God in Jesus Christ: the voice of God.

Worship is the meeting, the fellowship, of God with His people. The service of public worship of the true church is the official, formal, visible realization of God's covenant of grace with believers and their children in the world. It is awesome. Every Sunday morning and every Sunday evening, the cloud of glory fills the temple, but now as the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, so that we can bear the Presence and can stand to minister (I Kings 8; I Pet. 2:1-10). In His Spirit and Word, the glorified Jesus Christ walks in the midst of the churches (Rev. 1:10-2:1). Angels attend their sovereign, the triune God in the exalted Jesus Christ, at the service (I Cor. 11:10). If an unbeliever enters the service, the secrets of his heart will be made manifest, and he will fall down on his face and report that God is in us of a truth (I Cor. 14:23-25).

As the covenantal meeting of God with His people, worship is delightful. Psalm 84 is the experience of every friend of God, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker:

How dear to me, O Lord of Hosts,  
The place where Thou dost dwell;  
The tabernacles of Thy grace  
In pleasantness excel.  
My spirit longs, yea, even faints,  
Thy sacred courts to see;  
My thirsting heart and flesh cry out,  
O living God, for Thee.

This meeting of God with His people takes place by means of God's Word. God is present to us, and we draw near to God, *by the Word*. In the activity of worship, God takes the initiative by revealing Himself as our Father and Savior in Jesus Christ *in the preaching of the gospel*.

God is first in worship. God is central. God is God in our worship, as He is God in our salvation.

The public worship of the church is theological, is theocentric. We do not make it so. God makes it so. Nor does God make our worship theocentric merely in the sense that all our activity revolves around Him. But He makes it theocentric in the sense that He Himself as the active, working, dynamic God is the center of the service. His activity, work, dynamism, at the center of the service, is the preaching of the Word.

To the preaching of the gospel as the heart of biblical worship are attached, not banners and special music, but the sacraments. They too are primarily God's actions, not ours. In baptism and the supper, God more fully declares and seals to us the promise of the gospel (Heid. Cat., Q. 66).

This does not imply that the congregation is passive, whether in indolence or in stupefied wonder.

By the very preaching in which God is first and central in worship, God calls us to activity in worship. But this activity is not that we come up with all kinds of innovations to make ourselves busy in the services. Rather, our activity is that we *hear God speaking*—truly hear with the reverence, submission, trust, obedience, and love of faith.

"Hear ye him!" God says to us concerning His Son, Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:5).

This, this is the activity in worship that is required of the congregation. This, this is the public worship that is acceptable to God.

Therefore the supreme worship of God that a man can offer, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, is to practice true godliness, to hear and read the Word. On the other hand, nothing is more dangerous than to become tired of the Word. Therefore anyone who is so cold that he thinks he knows enough and gradually begins to loathe the Word has lost Christ and the Gospel.... This is what is finally happening to the frivolous fanatics (Martin Luther, commentary on Gal. 1:11, 12).

When the busy "worship-leaders," no doubt sincerely, make themselves and us frantic with religious exercises, every Sunday a new set of them, we must say to them, "Sit down! Shut up! Stop working! Let God speak, will you! And hear!"

"Hear!"—the most difficult, strenuous activity of all, and the sweetest, as it is the most glorifying to God.

Commenting on Habakkuk 2:20, "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him," Calvin said:

Silence in this respect is nothing else but submission: and we submit to God, when we bring not our own inventions and imaginations, but suffer ourselves to be taught by His Word.

The right worship of God by



His New Testament church is described and exhorted in Hebrews 12:22-29. The "church of the first-born" (v. 23) is called to "serve God acceptably" (v. 28), where "serve" is one of the chief New Testament terms for the church's worship. This "service" is characterized by "reverence and godly fear" (v. 28), not by wild exuberance and frenzied activity. It is Reformed, not charismatic.

The central act in the church's worship is the act of speaking: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (v. 25). The one who speaks is the triune God: "much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (v. 25). He speaks through Jesus Christ the mediator of the new covenant (v. 24). He speaks still. He speaks today. He speaks by means of the preaching of the gospel, whose message is

"the blood of sprinkling" (v. 24) and the promise of a new world (vv. 26, 27). Just as really as the voice of words that Israel heard at Sinai was the living voice of God (v. 19), so truly is the voice that the church hears in the preaching the voice of God (vv. 25, 26).

The resulting and corresponding activity of the worshipping church is pointed out in the warning of verse 25: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Negatively, the one great admonition of the New Testament church regarding her public worship is: Do not reject the speaking God! Do not turn away from the one who speaks from heaven! Do

not disdain the voice of God! Do not first belittle and despise and then replace altogether the preaching of the Word of God!

Positively, the one great exhortation of the New Testament church regarding her public worship is: Hear Him!

The true church will heed the admonition and exhortation. The speaking God Himself will see to it. He makes His voice lovely to her. Once, from Mt. Sinai, He spoke the awful justice of the law, and Israel "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more" (v. 19). Now, in Mt. Sion, He speaks the gospel of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus, and the church receives the Word gladly. She refuses to have it silenced.

Thus does the church rightly worship God. □

— DJE

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Thomas Miersma

## Preaching and Missions without a Debilitating Offer (2)

*In the previous portion of this article, October 1, 1997, I touched on the Reformed doctrine of preaching, something which has also been addressed in recent articles on Reformed worship. I also discussed the historical roots of the well-meant offer in the attempt in the past to marry the Reformed and Arminian doctrines of election and the atonement within the history of Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine. It is in that historical context that this article now returns to the subject under discussion.*

**T**he well-meant offer, or free offer, and the notion of a general conditional promise are really nothing more than attempts to introduce this same semi-Arminian synergism and dualism into the whole doctrine of soteriology, the doctrine of the application of salvation, and into the doc-

trines of the means of grace, preaching and the sacraments. It is again an attempt to marry an Arminian doctrine of salvation and the means of grace, preaching or baptism, to the Reformed view. It involves teaching two kinds of grace, a general, common, conditional, and resistible grace to all under the preaching or in baptism, and a particular, irresistible grace to only some. According to this theory of the offer, God does not

simply call and command men to repent and believe under the preaching of the Word, but sincerely desires the salvation of all and well-meaningly offers Christ, His righteousness and eternal life, to all, head for head. The preaching becomes a check which man must endorse by his faith, an objective bequest which man may accept or reject. Moreover, if you object to this as Arminianism, you are told that, since they also teach that

*Rev. Miersma is home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



God fulfills the conditions by grace in the elect, the charge of being Arminian is false.

While dressed in a new suit of clothes, this error is still the same error which was condemned by the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of the past. While the theology it is based on is rarely spelled out, it is nothing more than that of Amyrauld. Its doctrine of the atonement is that of the Marrow. In order to make Christ's death and the preaching of it universal or an offer, they must separate from that death its efficacy and all the subjective blessings of salvation. If Christ is offered to all, then faith cannot be a benefit of the cross. One cannot very well offer faith as a blessing while requiring it as a condition. One cannot promise to all what is an entrance requirement to the promise.

The offer introduces ambiguity into the doctrine of faith, conversion, and repentance. Rather than being a work of grace in man, the wonder work of God in Christ, and a gift of grace out of which a man himself actively repents and believes, the preaching of the offer becomes centered on the experiential moment, for faith is man's fulfilling of the condition. And yet, because they would be called Calvinists, they would also be seen as teaching that it is God's gift. The only way one can maintain this kind of dualism is to reduce faith and conversion to an experimental moment, a moment of revelation and response, of giving and yet taking and receiving. Grace becomes like a ball bouncing on a table. In the moment it touches the surface, God is giving and man accepting, God is revealing and man responding. This is Barthian mysticism. It is dualism carried to its ultimate synergism.

### The offer and preaching

The seriousness of this error must not be overlooked. It has practical consequences for preaching and mission work.

This affects first of all the content of the preaching and exegesis. If God wants to save all but wills to save only some; if Christ is dead for all but died only for some; if God offers salvation to all but calls effectually only some; then truth, veracity, and coherence have gone out the window. The double track theology of the offer makes coherent preaching of the truth impossible. God wants what He does not want, intends what He does not intend. Authoritative proclamation of the truth of the gospel can but cease. The unity of the truth is broken. By separating Christ as Mediator of the covenant and as Head of the elect, one distorts and obscures even Christ's mediatorial work. One cannot genuinely compare Scripture with Scripture, for Scripture contradicts itself. The fundamental principle of Reformed scriptural interpretation is broken. Scripture speaks out of two sides of its mouth. One must first carefully impose this hermeneutical dualism on the text, much like dispensationalism does when it tries to separate Israel and the church. Does this passage speak of God's universal will or His particular will? Is this passage about Christ as Mediator or as Head?

This is plain from the effect and consequences of this dualistic hermeneutic round about us as it has worked through the life of the CRC. If God wants to save all but wills to save only some, He may also want only men to be ministers from a creation perspective but wills that women also hold office from an eschatological perspective. Who is to judge? "What is truth?"

It is not without reason that this leads to shoddy exegesis in which one sometimes takes an Arminian interpretation, and one sometimes, though quite arbitrarily, takes a Calvinistic interpretation. Sometimes one takes a conservative or orthodox approach, while at other times a liberal one. The truth in fact becomes relative to the interpreter and his opinion,

and exegesis becomes eclectic. By this error the authority, power, and clarity of the gospel is overthrown. The herald or preacher sounds an uncertain note on the trumpet of the gospel. Because of it the offer is a debilitated cripple when it comes to mission work and a clear proclamation of the gospel.

Moreover, as God wants to save all and offers Christ to all in the preaching, the gospel is reduced to a crippled, truncated version of itself. One cannot under the offer preach the doctrine of election as good news for sinners, that "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37). This goes into the theological closet. Likewise, since faith, repentance, and conversion are the conditions man must fulfill to receive the proffered salvation, they also can no more be preached as the glorious work of God, the effectual fruit of the atonement. They too must go into the theological closet. The gospel is reduced to a truncated word about the cross, without its efficacy, design, power, and purpose. That by "one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14) belongs in the closet. It is too definite. Soteriology, and the saving efficacy of the cross in Christology, likewise join God's sovereignty in the theological closet, especially on the mission field. Instead an unfruitful divine desire to save all men must be preached.

All of this robs the gospel not only of its power, authority, and clarity, but also of the *wonder* of grace. It does not lead to reverence and fear, to worship and praise, but to the notion of a spiritually impotent God who wants what He cannot or does not perform. It robs God of the honor and glory due His name and demeans the name of Christ, the Lord of glory. This is emphatically debilitating to the work of missions. It is exactly the unique power, glory, and majesty of God in Christ which sets the Christian gospel apart from



the inventions of human philosophy and pagan religion.

The very need for a sovereign Savior of mere grace is destroyed, for God is said to offer that which was not purchased in the blood of Christ and to desire to impart to sinners that which Christ did not effect on the cross for them. It destroys the holiness, righteousness, and truth of God. It sets God's mercy against His own justice by overthrowing the principles of atonement. Jesus no longer actually saves, but only wants to if we will accept Him. It is demeaning to Christ crucified.

As such, the offer is incapable of proclaiming a serious call to repentance and faith. It is not a divine summons which seriously addresses men with the will of the Holy God to turn from their wicked way. Rather it becomes a pleading invitation, something that God wants to be true for all. The gospel does not confront men with an imperative, a command, but with a wish, a pleading, a begging, with moral suasion and emotional appeals to accept the proffered salvation. Not only so, but the faith called for is not a powerful transformation that grace alone can give, but a work which man must perform and a condition he must fulfill in order to be saved. Oh, to be sure, if you press those who preach the offer, they maintain that God by His grace fulfills the conditions in man. They formally reject free-willism. Nevertheless, it is my faith, my repentance, my acceptance upon which the salvation offered to me rests.

This is the doctrine of salvation upon the worthiness of my faith and repentance. It is Arminian. In fact, it is the doctrine of justification because of faith and works, which is the doctrine of Rome. The offer is warmed-over Jesuit theology masquerading as Protestantism. However much free-willism is denied, the practical fruit of that error, a trusting in one's own works of believing, repenting, and

coming, is maintained and taught in practice, if not in theory.

Moreover the wicked are left with the principle that, after all, if God wants to save them so much and is trying so hard to offer salvation to them, there is really no urgency about the matter. If God wants to save them, would He now give up and judge? The fact is that the offer tempts men to despise God's very simpering impotence.

As if that were not enough, by making the promises general and conditional, the personal, sure comfort of the gospel is lost. There is an irony here in calling the offer the "free offer of the gospel." There is nothing free about promises with strings attached. Sovereign grace is free, genuinely free, rooted in the grace of election. The effect of the offer is to leave the hearer in doubt whether, after all, those promises are for him. Have I really repented? Do I really believe? Either I must boast in my own works of believing and acceptance of the gospel or I am left with the conclusion that, after all, my whole spiritual welfare is in doubt. The offer, rather than leading one out of oneself to Christ to be justified by faith as God's free gift, leads one inward to a seeking of signs of revealed grace, to a mystical, spiritual "belly-button watching." It overthrows the tender conscience of those who know that they "have not perfect faith." On the mission field it leaves one who is broken by his sin and guilt, who cries out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), with neither a clear direction, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 2:38), nor with a sure promise, "thy sins are forgiven thee" (Luke 5:20). The offer leads to mysticism, and an unwholesome experientialism. It robs the sheep of that sure comfort which they have in Christ and ought to have.

In this connection, I recall specifically a sermon on the resurrection of the body from the dead, out

of the Catechism, by a prominent so-called conservative. The glory and beauty of that work of God was adequately set forth. But then he had to add the offer to it all. We had to attain unto it by our believing. The whole sermon was concluded with the hope that we would attain to the resurrection. This was his hope, and he hoped (???) it was true for the congregation. The wonder and glory were taken away and the congregation was left with only doubt, a comfortless question mark, an unsure hope that maybe it would be true for them. It was an abomination, which robbed the sheep that Sunday morning of the hope and comfort of the resurrection from the dead. What was done with the sermon was the same fear tactic that the church of Rome uses by holding purgatory over the heads of the people. The well-meant offer dangles the promises of God which are yea and amen in Christ before the people of God, holding them out of reach. Its professed love for sinners is false and cruel.

### Conclusion

It is the offer which is crippled, debilitated, and anemic in preaching the gospel. This is particularly true on the mission field, for it comes with neither clarity nor power, neither a clear command to repent and believe, nor a sure promise. It destroys a serious call to repentance rather than establishing one. It robs the sheep of their comfort. Abraham Kuyper put it well. When he spoke of the advocates of a "Christ for all," he said, "In reality, it is they who are in an increasingly painful and sad situation, for in spite of that 'pro omnibus' (for all), they are still not able to persuasively move the soul to believe" (*Dat De Genade Particularis*; Abraham Kuyper, Part 1, chapter 1, p. 3; translation mine). It is the offer which cannot do genuine mission work, for it does not faithfully serve the cause of Him who said, "I will build my church." □



## A New/Old Rubric

With this issue, the *Standard Bearer* restores an old and honored department, namely, a rubric devoted to covenant education. The *SB* has from early on shown a dedicated concern for Christian schools and the instruction of covenant children. This had been my general impression, and a search of the index confirmed this, no rather, astounded me. Articles on the Christian school are found in the first volume of the *SB*. From that volume to the present, 44 *SB* articles discuss Christian schools in the Protestant Reformed Churches; 179 articles explore Christian schools and/or education; 47 more deal with education in general; 29 discuss "the government and Christian schools"; 22 articles are written on just plain "instruction"; 47 of the many articles on the covenant focus on children and the covenant; and 35 articles address the topic "children" directly. Are you keeping track? That comes to 403 articles! This does not include the many articles which, in discussing a particular philosophy or trend, also address its possible effect on children or the Christian schools.

This history of *writing* about Christian education in the *SB* runs parallel to the *activity* in the Prot-

estant Reformed Churches of providing Christian education for covenant children. The first Protestant Reformed school began instructing students in 1934 in the basement of the Redlands (CA) Protestant Reformed Church. A two-room school building was erected in 1941, and the school operated until 1954 when, decimated by "the split of 1953," it ceased operations. The Redlands congregation rejoices today in the new school started in 1975.

The second Protestant Reformed school movement began in 1937 with a meeting in the basement of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. Soon after, a society was formed for the establishment of a Protestant Reformed *high* school. The determination to seek a high school was due largely to the influence of Rev. Hoeksema, who had some ten years earlier begun to plead for the founding of such a school (*SB*, Vol. 13, p. 508). However, four years later (1941), the society changed its goal—it would strive for an elementary school. It was not until 1950 that Adams Street Christian School opened with 235 students.

By that time, Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School had been in operation for three years on the other side of Grand Rapids. The beginnings were more modest (51 students), but the society had taken only a year and a half after organization to put the school into operation. The early fifties saw the Protestant Reformed congregations in Hudsonville and Holland join the effort.

The congregation in Edgerton,

MN organized a school society in 1940, and opened the doors of the new school ten years later.

In 1956, members of the congregations in South Holland and Oak Lawn formed a Protestant Reformed School Society, and within five years had a school in operation.

A school society was formed in northwest Iowa in the late fifties, and the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School opened in Doon, IA in 1967.

The congregation in Loveland, organized in 1958 as a Protestant Reformed Church, made quick work of establishing their own school. By 1961, their school was up and running.

Another huge milestone in the history of Protestant Reformed schools occurred in 1968 when Covenant Christian High School began its opening day of classes.

In the last twenty-two years, the drive for Protestant Reformed schools has not faltered. The 1970s saw three more Protestant Reformed schools begin classes—Redlands in 1975 (as noted above), Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School in 1976, and Covenant in Lynden, WA in 1978. The school in Lynden even included high school grades from 1979 to 1991! Additionally, the newly organized (1977) Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, TX maintained its own school from the start and held classes as long as it was feasible, with many in the congregation helping with the instruction.

By the early 1980s, overcrowding in Hope school caused the society of Hope to see the need for a

---

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



new school in the Hudsonville area. The result was the commencement of Heritage Christian School in 1985.

In addition, the belief that the demands of the covenant apply to *all* children in the sphere of the covenant prompted the Hudsonville consistory to call a meeting in 1983 to encourage the formation of a society for educating children with special needs. The result was the Society for Special Education in the Grand Rapids area which began offering special education classes in Hope in 1985 and continues today with its own room in Heritage.

The serious and dedicated devotion to Protestant Reformed education over the years is evident from the formation of other related organizations. The Federation of Protestant Reformed School Boards was organized in 1957 by the boards of Adams St., Hope, and South Holland. Through the years it has grown to eleven schools.

In 1955 a handful of teachers started the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute for mutual encouragement and instruction. It held meetings and annual conventions in the Grand Rapids area and in South Holland for the first twenty-five years of its existence. In 1980 it agreed to meet in NW Iowa every fifth year. It has also published its own quarterly magazine, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, since 1974. At its last convention (held in northwest Iowa in 1997) seventeen new teachers joined the Institute, and ninety-nine teachers were in attendance!

Those are indications that the cause of Protestant Reformed education flourishes today. There are others—the start of Faith Christian School in Randolph in 1994; the existence of the Lacombe School Society (Alberta, Can.), formed shortly after the church organized in 1987; and Hope's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration held this past summer, where many generations were represented. And we note that enthusiastic parents and supporters

in the northeast side of Grand Rapids started their own school this school year (Eastside Christian) when Adams St. was forced to move.

The secondary school movement is showing life in at least two areas of the country. The society for secondary education in the area south of Chicago recently took the positive step of purchasing land with a view to the building of a high school. In addition, a new society for secondary education was formed in 1997 by members of the congregations in Doon and Hull, Iowa, and Edgerton, Minnesota.

Other schools report excellent support from the congregations, including building projects being planned or paid off. Many pastors speak of the unity of focus and support for the schools established by the members of their congregations. Others point to the truly encouraging fact that the younger generation is enthusiastically throwing its support behind this work of love.

Great things? Yes. Significant things? Yes. In the eyes of the world? No. In the opinion of most of the church world? Probably not. No doubt to many these efforts appear small and insignificant. They do, however, demonstrate the keen interest in and support for good, Reformed, Christian education in the Protestant Reformed Churches. In addition, I contend that great things *do* happen in these schools! Covenant children, hundreds of them, are reared in obedience to the command of God given to parents; equipped to walk down their God-ordained paths in harmony with the Reformed truths; and trained to stand as representatives of God in this present evil age. With the obvious exception of the preaching, is there a more significant work anywhere in the world?

The question begs asking, Why do parents, grandparents, young couples, and single individuals zealously support and labor for these schools? Why are men will-

ing to devote long hours to school board meetings, committee meetings, and the like, without pay? Why are teachers ready to spend themselves in the effort of teaching, when the same level of education as well as the number of hours spent in the business world might well make them rich? Why? The schools are not exclusive, well-equipped academies that promise superior graduates and guarantee entrance to the best universities, though they do stress excellence to the glory of God. These schools do not promise an academic "free ride" for children who do not care to study, though they are zealous to help the struggling student. These schools do not advertise freedom from all the evil influences of the world, though they have no tolerance for sin. Again, we ask, Why this labor, sacrifice, and determination, why these millions of dollars, when other schools are available at no cost, why this enthusiasm by a relatively small band of people for the work of educating their children?

In a word, the answer is, God's covenant. The life and walk of a Christian must be determined by the truth he confesses. The lives of Protestant Reformed people ought to be governed by the eternal covenant of grace that God has established with them. This is especially true in the area of covenant education. To this we will turn in the next installment, the Lord willing—God's gracious covenant with His people, the basis of Protestant Reformed schools. □





# The Battle Against Heresy

## Introduction

Throughout the history of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, heretics have been present to trouble the church, attempt to lead her astray, and attempt to destroy the church by robbing her of her dearest treasure and her most important reason for existence.

The lives and teachings of these heretics are so closely interwoven in the life of the church that it is impossible to know anything about the church without knowing something of the heretics that periodically appeared and the false doctrines they proposed.

We intend to write a series of biographical sketches of some of the church's most influential heretics, describe the heresies they taught, and give some idea of what their role was in the larger picture of the history of the church.

But before we actually get into the matter of writing about these heretics, it is well, I think, to say something about them in general, about the heresies they tried to pass on to the church, and about the importance of writing concerning them.

## What Heresy Is

I suppose that it seems a bit superfluous to ask what heresy in the church is; everyone knows that. Everyone knows that a heresy is a teaching in the church which is contrary to the Scriptures.

Though in a way that is true, it is not quite accurate enough to serve our purposes.

The church has always made it her business to study the Scriptures. This studying has been done by all the members of the church, although especially by those who are in the offices of minister, elder, and deacon. But the members of the church are, after all, though saints in Jesus Christ, also sinners as long as they are in this world. Sometimes in their study of Scripture, especially in the early history of the church, they made mistakes in their understanding of God's Word and began to teach ideas that were not in harmony with Scripture.

There are several instances of such mistakes which various men made. Indeed, sometimes men taught wrong ideas which were even generally accepted in the church, but which were proved wrong by later men of God who understood the Scriptures more perfectly. These mistakes are not really heresies.

An instance of this latter is Augustine's view of the sacraments. While Augustine was completely in harmony with Scripture in most of his teachings, especially when it came to his teachings on

the doctrines of sovereign grace, he erred in viewing the sacraments, especially the sacrament of baptism, as having themselves the power of regeneration. This view was accepted by the church until the time of the Reformation.

But a heresy is different. One does not necessarily teach heresy when he sets forth a view which is a mistake born out of a less than full understanding of the truth. But once the church of which he is a part has shown him that his view is wrong, that it is not in harmony with the teaching of Scripture, and that he should not, therefore, teach it—if he continues to teach it nonetheless, at that point he becomes a heretic.

Or if the church has already established a certain doctrine as being the teaching of Scripture, and some man comes along and begins to teach something contrary to what the church has established as the truth of God's Word, that man teaches heresy.

## The Reasons for Heresy

How is it to be explained that heresy continually raises its head in the church?

If one would look at that question from the viewpoint of the man who himself teaches heresy, the question is somewhat difficult to answer. It is always possible for a man to make a mistake with respect to the truth and to teach something that is quite clearly heresy. Every man is sinful and the imperfection of our natures makes



heresy a distinct possibility.

But when a man makes a mistake, and the church points out to him that mistake, then his obligation before God and the church is to confess that wrong, admit his error, and get clear in his own mind what the truth of Scripture is. This does not often happen. Man is too proud, as a general rule, to admit his wrong. So he defends vigorously the error that he made, so that what was at first a mistake now becomes stubborn support of a wrong position. This happens repeatedly in the church.

Oftentimes men who are ministers of the gospel, professors in one of the church's schools or seminaries, or leaders in a certain area of the church's life deliberately begin to teach something which they know is wrong. They may do so in a very subtle way so that the heresy sounds as much like the truth as possible. But they make a conscious choice to teach something contrary to Scripture and the teachings of the church.

Why do they do this?

The reasons, I suppose, are legion. Perhaps they want to appear before men to be original theologians who come with new and amazing insights into the truth so that men will marvel at their intellectual prowess. Maybe they want to make a name for themselves as scholars whose masterful writings will appear in prestigious theological journals. Maybe they simply want the preeminence within a congregation and choose to teach heresy as a way to gain a following.

But in every case, obviously, they consider themselves more important than the truth of God's Word. They set themselves above the truth. Their own name, fame, reputation, honor which they acquire for themselves—all these are more important than God's truth and God's glory.

But we must look at this matter of heresy from another point of view as well. Behind every heresy

which lurks in the minds and hearts of men and which raises its ugly head in the church is Satan and his host of devils. They are the ones who sow the seeds of heresy and nourish these seeds until they become thorns and thistles in the life of the church.

Satan has his own reasons for bringing heresy into the church. He does so because he knows, better than men, that the surest and quickest way to destroy the church of Jesus Christ is through the introduction of heresy into her faith. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20-22). That is, the truth, as it is centrally in Christ and as it is revealed through the apostles and prophets, is the foundation of the church. Take away the foundation, and the church collapses into a pile of rubble. The devil knows this.

It was to this idea that Jesus referred when, in speaking of Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, He said that this was the rock on which He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. The gates of hell batter that rock on which the church stands.

The struggle within the church between the truth and the lie, between heresy and the confession of the faith of Scripture, is never an intellectual battle only; it is profoundly and intensely a spiritual struggle. The very existence of the church is at stake. On the outcome rests the continued presence of the church in the world. And it must never be forgotten that the devil will not consider himself to have accomplished his sordid purpose in this world until he has obliterated the church.

The church is, after all, the pillar and ground of the truth. That is, the church shouts as loudly as it can the truth which is found in the Holy Scriptures, for that truth is the truth of God. As long as the

church is here, there is sharp witness to God and Christ, something intolerable to Satan in his nefarious purposes.

But that the battle for the truth is a battle for the very existence of the church means also that it is a spiritual battle. The greatest issues are always at stake. The eternal destinies of men are being decided. For in the confession and defense of the truth lies everlasting salvation; while in heresy and its promotion lie spiritual destruction and everlasting damnation. No battles in any war ever fought are as important as the battles fought in the defense of the faith on the battlefields of the church.

But we must carry the point one step further along.

We believe that God is sovereign in everything and that, therefore, no heresy can trouble the church without the will of God. Even Satan is under God's control and can do nothing without God's will.

Why does God so rule that heresy comes into the church and brings all the pain and suffering which church struggles involve?

There are also several answers to this question. We need only be brief, for the themes involved in this question are going to be the chief themes in the series of articles we hope to write.

The history of the church is the history of a church which has always in it carnal and wicked seed. These come into the church from the outside, or they are in the church because even among the children of believers not all that are of Israel are true Israel.

If they were permitted to continue to fly deceptively under the colors of the faith, they would so weaken the church that her position would become increasingly precarious. But heresy comes into the church that the carnal element may reveal itself as such by joining with the forces of heresy. In this way the church undergoes purification and reformation.



But more importantly, it is always over against heresy that the truth of the Word of God is developed in a positive way.

There are, I think, two sides to this matter.

Generally speaking, the people of God are too spiritually lazy to be busy with developing the truth for its own sake. If no heresy ever appeared as a cloud on the ecclesiastical horizon, the church would bask in the sunshine of peace and quiet and the truth of God's Word would go undeveloped.

Heresy acts as a goad to push the church out of complacency and spiritual lethargy. When the truth is threatened, God uses the very threat of heresy to show His people that the existence of the church itself is in danger and that the

church had better get to work to search the Scriptures so that the attacks of heresy may be fought off with the weapons of God's truth.

But we are also called to live antithetically in the world. God has so ordained that our life in all respects is always a certain "No" to that which is wrong, and an emphatic "Yes" to that which is right. We cannot live any differently than that. We cannot serve God in any other way.

And so, when it comes to matters of the truth, we cannot say our "Yes" to the truth without first saying "No" to heresy. That is the way we serve God. It has been so ordained by God Himself.

And so heresy is always the spur to the development of the rich

and glorious truth of Scripture. The weapons of our spiritual warfare are not manufactured in the ivory towers of theological speculation; they are hammered out on hastily prepared forges set up right on the battlefield, where the din and noise of the conflict can be heard on every side.

To study the heretics is no virtue in itself. To study them with a view to seeing how in every case their heresies resulted in a church stronger in the faith because it became more knowledgeable in the truth is to participate in an exciting and worthwhile endeavor.

So we intend to do. So we shall be marking Zion's bulwarks in order to glory in the strength of Zion against the relentless attacks of her enemies. □

## Special Article

Rev. Arie denHartog

# The Philippines an Open Door?

In the first couple of weeks of December the author of this article and Pastor Allen Brummel from our church in Edgerton, Minnesota were sent by the Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches to visit the islands of the Philippines to investigate the possibility of a mission field for our churches there. We are thankful for the exciting opportunity given to us to make this trip.

---

*Rev. denHartog is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.*

In the short two weeks that we were in the Philippines we had enough interesting experiences for me to be able to write a book. We give in this article a brief report.

Let me first of all give some background and the reason for which our Foreign Mission Committee decided to send us to the Philippines. Over the years a number of contacts have been made in the Philippines with men and groups of men who profess faith in Jesus Christ and interest in particular in the precious Reformed faith which the Lord has entrusted to us and preserved in our churches. We came across brethren in the Philippines which first learned about the Reformed faith through the correspondence Bible

Study program of Rev. Bernard Woudenberg. We also found people who had read the *Reformed*



*Pastors denHartog and Brummel*



*Dogmatics* by Rev. Herman Hoeksema. One pastor was in fact using the dogmatics to teach other men in the Reformed faith. We contacted a young man in Manila who first came to know about our churches through the reading of one of the Reformed Free Publishing Association books. We spoke with a group of men from Negros who had learned about the faithfulness of our churches in their adherence to Reformed doctrine. They have formed themselves into an organization called "Conveners of the Historic Reformed Faith." This organization is very interested in learning more about our churches and the truth God has given to us. Based on this history the FMC last year asked Rev. and Mrs. Jason Kortering to visit several places in the Philippines last year. They did this but were able to make only very short visits. Rev. Kortering gave a very encouraging report to the 1997 synod.

The history detailed above was the reason why the FMC, with the approval of the 1997 synod, decided to send a delegation to the Philippines to find out more about the various contacts there. Plans were made that the delegation should visit four different cities where we have some contacts, including Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. Also it was decided to organize a conference in the little town of Labo, near the city of Daet, on the island of Luzon. This location was chosen because of the presence of an established church with facilities to hold the conference. Knowing the great poverty of the people in the Philippines with whom we had contact, the FMC offered to pay the expenses of a few men from each of the areas of the Philippines where our contacts were. Moneys were sent to leaders of the various groups and they decided whom to send to the conference. This conference envisioned bringing together men from very different areas of the Philippines. To travel to

Daet, some of the men would have to travel by sea and by land for two days.

Rev. Brummel and I flew into Manila on December 3 late in the evening. There we met first with a young man named Allan Bautista. We found Allan to be a vibrant young Christian man greatly interested in learning more about the Reformed faith. Allan arranged hotel accommodations for us in Manila. He also took us to our hotel the night of our arrival. That ride gave us our first taste of the traffic snarls for which Manila is famous. We soon found out that there were many advantages to having a native of the Philippines with us whenever we moved from place to place.

The next morning (Wednesday) we went to the domestic airport in Manila to fly with the Philippine Airlines to the island of Mindanao and the city of Cagayan De Oro. At the airport we had our first experience of the enthusiastic and warm welcome that we would receive everywhere we went. A group of about 30 members of a Bible Study in Cagayan De Oro met us at the airport. They displayed a large banner to welcome us that made us feel as though we were some sort of celebrities, a little embarrassing. Included in this group, interestingly, were a number of young people of high school age. Two members of the Cagayan group teach at the high school where these young people attend and have had a good influence on the students. (I was reminded of my first meeting in Singapore with the members of what was then called the Gospel Literature and Tract Society, when I went to Singapore as missionary of our churches.) We were transported from the airport by Jeepney. There is hardly anything more unique to the Philippines than the Jeepneys. There are more of them on the roads in some places than regular cars. Riding them is an experience in itself.

We were brought to a modest

but very adequate hotel in Cagayan where we would stay the next several days. We were immediately impressed by the low economic standard of the people in the Philippines, especially on the islands away from Manila. This became even more apparent when we attended the first meeting in Cagayan, a Bible Study with about 10 people. The Bible Study was around an old table, outdoors, in the dark, with a few lights, surrounded by shanties which are people's living quarters, pretty far from the luxurious homes we live in here in America. After the Bible Study we had a ride around some of the city before we went back to the hotel.

The next day there was a planned conference. This conference was for ministers and church leaders from the area. It was sponsored by the Bible Study group of Cagayan. One thing we learned very soon was that there are many men who call themselves pastors and who are taking care of small groups which are called churches but are hardly organized churches as we know them. The "pastors" are not all well trained. Many evangelical organizations have Bible schools in the Philippines that turn out one "pastor" after another with minimal training, and then commission them to start a work in an area of their choice by trying to get a following. As you can imagine, this has resulted in many tragic situations. Some of these men get very little financial support. They cannot find other jobs because of the high unemployment (30%) in the Philippines. Tiny so-called churches are found everywhere.

The conference was attended by about 30 people. At the daytime meeting I gave a lecture on the subject "What is the Reformed Faith?" This was only a general summary because we knew that a number of the men from Cagayan were coming to the conference in Labo the following week, and we



did not want to present the subjects of this conference in Cagayan already. After the lecture we experienced our first response to messages given in the Philippines. All of the speeches would generate very lengthy and lively discussions. The discussions indicated that there was a definite interest in the Reformed faith. Most of those attending the meeting were infants in understanding Reformed doctrine. Some were hearing Reformed truth for the first time. A few had learned enough heresy to be strongly opposed to Reformed doctrine.

The Bible Study group in Cagayan De Oro is mostly self supporting. They rent an upstairs hall in a building which, though poor by American standards, is nevertheless adequate for their needs. The Bible Study holds Sunday worship services with regular attendance of about 50 people. They have three pastors, some of whom are better informed and more gifted than others. We were encouraged by the interest in God's Word. We saw also the need of instruction in so many basic areas, even such as what a pastor is and what a church is. But there is an openness and desire to learn. They have some good men with good potential for leadership as the Lord might direct them in developing and growing in the truth. The Cagayan group is commendable in that it is self supporting. This is not very common for church groups in the Philippines. Many depend on support from Western churches.

In the afternoon we visited with Pastor Romegio Lapiz. He seemed to be a good man with a pastoral heart and a good grasp of Reformed truth. We were also impressed with his wife and family. They obviously have a serious Christian home. The family lives in pretty humble circumstances. Pastor Lapiz supplements his support from the Bible Study group with income from teaching a class

in "values" in the high school mentioned earlier in this article. We had a very pleasant visit with this family.

In the evening of the same day there was a special preaching service at which Rev. Brummel preached the Word. The young people from the high school were present at this meeting, as well as a number of the other members of the Bible Study group. To the surprise of Pastor Brummel there was a request to translate his message into the Philippine dialect of the people. From all our contacts in the Philippines we learned that if a missionary were to go there from us he would almost certainly have to learn the Filipino dialect of the people to whom he is ministering.

On Saturday morning we boarded a plane to another city on the island of Mindanao called Davao City. This city seemed to be just a little more prosperous than Cagayan De Oro, though Filipinos told us later that this was not true. At the airport in Davao we were met by another group of people with whom our churches have had contact. This time we rode in a regular taxi from the airport to an outdoor park, where we had lunch, and after that we were brought to our hotel. Later in the day we planned for the activities scheduled for the evening. The group in Davao City meets at the home of Elder Ronald Jacutin. He is a squatter, and the living conditions of his family are pathetically impoverished. The group that met together at Elder Jacutin's residence were from other small works in the area. Many of these men are called pastors for the reason mentioned earlier. At the evening meetings we gave a summary presentation on the Reformed faith. Pastor Brummel dealt with some of the difficult passages in scripture often used to attempt to refute Reformed doctrine.

The next morning being Sunday, I was asked to speak at the church of one of the men who was

part of the group at Elder Jacutin's home. The church, to my dismay, had a very Pentecostal worship service. Pentecostalism is widespread in the Philippines. It has engulfed even churches with connections to Western denominations that have Presbyterian and Reformed traditions. Pastor Brummel preached at a worship service in Elder Jacutin's residence. I joined the meetings there in the afternoon and evenings. At these meetings there were speeches and discussions on subjects like infant baptism and on what it means to be a pastor and what it means to be a church. Discussions at these meetings were lively. The men there showed varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of Reformed doctrine. Most of the speeches were translated into the Filipino dialect of the men present. This dialect is called Cebuano.

On Monday morning we had a little opportunity to walk the streets of Davao near our hotel. We found out what a rarity Americans are in most of the Philippines. An American really attracts attention when he walks down the streets. Even the downtown areas of Davao City are pretty poor by American standards. We did not encounter any hostility from the people there, though we were told of the need of being careful. Many of the people were very pleasant and gracious. It seemed to us that Davao City was a place where an American missionary family could live without severe hardships.

Later that day we boarded a plane to travel back to Manila. Flights into Daet, our next stop, were scheduled only on Tuesdays and Saturdays, only one flight on each of these days. The city of Daet is about 60,000 in population but obviously pretty isolated. It is probably almost fifty years behind the Western world in development.

Tuesday morning we traveled to Daet. We were met there at the airport again by an enthusiastic group. There are two Reformed



pastors in Daet with whom our Foreign Mission Committee has had extensive contact. They are a father and son, Pastor Modesto Tanierla (69 years old) and his son Pastor Percival Tanierla (42 years old). These two men proved to be delightful. They are pastors in the true biblical sense of the word. They are wholly devoted to their work in the church, and they have real love for the Reformed truth and for the people to whom they minister. They zealously desire to teach the truth to as many as the Lord in His providence will bring to them. We had a very blessed time of fellowship with these two men.

We rode from the airport in a small open jeep. This jeep and its faithful driver ( a member of the church) would take us on many journeys during the next several days. Again I must limit myself in giving details of the interesting experiences we had in Daet in this little jeep, usually loaded down, with people sometimes even hanging out of the sides. The city of Daet is in a rural setting. We drove through the country to get to the church and meeting place of the conference in a town called Labo. The countryside reminds one of pictures from Vietnam during the days of American involvement there. All around you see rice paddies submersed in water. There are the typical water buffalo pulling crude implements through the wa-



*Our hosts, Pastor and Mrs. Tanierla, and our cooks.*

ter-filled fields divided into small square sections. There were torrential rains almost every day, which made travel in an open jeep interesting.

The conference was the main event of our stay in the Philippines. We were told the first day what the schedule would be. The planned speeches were scheduled for the evening so that members of the church who worked during the day could attend the meetings. We were faced with having to keep the four groups of men at the conference busy the whole day. There were no nearby resorts to drive off to. The groups at the conference traveled from Manila, Negros, and Mindanao. Some traveled for two days to come to the conference. Meals were made by the ladies of the church (three a day for a group of about 40 to 50 people). They did an excellent job. The food was different but good. The attendees

ate heartily, probably because they were getting better food than they were used to at home. Accommodations were makeshift. Some slept on the church pews, others in huts around the church sanctuary.

Conversations with men at the conference soon gave us all kinds of good

topics to give presentations on. The presentations were on infant baptism, the work of the Holy Spirit, Reformed church government, and the three views of the millennium, including especially a critique of dispensationalism. Lectures had to be prepared early in the mornings, beginning usually at 5:00 A.M. Needless to say, we were kept very busy. There was very little time for sight-seeing; but, then, that was not the purpose of our visit anyway. There was great interest in all the lectures. Discussions and debates afterwards always had to be cut off long before all questions were answered. We had an exciting time of presenting the truth to men who ranged from a good measure of knowledge and full agreement with almost all we had to say, to men who were hearing the things we were teaching for the first time in their lives, and some who were strongly opposed to what they heard. One has to be a walking Bible commentary in a situation like this. It was heartening to hear from men who have a good grasp of Reformed doctrine. It was also amazing to hear heresy of almost every sort that had been brought by various denominational works of Western churches into the Philippines.

All the evening meetings were well attended. The little church was almost full to capacity. Among those who attended the evening meetings were also young people, some of whom were receiv-



*Our driver shows us around the city of Labo.*





*Conference in Labo,  
in Pastor Percival Tanierla's church.*

ing instruction from Pastors Percival and Modesto Tanierla. Some of these were new to Reformed teaching and were just so eager to listen to what we had to bring to them. Giving the speeches on the great doctrines of grace was exciting in ways that words can hardly describe. We have taught these truths for years in our own churches and on so many occasions that we might become complacent in regards to the wonder of these truths. How exciting it is to teach this glorious and blessed truth of the gospel to those who are eagerly discovering and hearing about them for the first time.

I must still tell you about our particular joy in fellowship with the brethren from Negros. They are members of the group called Conveners of the Historic Reformed Faith. These men are obviously more advanced in their knowledge of Reformed teachings than some of the others. They are men who have a good formal education as well. The group includes one who is a medical doctor, one who is an attorney, another a physical therapist, and some who are teachers, as well as those who have had a good measure of training in theology. They are conversant with the writings of many Reformed theologians. They are able to see more deeply the importance of maintaining a distinctively Reformed position. They have learned to combat heresy as they have grown in their knowledge of

the truth of the Word of God.

In conclusion, the brethren at the conference were easy to love and a joy to have fellowship with. On the Friday evening before our departure from Daet, both Pastor Brummel and I preached in the church in downtown Daet that is cared

for by Pastor Tanierla senior. We had occasion to demonstrate in sermons how Reformed truth is present in the regular preaching in church.

We left with sad good-byes from Daet. Bonds in the truth had been formed in our short visit there. On Saturday morning we flew back to Manila. In Manila we stayed at Shalom Mission, which is a modest accommodation for missionaries and church workers from various denominations. The cost of staying there is considerably less than hotel accommodations.

We had made arrangements to meet with the director of the Christian Reformed Missions in the Philippines on Sunday and also to attend a worship service in one of their congregations in the Philippines. Pastor Lee Baas was very helpful in giving us an overview of the mission work which the Christian Reformed Church and some other denominations have done in the Philippines. Having been in the Philippines for eight years he could tell us about the difficulties and problems they have faced as well as the joys. We believe our meeting with Pastor Baas will be valuable for advising the Foreign Mission Committee regarding the physical aspects of setting up a mission work in the Philippines, should the Lord so direct our churches.

Because of traffic conditions in Manila we were not able to attend

the church we had planned to visit in the evening. We did however have another opportunity to visit more with the young man mentioned at the beginning of our report. This was done in the cool of the evening while walking along scenic Manila Bay.

It is our prayer that the Lord will guide our Foreign Mission Committee and our synod this summer so that we might know what is the Lord's will for our churches as far as future mission work in the Philippines is concerned. We believe there is an open door in the Philippines. We met with a number of dear saints of God. There are a number of these who would greatly welcome the help of our churches in teaching them the gospel as we believe it is outlined in our Reformed creeds. They want our help in establishing Reformed churches. Some expressly stated this to us.

For various reasons a missionary family would face many difficulties living in the Philippines. However, there are many Western missionaries who have coped with living there for many years. As in all fields, there are problems that would have to be faced. There is the problem of the poverty of many of the people. There is the problem of the difficulty of establishing self-supporting churches in such a situation. Roman Catholicism is very strong in the Philippines. Pentecostalism has had widespread influence. There are other heresies that have had a strong influence in the country. The "peace and order" situation, using the slogan of the Philippines, can present some danger in parts of the Philippines. Foreign mission work is always very difficult. May the Lord enable us as churches and ministers of the gospel for the salvation of God's people to face the challenges. □



## The Covenant of Marriage

### 2. Courtship Within the Covenant (cont.)

**D**ating, or courtship, is a serious matter! It is not a popularity contest to see how many girls or guys one can go out with. It is not a game to see how far one can go sexually without going all the way. Neither is it a means which one uses simply to have fun with a person (believer or unbeliever) without any commitments or responsibilities. Dating is not a game! On the contrary, dating is courtship. It is a means which a person uses prayerfully to seek out a spouse. It is to be used by a man and woman solely for the purpose of ascertaining whether God has intended them to spend a lifetime together in marriage. That is the godly goal of dating or courtship.

If this is truly the purpose or goal of dating, however, then it carries with it some very practical implications for our dating life. These we consider in this and the next couple of articles. As we do, keep in mind that we are not using the standard that is set for us by the wicked society in which we live. We do not follow after the example or the advice unbelievers give us in this area of our lives. We are Christians—followers of Christ. We therefore follow the norm of Scripture. We are believers whose dating life is governed by the covenant which God has established with us. The bond of friendship God establishes with His people in Christ has much to say about dating. How so? Consider the following.

#### A man must search out a wife

God's covenant relationship with His people has much to say about who takes the lead in dating. We have already learned in previous articles that the covenant relationship which God establishes with His church is described in Scripture as a marriage relationship (e.g., Is. 62:4, 5). We need not demonstrate that again. The question we wish to consider is: who sought out whom in this relationship? Did the church, the bride, seek out God or Christ, the bridegroom? Or did God search out His bride in this world?

The answer is clear from Scripture: God seeks and saves His church! This is firmly established in eternity already in the counsel of God. God who is the eternal One, in order to bring glory to His name, determined to share His fellowship with the creature outside of Himself. To accomplish this goal God elected Christ as the firstborn among His people (Col. 1:15-17). Only upon this election of Christ follows the election of the church (Col. 1:18). In eternity already, therefore, we find the bridegroom (God) choosing unto Himself in Christ His bride (the church).

But what is firmly rooted in eternity is even more clearly revealed in time. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, this affected the entire human race, including God's elect. "... for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom. 3:9). When God looks down from heaven to assess the children of men, to see if there are any that understand and seek Him (Ps. 14),

this is what He finds: "there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:10, 11). This is true of God's elect, too, prior to salvation. We are children of wrath even as others. But God seeks out His people in this world. Jesus speaks of this in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The divine Bridegroom seeks His wife. This is described most beautifully in Ezekiel 16. It is profitable to read the entire passage, but a quotation of verses 4-8 here will suffice.

And as for thy nativity, in the day that thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee in thine own blood, I said unto thee, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.

This is the divine example we are given in Scripture.

*Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.*



This example must govern us in our dating life: the man is called by God to seek a wife. Already in this approach to courtship we find an all-important principle being established which later will be exercised in marriage itself. The husband is called to exercise headship in his marriage. Contrary to the cry of alarm sounded by the feminists, this is not chauvinistic! It is proper! And it is only logical too! If the man is going to assume headship in his home as Scripture commands him to do, then that headship is not something turned on like a light-switch on the day of his marriage. It is exercised from the very start. It begins with a man searching out a wife and continues on into the dating relationship and finally into marriage itself.

This role of the man seeking a wife is also scriptural. We need only look at the examples of godly men of old. Abraham sent a servant to Haran to find a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24). The opposite was not true: Rebekah did not come seeking Isaac. Jacob too was charged by Isaac with these words, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother" (Gen. 28:1, 2). Prior to the Flood we also read of "the sons of God" taking the lead in seeking to themselves wives. We read in Genesis 6:1, 2: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and took them wives of all which they chose." The sons of the church sinned, of course, by marrying ungodly wives—but not by taking the lead in seeking out wives for themselves.

Other passages of Scripture simply assume that it is the man who seeks and finds for himself a wife. Proverbs 18:22: "Whoso

findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord." Proverbs 31:10: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." Proverbs 18:19: "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid."

This is the knowledge God's Word gives to us about a man's role in dating. But knowledge is not wisdom. We can know what God's Word says, yet not be very wise in God's Word. Spiritual wisdom is the ability to put the knowledge we have of God's Word into effect practically in our lives. It is also the ability to discern what might dictate against God's Word in a small but subtle way. We say this because there has definitely been worldly influence on us in this whole area of dating. We do not always detect this because Satan is pretty shrewd when dealing with the church. Yet, there is something appealing to us too about that free, independent woman. The world makes her look so glamorous.

The sinful trends of feminism today are glaring! Feminists make their voices heard in politics and in society. We cringe when we hear of their agenda! But the views of feminists have made their way also into the media. Their doctrine of the supremacy (not equality) of the female gender creeps into the novels, magazines, and movies of today. And far too many of us sinfully enjoy reading about it and watching it. Yet, we assure ourselves, all of that is "out there" in the wicked world and we personally would not care to follow in this way. We are not affected by the feminist propaganda that pervades society. Are we sure about that?

Many churches today which at one time were solidly rooted in the Reformed truths of Scripture have come under the horrible influence

of feminist thought. Women in church office and the career woman who gives her own children into the hands of day-care are just a couple of evidences of the horrible influences of feminism on the church. No wonder we witness so much divorce and remarriage in the church! Husbands and wives cohabit the same house, but do not care to depend on each other financially and emotionally. They live together but develop little interdependence. Yet, we contend, these things have not affected us as they have others. Maybe not to that degree as yet—of that we can be grateful. But do not forget how shrewd Satan is! Do not forget to be wise so that you are able to discern what his subtle attacks are on us! Feminism slowly but surely filters into the church. It trickles into the church in little, almost imperceptible, streams.

Who takes the lead in asking another out on a date? The young man, of course! Does he do that during "twerp week" too? "Come on! Don't be such a kill-joy! This is only done in fun!" Is dating ever supposed to be a game? Do we switch gender roles in courtship in order to make it fun? Are we as adults teaching our children wisdom and discretion in dating with such a frivolous practice?

Who calls whom when seriously desirous of finding a life's mate? The young man, of course! Are we teaching our children this when we allow our daughters (sometimes when they are thirteen or fourteen already!) to call young men on the phone to lay the "subtle" hint that they really like him and want to "go with" him? "Now you are going too far! We may not discourage our children by placing handcuffs on them in this whole area of their young lives. We did it when we were young and we turned out all right." We ought to ask ourselves a serious question in this connection. What are we teaching our children when we allow them to do this? Are we teach-



ing them that courtship is an aspect of life which a person must always take seriously? If so, then parents must teach their children that there are certain rules in dating. We must not simply allow our children to follow after the standards set by our godless society. We must teach our children correct behavior in dating. That means we must instruct our sons to be willing to exert headship and our daughters to be adorned with a "meek and a quiet" spirit.

These, of course, are only a couple of examples. They may seem to be of little consequence. And maybe that is true. But then, they are only examples. It is not the intention of this article to call attention to particulars. They are mentioned only in order to stimu-

late our thinking about the significance of dating. Dating will set the course for one's whole future life in marriage. It is a serious matter when young men and women of the covenant and church of Christ date one another. If there is one thing Scripture is clear on it is this: every aspect of courting and marriage is of weighty significance. And, yes, that begins already in the matter of directing our young men to do the searching, and our young women to wait patiently on God to bring to them a man of His choosing.

Parents must exercise wisdom while guiding their children to establish a good marriage and family. The divorce rate even in the church is on the rise. Can we stem

the tide? Scripture teaches what the calling of a young man and woman is in seeking a mate. God's covenant with His church lays a valuable foundation for us in this matter. A lifelong commitment in marriage is greatly assisted by following this Word of God. We *know* what God's Word tells us. But it is only the wise person who will take this Word in hand and put it to practical use in his life. May God give such wisdom to parents whose children are of age to date.

May God give wisdom to young men and women in the church to use His Word to guide them in this important matter of dating. May we be bold to stand against the pressures of the wicked world and society in which we live. God give us wisdom. □

**Decency and Order**

**Rev. Ron Cammenga**

## Special Days of Prayer

"In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches, it is fitting that the classis proclaim a day of prayer."

Church Order, Article 66.

### The Original Article of Dordt

As is well known, the Roman Catholic Church multiplied special days of fasting and prayer. The Reformed churches condemned this multiplication of days. At the same time, they saw the spiritual benefits of fasting and prayer. They believed that there were certain times when circumstances called for the saints to come together in order to humble them-

selves before God and implore His grace. Thus the inclusion of Article 66 in our Church Order.

Our present Article 66 differs somewhat from the article adopted originally by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19. The original article read as follows:

In times of war, pestilence, national calamities, severe persecution of the churches and other general difficulties, the ministers shall petition the government that by its authority and order public fasting and prayer days may be designated and set aside.

Several differences may be noted.

First, our article speaks of the "classis," whereas the original article spoke of the "ministers" taking the initiative in the proclamation of special days of prayer.

Second, the original article spoke of the government setting aside these prayer days, whereas our present article makes no mention of the government. Undoubtedly this was due to the fact that on these days of prayer all businesses, schools, and amusements were shut down. Public life came

*Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*



to a standstill, as was otherwise the case only on the Sabbath.

Third, excluded in our present article as a cause for a special day of prayer is "severe persecution of the churches." For some unknown reason this was dropped in the 1914 revision of the Church Order by the Christian Reformed Church. Perhaps it was felt that if the church was experiencing severe persecution, it would hardly be possible for the congregations to gather for public worship. Nevertheless, this certainly qualifies as a compelling reason for a special day of prayer. It would be good, therefore, that any future revision of the Church Order restore this phrase of Dordt.

Fourth, our present article contains no reference to fasting. This is regrettable. The original article of Dordt combined fasting and prayer. These were to be special days not only of prayer, but also of fasting. Consideration ought to be given to reinstating the reference to fasting in any future revision of the Church Order.

#### The Provision of Article 66

Article 66 is concerned with special days of prayer. These prayer days are to be distinguished from the annual Day of Prayer for crops which is referred to in Article 67. These are not regularly scheduled days of prayer, but special days of prayer arising out of extraordinary circumstances.

These extraordinary circumstances are the circumstances generally referred to in the article: war, pestilence, national calamity, other great afflictions, and persecution. In various ways these circumstances bring "pressure" to bear on the churches. The church is not immune from these disasters. Although separate from the world, the church is in the world. And being in the world means that the saints experience the trouble, pain, and temptations associated with these afflictions.

The classis is authorized by the

article to designate these special days of prayer. Undoubtedly a classis would do this at the request of one of its member consistories. The special day of prayer, therefore, would affect all of the churches in that particular classis. It may very well be that the circumstances prompting a classis to set aside a special day of prayer are circumstances that do not prevail in neighboring classes. This is the more likely in our own situation in which our classes are rather large geographically and congregations widely separated.

Even though Article 66 authorizes a classis to call for a special day of prayer, the article does not prohibit either a local consistory or the general synod from designating such days.

There may be reasons locally for a consistory to take this step, for example, if the congregation's meeting place is destroyed by fire or its pastor unjustly imprisoned. Acts 12 tells us that many of the saints of the congregation at Jerusalem were gathered for prayer at the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, at the time that Peter was miraculously delivered from prison.

The general synod may designate a day of prayer. The "national calamities" referred to in Article 66 may affect the churches of all the classes. Or all the churches may come under the pressure of a general persecution.

However, ordinarily, individual classes will designate special days of prayer for the churches within that particular classis.

On the designated day, each local consistory will issue a call to worship. As on the Sabbath, the members of the church are expected to heed this summons. Although these are special days of prayer, the Word is to be administered, as is always the case when the congregation is gathered for worship. The ministers should preach a sermon appropriate to the specific occasion. In the Nether-

lands the congregations would often spend the entire day in church, at the same time refraining from eating and drinking. Usually two sermons were preached, and between the sermons the congregation would engage in prayer and singing.

At times the question arose whether these special days of prayer should be designated on a Sunday or on a week-day. The consensus of the synods was that they should ordinarily be held on a week-day.

The purpose of these special days of prayer is not simply that the church request that the Lord remove whatever calamity He has sent. Such a request has its place in the church, which all the while submits such a petition to the will of God, as it does in the life of the individual Christian. But beyond that, it is the purpose of these special days of prayer to recognize the hand of the Lord in whatever afflictions He has sent, and His goodness in sending them. The purpose is to humble ourselves under the heavy hand of the Lord, confessing our sins and acknowledging that in ourselves we deserve far worse than extreme earthly affliction. The purpose is to pray for His preserving grace in the affliction, the grace neither to complain nor to find fault with God's ways which are always higher than our ways.

#### What About Fasting?

As noted earlier, the reference to fasting in the original article of the *Church Order of Dordt* has been dropped in our Church Order. There are two explanations for this.

First, the Reformed churches reacted to the unbiblical practice of fasting in the Roman Catholic Church. Rome imposed fasts on the people. And Rome promoted fasting as meritorious.

Second, the practice of fasting gradually fell into disuse in the Reformed churches.

Is there, however, a legitimate



place for fasting in the life of the New Testament Christian? Is it appropriate at certain times for believers to be encouraged to abstain from food and drink so that they may give themselves to prayer and other exercises of piety? Ought we to give fasting more of a place than we do?

The Scriptures contain numerous references to fasting. Under the Old Testament economy there were mandatory fasts associated with the solemn festivals appointed by God in Israel. The Scriptures refer often to voluntary fasts. David fasted as long as the child born to Bathsheba still lived (II Sam. 12:21ff.). The people of Nineveh fasted in response to Jonah's proclamation of God's intention to destroy their city (Jonah 3:5ff.). The Lord Jesus fasted for

forty days and forty nights at the time of His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2). The church at Antioch fasted prior to sending out Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:2, 3).

Without doubt, fasting ought still to have a place in the life of New Testament Christians. Nowhere do the New Testament Scriptures bind fasting on believers at set times and for prescribed lengths of time. Fasting in the New Testament is to be voluntary fasting. The church is not to mandate fasting. But that does not mean that at certain times the church may not encourage fasting. It may and it ought.

Fasting has several purposes. The main purpose of fasting is the better to dispose the soul to prayer

and meditation. No distraction, not even the distraction of food and drink, are permitted to take the believer's mind off God or to interrupt his supplication of God. Besides this, fasting is an expression of sorrow and repentance. Fasting in Scripture is often associated with confession of sin, the outward manifestation of the strickenness of the inward man.

It is doubtful that the provision of Article 66 has ever been implemented in the history of our churches. Perhaps some day circumstances will arise which persuade the churches to proclaim a special day of prayer. For it lives in the consciousness of Reformed Christians that prayer is the chief vehicle by which we express our gratitude to God and receive from God His grace and Holy Spirit. □

## Book Reviews

*Believers and Their Seed: Children in the Covenant*, by Herman Hoeksema. Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, revised edition, 1997. 166 pages. \$17.95 (hard cover). [Reviewed by Rev. D.H. Kuiper.]

There are really only two views of the covenant of grace. One view holds that the covenant of God is unilateral. The other view is that it is bilateral. That the covenant is unilateral or one-sided means that God is sovereign in every aspect of the covenant: He conceived of it, established it, maintains it, and perfects it. There are not two *parties* in the covenant, but one, and that is God. There are two *parts* to the covenant, God's and man's; but God performs His part, and also works man's part by the power of His grace. The other view of the covenant, bilateralism, has God and man in contract or agreement. Each has a work to perform. When God does His part and man does his part then the covenant is successful. In this book Herman Hoeksema argues successfully that the covenant is unilateral. And he shows that all other views are essentially bilateral, and as such partake of Arminianism to one degree or another.

From a certain point of view, *Believers and Their Seed* is Hoeksema's most important book, for it sets forth his greatest contribution to Reformed theology. At the same time, the view of the covenant developed here sets forth the heart of Protestant Reformed theology; if anyone wants to know what these churches stand for, in distinction from other Reformed denominations, this book will make that clear. As the sovereignty of God is the great truth that underlies and unifies the five points of Calvinism, so the sovereignty of God is the basis of Hoeksema's understanding of the covenant. God is God! Salvation is of the Lord alone! And salvation, the covenant, and the grace of God revealed therein, are only for the elect whom God has chosen in eternity and unconditionally.

Because Hoeksema was intellectually honest and thoroughly committed to Holy Scripture and the Reformed confessions, it is safe to say that his insistence on particular grace assisted him in developing a view of the covenant that was biblically grounded and in harmony with the genius of the confessions. It is striking that in 1927, only three years after he was expelled from the Christian Reformed Church

for opposing the theory of common grace, he set forth his covenant view in eleven editorials in the *Standard Bearer*. Those editorials form the contents of this book, first published in the Dutch language, then in an English translation in 1971, and now in this attractive reprint. This volume also contains a twenty-six page preface by Prof. David Engelsma which gives a biography of Hoeksema and a thorough introduction to the book itself.

As Prof. Engelsma points out, the significance of the book is that it makes six points about the covenant, points we believe Reformed churches need badly to hear today. 1) The essence of the covenant is friendship, friendship between God and His people through the work of Jesus Christ. And this friendship is to be traced back to the triune life of God Himself. God is the covenant God because He enjoys a life of friendship, first within Himself, and then with His people. 2) Included in this covenant life are the children of believers, for God saves His church in the line of continued generations. And for this reason infants are to be baptized. 3) There is one church throughout the ages, one covenant under Old and New Testament forms. Baptism has replaced circumcision. Infants



must receive the token of the covenant. 4) The covenant is established only with the elect. Here we see Hoeksema faithful to the Canons of Dordt as he applies the doctrines of grace to the covenant. Because believers bring forth a twofold seed, the elect and the reprobate, it is necessary to distinguish the covenant from the sphere of the covenant. Only elect children of believers are *in* the covenant of grace. The Esaus in the church are not in the covenant, but are merely in the sphere of the covenant for which they are judged the more strictly. 5) The doctrinal struggle of 1953 must be seen as a controversy over the covenant: Would the Protestant Reformed Churches remain faithful to her historical moorings, or would she adopt

bilateralism as regards the covenant? Hoeksema shows that the Christian Reformed view of the covenant was basically the same as that espoused by Dr. K. Schilder and the Liberated Churches, and therefore must be rejected. And 6) Hoeksema rejects the Kuyperian notion of presupposed regeneration as the reason for the baptism of infants. It is a mystery of modern church history that time and again Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches are charged with maintaining presupposed regeneration.

I have used the book to study the doctrine of the covenant twice, once with the adult members of a small congregation and once with older young people and young adults. Both times

the experience was profitable and enjoyable for all concerned. We encourage others to study this important book, either personally or in society. Such a study will send us to Holy Scripture to learn what it means that God is the covenant God, and why the covenant is called the covenant of *grace*. Such a study, humbly and prayerfully undertaken, will be an act of friendship.

Many years ago an older pastor advised me to read Chapter 5 of the book before all the other chapters. In Chapter 5 the "Meaning of the Covenant" is set forth. With that in mind the other chapters are more understandable. We found that to be true, and pass the suggestion on for your consideration. □

## Report of Classis East

January 14, 1998  
Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 14, 1998, at the Southwest PRC. The churches were each represented by two delegates; Rev. W. Bruinsma chaired this session. Present for the first time as active pastors were Revs. Laning and VanderWal. Mr. Cal Kalsbeek's church history students from Covenant Christian High School were in attendance for part of the morning session.

This was a relatively light session for a January classis. No one seemed to mind the change. Reports were heard from the Stated Clerk, the Classical Committee, and the church visitors. The church visitors report peace

and harmony in our congregations. One matter of discipline was treated in closed session.

Southwest PRC presented an overture proposing the creation of the office of vice-president for classis. This overture was approved; the vice-president will be the pastor who is next in line alphabetically to be the chairman of classis.

In voting, the following results: Synodical Delegates: Ministers—*Primi*—R. Cammenga, B. Gritters, K. Koole, J. Slopsema, C. Terpstra; *Secundi*—W. Bruinsma, M. Dick, Dale Kuiper, A. Spriensma, R. Van Overloop; Elders—*Primi*—W. De Kraker, D. Harbach, Cal Kalsbeek, D. Ondersma, T. Spriensma; *Secundi*—T. Bodbyl, T. DeVries, D. Kregel, H. Rutgers, J. VanDyke. Delegates *Ad*

*Examina*: Rev. Dale Kuiper for a three-year *primus* term and Rev. M. Dick to a three-year *secundus* term. Classical Committee: Rev. B. Gritters was elected to a three-year term. Church Visitors: Revs. Dale Kuiper and J. Slopsema with Rev. K. Koole as alternate.

In matters of finance, subsidy requests for 1999 for Kalamazoo for \$19,500 and for Covenant for \$37,500 were approved. Covenant also informed the classis that its 1998 subsidy would be reduced by \$3,000 to \$40,500. The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,423.00.

Classis will meet next at the Southeast PRC on Wednesday, May 13, 1998.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

### Mr. Benjamin Wigger

#### School Activities

Our Christian schools continue to enjoy increases in their enrollment.

Addressing that "problem," the school society of the Hope Chris-

tian School in Redlands, CA met on December 15 to consider two proposals submitted by their school board. The first was to approve adding an additional teacher to their staff for the upcoming year, and the second was to approve the construction of another building, consisting of two classrooms and additional bathroom facilities. Both proposals, after discussion, were passed unanimously. The

Lord willing, construction will begin as early as mid-way through this month.

Once more this 1998 season, the Hope Foundation of the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI is presenting their annual travelogue series at Grandville Middle School in Grandville, MI. Plans called for four travelogues this year, ranging from a canoeing adventure in the Northwest Territories in Canada, to

---

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



Australia, over to Turkey, and finally coming to a conclusion in April in Switzerland.

#### **Evangelism Activities**

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL has recently published business-size cards with their church's address and phone number on them. The first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism is on the back. It was hoped that these cards would be used in introducing others to their church. They could also be sent to people in cards and letters, handed to friends and neighbors with whom one has contact, and left in places of business.

From a letter received by the Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI we quote a few lines, "I have passed out more than 1,000 copies of PRC booklets in the past five years ... to the men in my Bible Study at Kent County Correctional Facility.... The men eagerly take your materials and comment on how much it has helped them come to know who God is and His way of salvation...." from Mr. Donald VanderKolk, Puritan Reformed Prison Ministry, Grand Rapids, MI.

#### **Congregational Activities**

The consistory of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC has granted their pastor, Rev. W. Bruinsma, permission to conduct a class on church polity. Rev. Bruinsma planned to start each class with a brief period of instruction, followed by discussion on subjects dealing with the duties and labors of officebearers, the inner working of a consistory, and the church order. Kalamazoo's consistory hoped that this class would stimulate discussion among

those who have served and now presently serve in office; and they hoped also that men who have not served, especially younger men, would be able to use this class to learn of this important work of the church.

This year two of our congregations reach important milestones in their history, D.V. Our Faith PRC in Jenison will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on February 15, and our Loveland, CO PRC will celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on June 7. As part of the observance of these events, both congregations made plans to put together a pictorial directory for 1998. We also know that Faith made plans for an anniversary program on February 15. We are sure that Loveland will do the same as June draws closer.

You might also be interested in knowing that back in 1958, when Loveland was organized, their budget, based on 17 families, came to \$4.25 per week. Rent for their parsonage was \$780 per year. And their pastor's salary was \$3,800.00.

The council of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI called a special congregational meeting for January 29 to deal with recommendations from the council concerning a church building. The council recommended to their congregation that it approve a Phase I building program which included a preliminary site plan, a concept building design, and a tentative financial plan.

After study of various designs and floor plans, Georgetown is looking at a building with a seating capacity of about 500 persons. This building will also include a large narthex for fellowship after worship services and an exterior style that is traditional and church-

like. The proposed site plan and building design was approved. Consequently, the next step is to engage an architect to prepare detailed working plans. If all goes according to plan, Georgetown could begin construction as early as this summer.

#### *Food for Thought*

"Prayer as it comes from the saint is weak and languid; but when the arrow of a saint's prayer is put into the bow of Christ's intercession, it pierces the throne of grace."

—Thomas Watson □

### *ANNOUNCEMENTS*

#### **TEACHERS NEEDED**

Adams Christian School of Grand Rapids, MI needs an elementary teacher for the 1998-1999 school year. Interested persons should contact Ted Pipe at (616) 452-9367, or the school principal, Peter Hoekstra, at (616) 531-0748.

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is accepting applications for a kindergarten teaching position for the 1998-1999 school year. Those interested should contact Ron Koole at (616) 735-1816, or Charles Kalsbeek (616) 453-6437, or send an application to the school, 1545 Wilson Avenue S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49544.

#### **NOTICE!!**

All standing and special committees of synod, as well as individuals who wish to address synod, are hereby notified that all material for the 1998 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to:

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