



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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Valued In Contempt

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

Matthew 27:9

The event of our text took place during the time between the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and the public trial before Pilate, and is the conclusion of the matters in which Judas Iscariot was involved in the suffering of our Lord. Judas Iscariot attempted to escape the accusations of his conscience. He ought to have fallen on his knees before the Lord, confessed his sin, and turned to walk as a repentant child. But for this he had no heart. So he tried other ways to escape the testimony of judgment that was against him for his sin.

In the account of the priests' actions in respect to this activity of Judas, we see the true nature of the sin of man, and we see what man naturally thinks of Christ. And we read that these things must come to pass that Scripture be fulfilled.

Judas Iscariot had betrayed the Lord and could now find no rest, as the sin of betraying Jesus filled him with a torment that he could not escape. This is always true of sin when true repentance and a godly sorrow do not follow it. And this was exactly the case with Judas. There was no true sorrow before God for this sin, and all that Judas' repentance was, as it is spoken of in our text, was mere despair. Judas, we read, "when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself." The wicked cannot sin against God with impunity.

They may try to cover up their sin and its damning testimony, but in reality they cannot. Judas now lives with the testimony of his betrayal of the Lord, and that evil holds him in condemnation.

By going to the chief priests he attempts to lay the responsibility for his transgression upon them, by giving back to them the money they had given him. But they respond by saying that this all belongs to Judas. They say, "What is that to us? see thou to that." They will not have any part in the taking of responsibility for what Judas did. Judas therefore throws the money down on the floor and leaves. But, of course, this would not give him rest, for he could not in this way remove his guilt before the Judge of heaven and earth. Not willing to turn unto the Lord, he continues

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his foolishness of sin and hangs himself. And the priests, with pretended piety, determine that they must have nothing to do with this blood money. So they go to the potter with the money and buy his field, with a view to using it for a burial place for bury the poor.

Thus Jesus was valued at the price of a slave. Such is man's great contempt of the Christ.

Matthew then points out that this took place that Scripture might be fulfilled. There is no other way to consider that which took place. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value." The great contempt that natural man has for Christ—that is the meaning of the Spirit in these words.

Matthew attributes the prophecy to Jeremiah, when in fact the words quoted are not specifically from any single passage of Jeremiah, but are found quite literally in the prophecy of Zechariah. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zech. 11:12, 13).

Is it possible, then, that Matthew made a mistake in the quote? There could, of course, have been no mistake, not because man cannot make mistakes, but because the Scriptures are inspired by the Spirit of God, and thus without error. We believe that the Spirit led Matthew to write our text exactly in this way, and that it was not an error on the part of the writer or copyist. To understand why the Spirit so instructed Matthew to pen these words, we must understand that the Scripture is a unity, that it stands together as one, and that it expresses this unity in its interre-

lation. Surely that is the case in the present instance, as we find the same Word of God set forth for us in Zechariah and Jeremiah.

The essence of this prophecy is to be found as the recurring theme of Old Testament prophecy. First, consider that God always revealed through the prophets that He did all things for the salvation of His people. He had through the prophets given His people the Word of His covenant, and His promise that would be fulfilled in Christ. Secondly, prophecy also pointed out that wicked Israel, as they stood before this Word of salvation, always despised that Word and the work of God through the prophets and made it clear that they found that Word and work of the Lord contemptible. Thirdly, the Scriptures teach that this hatred for the word of the prophets (which really was a hatred for Christ, the Word) was always brought by the wicked in the face of Jehovah. The result is that God judges wicked Israel for their contempt of Him and destroys them, in order to bring the gospel to others. This is the basic teaching also of this prophecy, which is fulfilled when Christ, the Prophet, stands before men.

This is the reason why the Spirit led Matthew to refer to Jeremiah while quoting quite literally the prophecy of Zechariah. The reason that Jeremiah is mentioned is the fact that in the prophecy of Jeremiah we find the truth of the prophecy of Zechariah even more emphatically expressed. In Jeremiah it is pointed out that the potter is God.

In the prophecy of Zechariah we find that the prophet is presented as a shepherd. As such He is God's ambassador or representative. The people of Israel are the flock unto whom the Word of God has been brought. The people of Israel, however, are wicked, and the shepherd will make an end of bringing them the word. He will be a shepherd unto them no more. He therefore asks them his wages,

so to speak: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (v. 12). Confronted with the question as to the worth of the labor of the prophet, they showed their utter contempt for the Word of God in their midst, for there is measured out 30 pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). There is thus a mocking contempt for the labors of the prophet, and for the covenant God who sends the prophet, and for His Word, and for Jehovah who has sent Him. The prophet was therefore called upon by God to cast the thirty pieces of silver unto the potter in the house of the Lord.

In Jeremiah we find one major difference: the Potter is presented as God Himself. Jehovah is in the house of the Lord, He abides in His Holy temple. He is the Potter who does what He wills with the vessel that is in His hand. Jeremiah declares the essential evil that Zechariah in his prophecy pointed out. Israel casts contempt upon the Potter when they cast their contempt upon His prophets. The Potter Himself remembers their hatred for His Word and their despising Him that sent it. It becomes the ground for His condemnation of them. He mars the vessel in order to make it into another.

Fulfilled In Christ

The shepherds of the old dispensation, the prophets, were types of the Prophet of God that comes as the Shepherd of God's sheep. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of all the old dispensation faithful prophets, for He is the Word come in our flesh. He is Jehovah-salvation, come to save His elect church. On the other hand, Judas represents wicked Israel, as do also the wicked priests. For notice that our text speaks in the plural. Matthew 27:9: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of sil-

ver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value." This prophecy, therefore, makes reference not only to Judas. It included the priests of the Jews, the elders, the people of Israel, as well as Judas. Judas, in a sense, represented this whole carnal element of Israel. The sin of all of wicked Israel throughout the old dispensation and at the time of Christ was fulfilled in his sin. The measure of iniquity was made full. This was the culmination of the contempt of natural man for God throughout the ages. Thirty pieces of silver was the price that Judas agreed on with the priests to betray Jesus. For this price the deal was done. This is what all parties agreed was the value of Jesus—the price of a slave. Thus, at the time of our text in Matthew, the prophecy of Zechariah/Jeremiah must be fulfilled.

Judas took the money and threw it on the floor in the temple before the priests, and that money was given to the potter for his field. In the prophecy of Zechariah, the prophet was called upon to bring the money, as a type, to the temple. In the fulfillment, Judas does this. Remember that the prophet, by his actions, was revealing not only that which was true of the people in his day, but that which would be fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

The result is that the contempt of the people is brought before the face of the Lord, before the divine Potter. The judgment of wicked Israel must be seen as entirely just. The holy God and His prophets were held in contempt. This became evident to all. The living God had come in our flesh. He had come with His work and Word now personally. But the attitude remained ever the same. He is held in contempt and is valued as worthless—at the most, the price of a slave. What did they think of God when He came to dwell in their midst, when they witnessed His power, and when they heard Him speak His Word with no im-

perfection? Judas Iscariot and the priests give the valuation of natural man to Jesus. He is worth thirty pieces of silver. This expressed their attitude toward God and His Word. Indeed, their condemnation is just.

But, do not now point your finger at Judas and the high priests and the elders of the Jews in pious hypocrisy. For the fact is that this is how all of natural man responds to the Word come in our flesh, to the Christ. This is the way that you and I hold the Word and value God who sends it. Of ourselves this is all we think of God and His Son. We too, by nature, are represented by this action of Judas and the priests. That action expresses the contempt of *our* natural hearts to the Word.

We again ask the question, why? Why must Jesus fulfill this Scripture? Why must He suffer this humiliation? Why could He not have been crucified without being sold for a mere thirty pieces of silver? It could be no other way if He were to save us! His death must be an atoning death. He came to bear the weight of God's

wrath against our sin, and He must suffer in our place.

Remember what we have just said, that we ourselves have counted God's Word and His prophets as worthless. We have cast our contempt upon God, and we are worthy only of condemnation. Jesus must bear that condemnation. He is counted by God, in a sense, worthy only of the price of a slave. The coins are cast upon the floor of the temple, before the face of God, that His wrath may be seen as just as He pours it out upon us. And this wrath Jesus came to bear. He must suffer that just wrath of God for our counting God as nothing.

Jesus must suffer this reproach in order that never may our sin come before the face of God, never must we suffer the judgment of the divine Potter. He takes our place before the Divine Potter that we be not marred to make another in our stead. Christ by grace died to deliver us, so that we value Him not at thirty pieces of silver, but as a treasure that cannot be bought! May we lift all praise to the God of our salvation. □

A speck of dust

A worm

Insignificance

Grace appears

Mercy

Abounding love

Regeneration

Holiness

A new creature in Christ!

Thelma Westra

Marriage: a Lifelong Bond

Over the past few months several editorials lamented the approval by Reformed churches of unbiblical divorce and of the remarriage that invariably follows (Nov. 1, 1997; Nov. 15, 1997; Dec. 1, 1997; March 15, 1998). The evil is widespread. Many churches quietly tolerate this great wickedness against God and the neighbor. Many others openly defend it.

Various factors contribute. A significant factor is the churches' conformity to the world. In these last days, the churches become worldly, as Christ forewarned. Therefore, lawlessness increases both among the membership and on the part of the institute itself. "And because lawlessness shall abound, the love of many shall cool" (Matt. 24:12, Greek text).

As the editorials showed, the root of the scandal is the churches' refusal to view marriage as a lifelong, unbreakable bond that God establishes between one man and one woman. Having compromised this fundamental truth about marriage, even those churches that once tried to restrict the right of remarriage to the "innocent party" have caved in to the pressure to tolerate the remarriage of any and all who are divorced, including the *guilty* party. This necessarily follows from the granting of a right of remarriage to the "innocent party." For if the "innocent party" may remarry, it must be that his original marriage has been dissolved. If the original marriage has been dissolved, it is dissolved not

only for the "innocent party" but also for the guilty party. And if the marriage of the guilty party is dissolved, she may marry again, just as every unmarried person is free to marry. The church may not forbid it. The church may not refuse the membership of the remarried guilty party, at least not on the ground simply of the remarriage.

The epidemic of divorce and remarriage among their members and, especially, the scandalous presence at the Lord's Table of many who have unjustly divorced and then remarried ought to drive the churches to reconsider their doctrine of marriage. Specifically, this evil should compel the churches to consider seriously whether marriage is not a lifelong bond established by God, which no one and nothing can dissolve as long as the two live.

Instead, the churches more and more view marriage, if not in theory, then in practice, as a contract drawn up and entered into by the married persons mutually. It is dependent upon their pleasure. As a conditional contract, it can be broken by one or both of them. In this case, the marriage is abrogated. It is as if it never existed. Both may then make another contract with other parties. *Ad infinitum. Ad nauseam.*

A spineless church enthusiastically blesses every new contract and dutifully approves the breaking of the old ones.

What part the great God of heaven and earth plays in this abuse of His holy ordinance is a

mystery. It seems to be His role genially to validate every abrogation of the old contract and compliantly to ratify every new one. Whatever suits the will and pleasure of the men and women who marry, divorce, and remarry, He sanctions. The god of the marriage doctrine and marriage practice of many evangelical and Reformed churches resembles nothing so much as a "Great Wax Nose" in heaven.

There is no excuse for the churches' rejection of the truth that marriage is a bond created by God. The testimony of Scripture is clear and compelling. A child can know it. The cleverest theologian cannot explain it away. At the institution of marriage in the beginning, the Word of God described the very essence of marriage as a man's cleaving to his wife in a "one flesh" union (Gen. 2:24). Where was the contract in the garden? Where was the conditional agreement, implying the possible dissolving of marriage? Marriage is, by God's own ordaining and effecting, a *bond*, a wonderfully intimate oneness. It is such a close oneness—"one flesh"—as unavoidably raises the questions, "Can this oneness be dissolved? Who or what can possibly make two again of those whom God has joined together?"

Appealing to the institution of marriage, specifically the words of Genesis 2:24 that describe marriage as a bond (with the express purpose of forbidding divorce!), Jesus sharpened and strengthened the biblical revelation that marriage is a God-formed bond: "What there-

fore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Essentially, marriage is God's joining together of husband and wife as one flesh. It is a bond. There is no room in Jesus' authoritative doctrine of marriage for the notion of marriage as a human contract, not even if God is allowed to peer over the shoulders of the contracting couple to ratify their bargain.

Christ's apostle taught the same, and ordained it in all the churches: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39). The point now is not that the bond is broken only by death (which the text teaches in language that cannot be misunderstood), but that marriage is a binding and bonding. To be married is to be bound, to be bonded. What binds and bonds is the law, that is, the living Word of God. Of a contract, the apostle knows absolutely nothing.

The alternative to the view of marriage as a bond is the notion of marriage as a contract. James Fitzjames Stephen was right in his debate with John Stuart Mill when he put the alternatives as he did: "(Is marriage) a divine, indissoluble union governed by the *paterfamilias*, or is it a contractual unit governed and dissolved by the wills of the parties?" (John Witte, Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, p. 198).

All contract-theory of marriage shatters on Ephesians 5:22ff.

Is the relation between my head and my body that of a contract? Did my head and my body agree conditionally to live together for their mutual advantage and pleasure, or even for their life? Is it part of their "co-living" and of their cooperation that if one fails in its duty the other may sever relations and find another, more agreeable body or head? If the

head should become senile, may the body leave and re-attach? If the body becomes paralyzed, may the head dissolve the relationship?

Can they dissolve their union?

Nonsense, you say.

And you are right.

No fool represents the relation between physical head and physical body as a contract. It is a wonderful, close, ultimately mysterious bond established by the Creator in His creation for every one who partakes of human nature. Such is the bond that head and body, though distinct, are one.

But now the inspired apostle describes the relation of husband and wife exactly as that of head and body: "the husband is the head of the wife" (v. 23); "men ought to love their wives as their own bodies" (v. 28). No more than that of head and body is the relation of husband and wife a contract. As much as the relation of head and body, marriage is a bond of intimate fellowship in which the two share one life.

Not even this in Ephesians 5, however, is the most powerful testimony against the sterile, fragile contract-theory of marriage and for the fruitful, solid doctrine of marriage as bond. The most powerful testimony is the apostle's teaching that earthly marriage symbolizes the relationship of Christ and the church. Having quoted the fundamental Word of God at the institution of marriage, the apostle exclaims, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (v. 32).

If earthly marriage is not a bond, but a contract, such also is the relationship between Christ and the church. If earthly marriage is a mere contract, dependent for its endurance upon conditions fulfilled mutually by husband and wife, so also is the relationship between Christ and the church. If earthly marriage can be dissolved by one or the other of the parties at his or her will and pleasure, or even by his or her sin, so also can

the covenant between Christ and the church be dissolved by the will of Christ or by the sin of the church. And then, a remarriage, at least on the part of Christ.

Years ago, a dear sister, who was not at that time enamored of everything Protestant Reformed, said to me, "The best thing that the Protestant Reformed Churches have going for them is their stand on marriage." She was not far wrong. For in addition to its being a blessing to many families, as well as to the churches made up of these families, the doctrine of marriage as a lifelong, indissoluble bond serves the gospel of the covenant of grace. And this grand gospel of the covenant as a bond of fellowship between Christ and us, established, maintained, and perfected by the triune God in sheer, unilateral, unconditional grace and, therefore, unbreakable and everlasting, is the "best thing" in the Protestant Reformed Churches, as it is the "best thing" in the Bible.

On the day (which may God graciously forbid!) when the Protestant Reformed Churches give in to the pressures of the world, which are heavy, and to the desires of their own members, which can be strong because of the hard, marital circumstances of ourselves or of our children, and permit remarriage, on that day they will repudiate marriage as a bond. And on that day they will be committed to a doctrine of the covenant as a contract—a conditional, breakable contract.

By virtue of Ephesians 5:31, 32.

Marriage is a bond. God the Creator made it so. He made it so for the sake of the redeemed and for the sake of His own covenant as Redeemer.

The question then is: Can the bond be broken? and if so, by whom?

God must answer this question. Marriage is His institution. He has formed every marriage-bond as with His own hand. Men and women may not speak here. All

must listen to the Word of God. Then they must confess what God has said. They must ignore what the world says. They must pay no attention to the answer pleaded for by their own circumstances or by the circumstances of those whom they love.

God's answer, given in Holy Scripture, is plain.

Earthly marriage can be dis-

solved. It can be dissolved only by God Himself. He dissolves it by the death of one of the married persons (I Cor. 7:39).

Fornication on the part of husband or wife can so strain the bond that divorce in the sense of full, legal separation is allowed. But even then the bond is not broken, so as to permit remarriage (Matt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10, 11).

Only the death of one of the married persons dissolves the bond, for the bond is superhumanly strong: "one flesh" by the joining of the Almighty.

"Marriage: a lifelong bond" implies "marriage, a calling."

Will you consider this with me next time? □

— DJE

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

The Reconciliation of Repentant Sinners

Part of the elders' care of the people of God involves supervising the reconciliation of repentant sinners with God and His church. In distinction from Article 73 of *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, which speaks of the reconciliation of private sins, Article 75 speaks of "The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised." The article reads as follows,

The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public shall, when there is a differ-

ence of opinion about it in the consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring churches or of the classis.

Public sins according to Article 75 are of two kinds. There are those sins which are "of their nature of a public character." It's very likely that these are sins reported in the news media. However that may be, a sin which is in its very nature public is a sin that is known to the congregation. It would be impossible for an unmarried woman who gives birth to a child to hide her transgression of the seventh commandment from her fellow saints. The second kind of public sin is a sin that was private but became public "because the admonition of the church was despised." In such an instance the matter was brought to the consistory in the way of Matthew 18. The consistory made every effort to bring the sinner to repentance, but the sinner refused. Because of this impenitence the consistory was compelled to announce the matter to the congregation (Article 77). It is then, only after the sin has been announced,

that the sinner repents and needs to be reconciled with God and the church.

The ground of reconciliation is "sufficient evidence of repentance." Usually "sufficient evidence of repentance" is a confession of the sin by the sinner together with a promise on his part to leave that sin. But it happens in not a few cases that the sinner confesses the sin and is reconciled with the church, and then falls into the sin all over again. It is with this possibility in mind that the fathers speak of "sufficient evidence of repentance" in this article. The consistory must be certain that the sinner is sincerely repentant. To attain this certainty the consistory may very well place the person on probation for a designated period of time. Each case will have to be considered on its own merits, but there are some sins which because of their very nature would require placing the sinner on probation. Drug abuse and continual drunkenness are two such sins which come to mind. A man may be exceedingly sorry for his sin of drunkenness, but soon thereafter fall into that sin again. If the sinner is placed on probation for a

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time, he is allowed back into the church, but is for a time barred from the use of the sacraments until the consistory is certain that he has forsaken his sinful ways. The consistory must exercise great caution lest the discipline of the church be despised and the church herself become the object of ridicule.

Admittedly the line here can often be very fine indeed. The whole matter calls for a good deal of sanctified wisdom, and, as was said earlier, each case has to be dealt with on its own merits. But, let it be emphasized, when there is sufficient evidence of repentance, the consistory must forgive the sinner and so must the congregation. The penitent sinner must be unconditionally received into the full communion and fellowship of the people of God. Jesus taught us to pray, "forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). Scripture teaches that when we confess our sins God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... we make him a liar and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). But let it also be emphasized, there must be sufficient evidence of repentance, for God forgives only those sinners who by His grace confess and leave their sins. The church must do likewise "until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

Further, Article 75 speaks of the method according to which this reconciliation must take place when it says, "in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of the church." The chief concern here is the congregation, the church, the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The holy name of Christ and the reputation of His beloved, blood-bought church are always affected by the public sins of her members. However the reconciliation of repentant sinners takes place, it must be in a manner that is conducive to build-

ing up of the church. This is the determinative factor involved in the reconciliation. The elders, then, must take into account the nature of the sin, the penitent sinner, and the circumstances prevailing in the congregation, and then determine how best the spiritual well-being of the church will be served.

Usually what happens is that the sinner goes to the consistory and confesses his sin and expresses his desire to be reconciled with God and His church. Upon determining that the sinner is sincerely repentant, the consistory prepares an announcement in which the congregation is informed of the sinner's repentance and exhorted to receive him into her fellowship in the way of forgiveness. This announcement ought not to be printed in the weekly bulletin, but read from the pulpit by the minister. The purpose of all this is, and this is what the consistory must strive for also when it oversees the reconciliation of penitent sinners, the removing of the breach struck in the congregation by the sin committed, the restoration of fellowship between the congregation and the penitent sinner, and keeping the church pure in the world. In this way the name of God is glorified.

The article also provides for the possibility of the reconciliation taking place "in public." Reconciliation in public does not then take place in the presence of the consistory with an announcement made from the pulpit as we described above. Rather, the reconciliation takes place under the supervision of the consistory, but in the presence of the entire congregation at a divine worship service. In such cases the consistory would formulate two or three questions concerning the sin, the sinner's desire to confess that sin to God and the congregation, and the sinner's resolve to leave the sin. During a worship service the sinner would be asked to stand and give answer to these questions.

While allowing for reconciliation to take place in public, the Reformed churches, also our own Protestant Reformed Churches, have approached it with a great deal of caution. The synod of Emden (1571) in the Netherlands ruled that a unanimous vote was required by the consistory before this procedure could be followed. The synod of 1586 decided that in churches served by only one minister, no public reconciliation should take place, except with the advice of two neighboring churches. (It should be borne in mind that the larger urban churches in the Netherlands often had several ministers serving them, while the smaller congregations had but one minister.) Prior to this the synod of Middleburg (1581) had ruled that consistories had to seek the advice of the classis before a sinner could be publicly reconciled. The Church Order governing our churches requires a unanimous decision on the part of the consistory if the reconciliation is to take place in public. This is implied by the words, "when there is a difference of opinion about it."

If the consistory cannot agree by unanimous decision, the procedure to be followed is one of two. The consistory must either seek the advice of two neighboring consistories, or the consistory must seek the advice of the classis. The former procedure would likely be chosen if the next meeting of the classis were a long way off. In that case the neighboring consistories would meet with the consistory to hear the details of the case. After this the two consistories whose advice was being sought would meet separately to formulate their advice. In the event that the two consistories came with contradictory advice the matter would have to be resolved by the classis.

The reconciliation of sinners who have been excommunicated is the subject of Article 78 of the Church Order and will, D. V., be discussed in our next article. □

Why Reformed, Christian Schools?

The title expresses a question faced by believers in various situations. Sometimes it is asked by a neighbor or fellow worker who, having sent his children to the public schools, wonders why a Christian would spend "all that money" to educate his children when it is available free. At times a student faces the question from a coworker who attends a public school. Our own sinful flesh may raise the question in order to undermine our enthusiasm for Christian education, hoping our time and money can be diverted to the pleasures of this world.

So, why *do* believers expend "all that" time, effort, and money for Reformed, Christian education? The answer must be, in a word, God's covenant of grace.

To put it another way, *the basis* of Reformed, Christian education is God's covenant of grace with His people. Christian education is covenantal education. Everyone involved in education—parents, teachers, students, school boards, and supporters, must understand and embrace this truth, and make it the touchstone of all their labors. If they do not, the Christian school will go awry, and will either eventually collapse, or offer something other than Reformed, Christian education.

The basis of Reformed, Christian education is not world-flight, i.e., the desire to separate our children from the evils of society, the godless and immoral lives, the blasphemous language, the drugs, etc. This is a proper and understandable desire, and increasingly so due to the vile iniquity and the anti-Christian instruction in the state schools; but it is not the foundation of the Christian school.

Neither is it proper to view Christian education as a mission work, either for children of believers or for children of unbelievers. Some church members see their children as unconverted, and hope the school will bring them to faith. No doubt, sound Reformed instruction should strengthen and nourish the faith of the children. This is a blessed benefit of Christian education, but not its foundation.

Similarly, some in the Christian school movement wish to use the school as a means to gain unbelievers to Christ. They attract children outside the covenant, children of unbelievers, into the school. Even though every Christian ought to have a zeal for evangelism and mission work, this is not the purpose of the Christian school.

Additionally, the goal of Christian education is not parochial, that is, to be a teaching arm of the church and to inculcate the doctrines of the church in the students. Assuredly this is a benefit of the faithful Reformed, Christian school, namely, that children learn the same truth in school that they

learn in home and church. Nonetheless, Christian schools are not parochial.

Finally, notice that the purpose for the Christian school is not *social*, that is, to mold students into socially active workers. In such schools the emphasis is placed on "service," that is, that students must go out and improve society. This is increasingly the motive today in Christian schools. This motive is driven by three influences, and it varies from school to school as to which dominates. First, it is driven by common grace, when this theory includes the postulate that Christians may fellowship with the ungodly. Soon this turns into a need to join hands with unbelievers to improve our world. This is essentially the social gospel preached in so many churches.

The second influence toward a service-oriented instruction is all forms of post-millennialism. Since this imagines a glorious kingdom of God here below before Christ returns, Christians are told to get busy in this world, building the kingdom.

The final influence is the view that the Christian must be busy *christianizing* the world by *reforming* all areas of life, as, for example, business, art, law, labor, etc. This is the fruit of the AACCS (Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship), formed so many years ago in Toronto, Canada, and now having its headquarters in the Institute for Christian Studies. This theory emphasizes training the stu-

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dent for "Christian service." This is not the proper goal or the basis for Christian schools.

Christian schools are rather covenantal—in basis, principle, instruction, and practice. Historically this was true of Reformed, Christian education, even if this has been lost (replaced) in many a school. Protestant Reformed schools are emphatically covenantal.

To understand this, we do well to review the main elements of the doctrine of the covenant.* The covenant of grace is a relationship of friendship and fellowship that God sovereignly establishes with His people in Christ. The covenant is not a contract or a promise, nor an agreement based on conditions fulfilled, but a relationship.

The nature of the covenant is determined by God Himself. This is based on the truth that God's ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself, and that, by revealing Himself to the creature. Further, God would reveal Himself in all His glory as the triune God, causing the creature to know the glory of the life in the Trinity. Amazing to consider, God determined to cause man to *know* this life by enfolding man in His own covenant life of love and fellowship!

This glorious covenant God realizes in Jesus Christ, the divinely appointed Mediator of the covenant. God establishes His covenant. He determines everything about this covenant, its character, realization, and members.

The covenant people are thus chosen by God. The elect are eternally chosen in Christ and given Him by the Father. These favored ones are given to know God through Jesus Christ. They come to know, from experience, God's grace that delivers from sin, His mercy that forgives, and His love that draws them into His fellowship. They come to know that they are adopted children of God and have the right to communion with God and to His inheritance.

Of particular importance for us

in this context of Christian education is the fact that God establishes His covenant with *believers and their seed* in the line of continued generations. Genesis 17:7 teaches this in so many words, when God promises Abraham, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

The Scriptures emphasize this in the history of the church. Genesis includes the record of the line of continued generations all the way from Adam to Abraham, and beyond! Israel knew the importance of this covenant. Not having any children was an unspeakable grief for believers because it meant that God was cutting them off in their generations.

Since God established His covenant with believers and their seed, this means that children are in God's covenant. The Reformed believer confesses with the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 27 that infants, "as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God."

In this context, then, the question must be faced, how is the covenant the basis of Christian education? The answer: the very nature of the covenant as a relationship of friendship and fellowship demands it. Friendship is based on knowledge. Virtually no fellowship is possible with a total stranger. Fellowship is based on mutual knowledge as well as on elements of life or character that the persons have in common. This is why the fellowship within the Trinity is so glorious—the three persons of the Trinity are one essence! They have not only perfect unity and harmony, but also perfect knowledge of each other.

When God establishes His covenant with His people, He reveals Himself to them. This revelation is through Christ, who as the Word and the Mediator of the covenant speaks even today through the

preaching. God expects that His people will seek to grow in the knowledge of Him.

Since God establishes His covenant with *children* of believers, these children also must know God. God, in His perfect wisdom, has determined to gather His church in the line of continued generations so that covenant children can learn about God from their infancy. To that end, God commands parents to teach their children His words—"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7). Fathers are admonished to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Children are admonished to "hear... the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding" (Prov. 4:1).

Failure of the Israelites to instruct their children in the days of the judges led to the horrible situation that "there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Jud. 2:10). The same neglect resulted in the cutting off of Eli's priestly line (I Sam. 2, I Kings 2).

Believing parents take this covenant obligation most seriously. They vow before God at baptism to give faithful instruction to their children. They are thrilled by the knowledge that in the way of faithfulness God is pleased to gather His church from their family. Take note of that. God gathers His church from the families of believers, not *because* of the faithful efforts of parents, yet *in the way* of faithful obedience.

Believing parents carry this out to the best of their ability—faithfully instructing their children in the home, and in and through catechism and the preaching. They are mindful of God's command to instruct these children constantly—"when thou sittest in thine house,

and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7). But they face two problems in this regard. The first is that most fathers cannot be home any longer to give this constant instruction. Their work carries them away from the home for much of the day, leaving the whole burden on the mother. These mothers are well equipped to teach their daughters the needed skills for running a home. However, mothers are less qualified to equip their sons for a life of laboring in the world to support a family.

The second problem is that a certain level of knowledge is needed to live as covenant people in the midst of this world. The people of God, though called to be not of this world, must nonetheless live in this world. Christians are called to press into the service of God everything they can legitimately use of the knowledge gained and the technology developed by man. The body of knowl-

edge, as well as the technical level, has been continually increasing through the centuries. The result is that many believing parents find themselves unqualified to teach in all the areas of knowledge that their children should have.

At the same time, believing parents cannot in good conscience simply send their children to the state schools for this more technical knowledge. On the one hand, this runs contrary to the command of Deuteronomy 6 that parents must be teaching their children God's words constantly. On the other hand, parents realize that all instruction is either for Christ or against Christ. Public education legally may not be, and in reality is not, for Christ. It is therefore anti-Christian instruction.

The desire to be faithful to their covenant obligations leads believing parents to band together to form schools—parental schools—where their children can be taught all the subjects in the light of God's Word. They ask the teachers to do

the work in the place of the parent. They bring their children to school with the demand, "Teach our covenant children as we, the parents, would, if we could. Rear them in the fear of the Lord. Teach them history, reading, mathematics, biology, literature, and all the rest, in the light of the Bible. But above all, and in all, teach them to love God and to keep His commandments. Teach them to live as God's friend-servants in the midst of a hostile world."

The covenant of God with believers and their demands this kind of instruction. □

* It is not the time or the place for an extensive development of the doctrine of the covenant. Interested readers are encouraged to consult Prof. H. Hanko's *God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace*, Rev. H. Hoeksema's *Believers and their Seed*, or a pamphlet by Prof. D. Engelsma entitled "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers."

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 8

The Setting of the Stage of History (cont.)

God's Temporal Judgments (cont.)

In this context we may try to discover something of the meaning of each of those pronouncements of the Lord and its effect upon human existence.

We may take note, first of all, of the *extent* of those judgments. They embrace the entire earthly creation. The woman, the man, the ground, and with it the plants and the animals—all of these are included. In other words, the whole sphere of earthly life is affected by them. The entire realm which forms the stage for the development of the human race, both the

seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and which constitutes the stage of the history about to be unfolded is affected by them.

The reason for this lies in the fact that creation is one whole, an organism. Man was created originally at the head of that organism, and all things earthly were adapted to him. This essential relationship does not change when sin enters

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the world. But the king becomes a fallen king, a rebel and a usurper. He drags the entire earthly creation with him in his fall. And thus all things, including all of the brute, irrational creation, come under the dictum of these judgments of God. Scripture points to this elsewhere also. This is pointed out, for example, in Romans 8:20-22: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Further, we may note that the individual pronouncements of these judgments are characterized, in the first place, by sorrow. Of this the world and all of human existence is full. There is suffering in body and soul—pain, grief, broken hearts, trouble, tumult and confusion, war, danger, fear, storms and pestilence, floods and fire. Secondly, all of human existence is characterized by *vanity*. Not only is the creature subject to special judgments and manifestations of the curse, but the bondage of corruption permeates all things, so that there is an underlying vanity in every phase of existence. There is toil, there is labor without fruit. Things come and go, come and go, like ever-rolling rivers. Creatures appear as shadows, as specters on the stage of life for a moment. They labor, they suffer, and they disappear. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity, and vexation of spirit." In the third place, there is death, the controlling factor in all of human existence, death which always casts its shadow over all. Notice how the Word of God here characterizes that death and pictures the existence of mankind from now on: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Such is life: nothing but a continual death—a coming from the dust and

a returning to the dust, along with all the suffering connected with this return.

This is denied sometimes. The claim is made that life is not all trouble and sorrow. Think, they say, of all the music and the dancing, of all the real joy and the pleasure which are to be found in this present world. It may be conceded, they will tell you, that life has its darker moments. But it is not all dark moments. In fact, men try to say that the outlook is even bright. But let us observe, first of all, that a man must be a fool to entertain such a superficial view of things with any seriousness. Remember that we must view things organically. These judgments do not make themselves felt alike in the existence of every individual, nor in all the branches of the organism, nor equally at various times in history. Some individuals, there are, who seem, at least on the surface of things, to escape much of their effects. Yet, when we consider the existence of men in connection with the whole of human existence, and when we view it from the view point of its end, then the only judgment that can be expressed is that the very best of it is *labor and sorrow*.

In the second place, consider this present existence in comparison with *Paradise*. You know, in a sense it can be said that one becomes accustomed even to living in prison. Well, such is the existence of fallen man: through all of this present time he is in the prison-house of death. He is living in death-row, so to speak. This is all he ever knows, and there in death-row he may deceive himself that life can be somewhat enjoyable. But in it all he knows that death awaits him at the end and will surely swallow him up.

In the third place, we must never forget that in this vale of death ungodly men vainly attempt to cover up their troubles by a superficial cloak of joy and to drown their sorrows in drunken revelry.

But upon whose life does there not hang the cloud of death, stark, grim death, and all that is connected with it? There is nothing but labor and vanity for all! That is: for all except those who have the victory in Christ Jesus our Lord!

In this connection, let us study the separate sentences expressed by the Lord.

To the woman, God said, first of all: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception." Literally the text here reads: "I will make very great thy sorrow and thy conception." From this it is plain that the text does not presuppose a sorrow before the fall which is now increased. The text points to the sorrow of the woman in connection with her bearing children. In connection with this it points to an increase in the reproductive capacity of the human race after the fall.

The significance of this sorrow of child-bearing must be seen in the fact that it is a Word of God's wrath. It is a clear testimony that we bring forth children of wrath unto death. Nor is this sorrow to be limited specifically to that particular suffering and sorrow that is connected with child-birth. But although medical science may even succeed to alleviate the latter, it can never eliminate the untold misery and grief that are the result of the fact that children are brought forth under the wrath of God. For the believing women of God's covenant, however, who bring forth their children with their eye of faith on the promise, this wrath and this death and sorrow are overcome through the crushing of the head of the serpent by the Great Seed of the woman. They are saved in child-bearing (I Tim. 2:15) and bring forth their children in the blessed hope of eternal glory in the kingdom of our God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

It is not difficult to understand how all this affects history and affects the stage on which humanity is henceforth to develop. Think,

for example, of the tremendous "population explosion" that there must have been in the age before the flood, when in the space of some 1,600 years the world became ripe for judgment. Think how this affects the development and growth of civilization and culture. Think how today our world is preoccupied with what is called the population explosion. But think, too, of the fact that this pronouncement of the Lord must serve to bring forth the millions of saints that shall appear finally in glory.

In the second place, the Lord pronounces this judgment upon the woman: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

These words do not refer to the original headship of the man and the original subjection of the woman, for that was a subjection of love, rooted in creation. "For Adam was first formed, and then Eve" (I Tim. 2:13). But this relation is now affected by the curse. The result is a ruling on the part of man in pride and tyranny, and a subjection of the woman in spite of herself and in spite of her every effort toward the so-called emancipation of woman, so that it is also impossible for her to escape the divine pronouncement concerning her great sorrow and conception. Even though God makes great her sorrow and her conception, her desire must needs be to her husband.

Again, it is not difficult to see how this drive, this urge, which is impelled by the divine pronouncement of judgment both with respect to the desire of the woman and the rule of the husband, deeply affects all of human existence, and frequently in a very overt way. It would not be difficult even to point this out in detail.

But again we must also note that the only real freedom from the wrath of God in this connection is by grace and in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is only in Christ that the mutual relation of the man and the woman is put in the sphere of true

liberty, wherein the woman's adornment is that of a meek and quiet spirit, wherein she is not afraid with any amazement in her subjection to her husband, and wherein the man dwells with his wife according to knowledge, giving honor unto her as to the weaker vessel, and wherein husband and wife dwell together as joint-heirs of the grace of life (I Pet. 3:1-7).

To the man God speaks as follows (and let us note, by the way, that in the case both of the woman and of the man their judgment is closely associated with their peculiar sin): "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

There are several elements to be considered here.

In the first place, there is the curse upon the ground, the very source of man's existence and sustenance. This curse entails that the earth brings forth thorns and thistles, representative of all noxious weeds and pests which make it incumbent upon man to wrestle a living from the ground. It entails, secondly, that man shall labor with great toil, in the sweat of his face, and in sorrow. The cursed earth produces corruption for man's corruptible body, and in the sphere of corruption he eats and drinks unto death. Man's labor under the judgment of God after the fall is indeed become toil. In the state of righteousness he ate in order to work, that is, in order to serve God, so that his work was always pure delight. After the fall, man must work in order to eat. Moreover, that work has become hard toil, drudgery: he can eat only in the sweat of his face. Even when the individual apparently succeeds to a degree in escaping

the physical exertion and exhaustion of that toil, he does not really succeed. For all man's labor, in a very real sense, is performed in the sphere of vanity. For death hems man in on every side. The very creation in which he exists is also subject to vanity. Man is never really able to accomplish anything. He works and eats and drinks unto his own death. The vain expression of this very reality is finally pressed from his own soul in wicked self-condemning testimony: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Everywhere, not only in the soil as such but also in all the earthly creation in which he moves and develops, is the operation of the curse. He can never escape it, nor, in spite of all his boasts to the contrary, can he ever overcome it, even though he may boast of someday conquering the power of physical death. For that latter reality, in the third place, is the end for him. It is no merely natural process. Nor is it a mere formal separation of soul and body. It is that operation of the curse in his entire earthly nature and existence which results in the total corruption, dissolution, and destruction of that earthly existence. He returns unto the dust, and his place knows him no more.

Nor is there any way out, except by the power of grace and in Christ Jesus. It is only by the favor of God that man can ever be exalted above the ground from which he was taken again.

What is the end of it all?

This power of the curse will continue and increase, and that, too, in spite of all human efforts to overcome it. There are always new manifestations of it and an increase in the force and effect of that curse, even as sin develops and as the full fruits of the first, root sin come to manifestation. The end of it is catastrophe. Even as man returns to the dust, so the end of the natural, this present creation, is universal fire, in which the very elements shall melt with fervent heat. That

end shall be reached as soon as this creation shall have served its purpose according to God's counsel. When it has fully served its purpose as the stage for the development of the fallen human race, dead in sin, from death unto death, and when it has fully served its purpose also as the stage for the revelation of the wonder of grace, intervening unto salvation, then it shall be destroyed.

Every attempt of man to stem the tide is absolutely in vain. To repair this world, to remove suffering, to make this a good world to live in—that is all in vain. The evolutionary philosophy makes a terrible mistake when it looks on the world as normally developing from lower to higher, from good to better to best. This world is ab-

normally developing under the curse, going deeper and deeper into corruption and death, to the very end. God has spoken! Shall puny man remove His Word? Vanity of vanities!

Yet there is victory. God has removed that curse as far as the seed of the woman is concerned in Christ Jesus. This He announced by way of promise in the beginning. He announced victory through the crushing of the head of the serpent. That victory cannot be achieved by stepping on the serpent's tail. His head must be crushed. Christ, through the satisfying of the righteousness of God, crushes his head and achieves the victory. Moreover, that victory is wrought on the plane and the stage of this present earth and its existence. Hence, the pain and the sor-

row of this present time remain, but by faith the woman in sorrow brings forth children of heaven, and with Mary, the blessed among women, she is blessed. Man labors and toils still, but by faith all his labor is subservient to the eternal glory. Death still comes, but for the seed of the woman it has been transformed into a passage to life. In the midst of this present existence, with all that belongs to it through God's temporal judgments, in the light of the promise the seed of the woman lives in the hope and the assurance that presently all things shall be made new and shall be delivered. Adam glimpsed this afar off. In faith and hope he named his wife Eve, that is, the mother of all living.

to be continued... □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "Promise Keepers Woos Catholics"

We continue to read much concerning the "Promise Keepers." Recently this organization has decided that there will be no more charge for attending meetings. The organization will continue in "faith" that God will provide what they need. Bill McCartney has asked that each individual church in the United States contribute \$1000 towards this "ministry."

Despite its obvious slant towards Pentecostalism and its increasingly open embrace of Roman Catholicism, many find nothing wrong with the organization. Does it not promote the good of family life? (But then, so does Mormonism in its advertisements!) Does not the organization emphasize that fathers must be proper "promise-keepers"?

Its agenda, however, becomes increasingly clear. The goal is to break down the walls which divide Protestants—and Protestants from Roman Catholics. In the *Denver Post*, March 3, 1998, an article appears with the title, "McCartney preaches togetherness in meeting at John Paul II Center."

Bill McCartney and his Promise Keepers were embraced by the Denver Catholic Archdiocese Monday night at a gathering of more than 250 men, and a handful of women, at the John Paul II Center in south Denver.

In his first address to a group of Catholic men, McCartney—former football coach at the University of Colorado and founder of the Denver based evangelical Christian men's organization—told the gathering that one of the great things about sports is that if you love sports, it doesn't make any difference what denomination you are, "they'll let you in."

"It has become clear to me what God has in mind" for Promise Keepers, McCartney said.

The answer, he said, was found

in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacekeepers, for they are the sons of God." A peace-maker is one who brings warring factions together, he said.

"A peacemaker is one who, at all costs, is willing to let the body of Christ come together. It isn't for the faint-hearted."

The reason there isn't a Catholic men's group filling stadiums around the country "is because God wants us together," he suggested.

Archbishop Charles Chaput, who embraced McCartney as he came off the stage, had said in an interview before McCartney's talk that he viewed Promise Keepers as another evangelical movement trying to bring people closer to Christ, and it should be encouraged....

■ Protestants Adopt Traditions of Ash Wednesday

A Grand Rapids MI reader sent in an article appearing in the *Grand Rapids Press*. The report indicates the growing trend to adopt increasingly the Roman Catholic practices. It is a further "breaking

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down the walls," which is the goal also of Promise Keepers.

Cornelius Plantinga remembers a time when people in the Christian Reformed Church never observed Ash Wednesday by having ashes rubbed on their foreheads.

Today, most of the 550 Calvin College students who gathered in the campus chapel received the ashes as a witness to their faith.

Mainstream Protestants' increasing embrace of this traditionally Catholic ritual is a healthy sign, said Plantinga, who presided over the chapel service.

"In the past when there was more antagonism between Catholics and Protestants, we tended to avoid deep old things of the Catholic Church that had real value," said Plantinga, dean of the chapel at Calvin. "We are rediscovering them."

Many area Protestant churches as well as Catholic parishes began the Lenten journey today with somber services symbolizing the beginning of Christ's journey to the cross. Falling 46 days before Easter, Ash Wednesday is a day of repentance and a reminder of human mortality.

At Zeeland's Second Reformed Church, members were offered the imposition of ashes every hour beginning at 6 A.M. The Rev. John Schmidt began the practice four years ago as an invitation for "people to take their spiritual life seriously."

"Protestant churches (are) recovering a deep sense of spirituality and tradition," Schmidt said. "They're looking for ways to help people take seriously their journey with God."

He's found people increasingly comfortable with wearing the ashes throughout the day.

"It's almost like the 'What Would Jesus Do' bracelets," Schmidt said. "This is the deeper tradition than the bracelets, a testimony not just to the world but also to yourself."

■ "W.W.J.D.?"

The above article refers to bracelets with the letters "W.W.J.D."

on them. The abbreviation stands for: "What Would Jesus Do?" There's something striking about that. Young people especially are wearing such bracelets. Surely when confronting the many temptations in this world, the question might well be asked. Years ago there was the question asked, "Would you take Jesus with you?" It is a sobering question.

But what must always be remembered is that we need far more than a bracelet to remind us what Jesus would do. Too often subjective judgments are made. Individuals tell themselves, "Surely Jesus would join me in doing this if He were here." But did they check His Book? We must not do what we *think* Jesus might do, but we are to search Scripture to find out *for sure* what He requires.

An article in the *Rocky Mountain News*, January 26, 1998, stated,

If Jesus Christ were preaching on Earth today, he would have been where you probably were Sunday afternoon—at a Super Bowl party.

"(swear word eliminated), Jesus would have *thrown* a Super bowl party," says Chuck Wilkes, the amiable pastor of Highlands Ranch Community Fellowship: "And whatever conversation came up during the game, Jesus would've thrown in a gospel message."

Like a good servant, Wilkes and his wife, Mitzi, threw the party in their master's name. They opened the doors of their gracious Highlands Ranch home, which doubles as the church's parsonage. Their guests were members of a growing, 70-member congregation, part of the 1.2 million-member Church of the Nazarene....

Winning souls at a Super Bowl gala? The prospect might have made the more proper founding members of the 90-year-old church blanch....

...Wilkes is also a practicing civil lawyer, part of a trend of pastors who came late to the ministry....

In short, the old 19th-century

rules of what makes a church tick don't apply. Says Wilkes: "The successful pastor of the 21st century will know how to preach a 2,000-year-old message in a way 21st-century people can understand."

Sunday, so they did.

So: is that what Jesus would do? I would rather think that His address to the Pharisees of His day would be equally appropriate for those of our day who would desecrate the Sabbath day in His name. And may all those who truly ask, "W.W.J.D.?", turn first to Scripture to find out for sure.

■ "Adultery: The Next Moral Domino to Fall?"

Cal Thomas, Los Angeles Times Syndicate writer, makes some pointed comments about adultery in an article appearing also in the *Loveland Reporter-Herald*:

Following the "normalization" of premarital sex, divorce and homosexuality, I have been wondering when and which of the few remaining dominoes dealing with personal morals would fall. It appears the next to go will be adultery.

Several press reports indicate the adultery domino is already teetering. The Air Force brought several charges, including adultery, against Lt. Kelly Flinn, the first female B-52 bomber pilot. Flinn admits to an affair with a married man.... CBS's Morley Safer rolled his eyes during a "60 Minutes" interview with Flinn, communicating his view that the idea of punishing adulterous behavior is a leftover relic from the era of witch trials in Salem....

Rushing to keep pace with the cultural decline are at least 40 member churches of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which last week signed a "covenant of dissent" signaling their noncooperation with the denominations "fidelity and chastity" law. That law, to be adopted this spring, requires church leaders not to engage in sex outside of a male-female marriage bond. If some

churches start going wobbly on a central biblical teaching, what are the rest of us to think?

Psychiatrist and family therapist Frank Pittman has written about adultery, calling it the "primary disrupter of families, the most dreaded and devastating experience in marriage. It is the most universally accepted justification for divorce. It is even a legally accepted justification for murder in some states and many societies."

Indeed, the author of the Mosaic code deduced from the Seventh Commandment prohibiting adultery that people who committed it were to be stoned. Jesus

said of the woman allegedly taken in adultery (which looked like a setup to entrap Him) that she should "go and sin no more."

Adultery is about breaking an agreement—to forsake all others until death parts the agreeers. That some high-profile people ... engage in adultery does not repeal the law given for our individual and corporate benefit.

Why do we treat perhaps this most sacred of human contracts in such a cavalier manner? Today, adultery is largely regarded as less offensive than a politician's broken promise. The breaking of a business contract is more universally condemned than the vio-

lation of a marriage contract. Yet, the consequences to a society which lowers its standards for such things is broken homes, broken children and, ultimately, broken society.

Infidelity is primarily about lying. That is why it is incorrect to assert that a politician, or anyone else, can be one person in his or her "public life" and another person in private.

...It won't be long before adultery is taught in our public schools as "normal," "human," and even beneficial.

The man surely speaks the truth. But is anyone listening? □

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

Mission Enthusiasm— Our Solemn Duty

God did great things for the spread of the gospel through the seventeenth century Reformation. From Pentecost onward, the Holy Spirit has moved the church to bring the gospel to the lost. The same Spirit used the Reformation to liberate the saints so that they could properly and enthusiastically bring the gospel to all nations.

This applies in two ways.

The Reformation gave back the message to the church. Not that it was entirely gone. Rather, it was obfuscated by an apostate church. God's work in the heart and life of men like Luther, Calvin, and others so affected them that they once again had *good news* to speak. Freed from the shackles of work-righteousness, they could enthusiastically declare to the nations that

there is salvation in none other name than that of Jesus. Salvation in Christ is God's work from eternity to eternity. Such a work was planned in the eternal counsel of God, grounded in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus, and now declared and applied to the hearts of men through the sovereign grace of God. Men everywhere were commanded to repent and believe in this God.

Personally, I am so thankful that this is the same word which we can preach to the nations today. The gospel as taught in the Holy Bible, so beautifully summarized in our Reformed confessions, and taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, is a wonderful word. In no way does it hinder mission work. Those in whom the Spirit works respond with thankful hearts wherever we preach. We have had opportunity to bring the word in Singapore, in India, in

Myanmar, and in the Philippines. We can truly shout, *Hallelujah!* there are those everywhere who love the good news of salvation as summarized in the Reformed faith. God gave this to us through the Reformation.

The same Reformation also gave to the church the messengers! Good news which is not heralded is constricted. Such was the case prior to the Reformation. Both the clergy and the people were bound to silly practices and clubbed to spiritual death with the constant barrage to do more penance, work harder for their salvation, appease an angry God. What a change came over the church when all the members of the church were not only told that they were free from such burdens, but also given the mandate once more to preach this gospel and bring it to the nations. This was true because the Reformed churches instructed their members that they *all* were officebearers in Christ's church.

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They were not, and are not now, all *alike* in their office, but they are all in office. Christ gave to the church the special offices, among which is that of minister of the Word. The Reformation equipped pastors and motivated them to go and preach the gospel. Think of Calvin's school in Geneva. What an influence to spread the Reformed faith! Christ also gave to the church the common office which every saint possesses, the office of believer. In this capacity of believer, we all have the commission to witness. When Christ instructed the church to go and make disciples of all nations, He gave that great commission to the entire church, so that every member must face this calling as a solemn duty before God. Pastors and missionaries must make disciples by preaching and baptism; members are involved in making disciples by witnessing.

Unless we understand this, our mission enthusiasm will be silenced and curtailed. In this brief article I will say a few things about this twofold duty.

The Duty to Preach

The great commission has been expounded among us many times (Matt. 28:18-20). The purpose of my article is not mission theory, but to generate mission enthusiasm. The duty assigned by our Lord and Master to the church is to make disciples. Our KJV translates "make disciples" as "teach." Jesus explains that making disciples is done by "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" and "to baptize them." These disciples are to be from "all nations." We can debate whether this means countries or people groups, but such debate to me is useless. As long as there is one disciple to be made from any country under heaven, the great commission stands as it is, a solemn duty to make disciples. The object of this activity is one who is not a disciple, one who is

lost in sin. "Go ye therefore" indicates to us that, if disciples are going to be made from all nations, the church has to send someone away from his home to travel to another place. This is the particular duty of missionaries, as the Form of Ordination of Missionaries in the back of our Psalter explains.

Let me interject briefly at this point that the duty of the local pastor is affected by this commission as well. It is clearly biblical that the pastor of an established congregation functions as a shepherd of the flock. Most of his work is to nurture and build up the church of God. When Christ gave this "commission" to the church, He did not mean that no concern had to be shown to the lost at home. They must be "discipled" on the basis of our love for the neighbor who crosses our path. Those who are lost in sin around us serve as the ultimate test of our love of the Lord Jesus Himself. This is very crucial for mission enthusiasm for the lost. We pastors must develop a real sensitivity for this and act as examples to the flock. Unless there is obedience to make disciples of the lost in our own hometown, there will be little or no obedience to "Go." The burden and enthusiasm is generated where we live. It is the easiest thing in the world to love the neighbor who lives on the opposite side of the earth from us, and to send a missionary off to bring the gospel to him. It is much more demanding and meaningful to love the lost neighbor next door and obey Christ's command to make him a disciple by teaching and baptism.

The church, however, must do more than that. The church must go out to the nations. When the apostle Paul carried out this great commission he began in Jerusalem, traveled to Antioch, and from thence to the world. If you stop to think of this, it is rather instructive how the church at Antioch placed such priority upon the "go

ye therefore" when they sent Paul and Barnabas on their journey. The church of Antioch was a young, newly organized church. They must have lacked much in this great work. Yet they did not hesitate to send Paul, who must have been the most qualified and needed man in the congregation. If we see missions as obedience to duty, we do not put it at the bottom of our list of things we do as a church. Our local congregations have many responsibilities; our parents must operate Christian schools; our denomination has much work to do. It is all wonderful work of the Lord. But missions must never be viewed as something we can do if other things are done first. No duty may ever be approached in that fashion. We all have the duty to train up our children, and other duties often impinge on that. Yet, we may never say to God, "Sorry, other duties demanded our time, so we didn't get around to training our children." A duty is a duty, no matter what. Mission work is a duty that may never be neglected.

We have to prioritize properly in order to do what God requires of us. The same applies to mission work which we do together as churches. This relates to manpower, funds, time, and all the rest. I don't think God is much impressed if we try to reason among us that we can't afford to send missionaries to other countries while we sit in our beautiful churches with plush pews, enjoy exhilarating organ music, and have good preaching every Sunday. I wish all of you could visit in the homes of the poor, or join them in their hovels of worship, and then look into the face of God and say, we cannot afford missions. I don't think you would sleep well at night. God doesn't even ask of us to give up any of these luxuries. He just requires of us a heart that cares! Out of that care for the lost, more missionary families will arise out of the churches. As congregation we will give up our pastor for

this work because we value it. And yes, if necessary, we may have to live a notch lower on the economic level to contribute to the work. Haven't we all done this for our family? Why not then do it for the family of God, which is made up of fellow believers from every nation on the earth?

As we fulfill our duty as churches we experience joy! One aspect of this joy is doing mission work. Personally, my wife and I are much encouraged by the response of our people to the work we and the ERCS are doing here. I hope it will increase, for it is only the beginning of so much more work that can be done, if the Lord should so will. Stop and think, obedience generates joy. It does in your personal life. Every parent knows what it means in the family situation. Do what God wants you to do and you will have a real sense of fulfillment under the blessing of God. In the measure that we are faithful in our duty in missions, we also experience the joy of the Lord. Nothing can compare to the joy that comes in making a disciple as Jesus has commanded. We parents experience something of it when we see our children walk in the fear of the Lord. What joy that is! Similarly, when we see one who has been born of the Spirit leave behind a life of heathen superstition and unbelief and cast himself on God and His Son, the whole church rejoices. Our baptism services are the highlight of the year. This is the goal of missions. Jesus said, "Make disciples!"

Duty to Witness

How thankful we all must be that our churches have properly emphasized the preaching of the gospel as the way to do mission work. We all know Romans 10 and we can all understand the need for Antioch to lay hands on Paul and Barnabas and send them.

Independent and individual evangelism is a hindrance to the gospel. The charismatic movement

has many sins to account of before God, and this includes missions as well. Just last June we had opportunity to sit down at the breakfast table with a group of them who went to Myanmar from the USA "to pray for salvation of Burmese people." One gave an account of how the Holy Spirit indicated to him that he had to climb up a rather high mountain, on top of which was a Buddhist temple, in order to "dispel the devils out of their stronghold." His account was punctuated with hair-raising details and, of course, heroic results. Even my attempt to put some of this in perspective was resisted as "against God." These well-meaning people think missions can be done apart from the preaching of the gospel. They come and go, and then what? The devils return, I suspect. Never do we want to discredit prayer and its importance for missions, for without it all our labors are in vain. Yet prayer, apart from God's ordained way of salvation, is futile.

It seems to me that our emphasis as churches has been so much on preaching that we have neglected the other aspect of duty, that of all our members in the office of believers. Some of this may very well be reactionary to the abuse of almost everyone around us. This is understandable and shows care for faithful obedience to the gospel mandate. Yet, as we go along, we must not stay out of balance. The church can never do her work of the Lord by emphasizing preaching at the expense of witnessing. This is particularly crucial for outreach ministry, both in the local congregation and on the mission field.

Again, I do not want to spend time demonstrating this to be true. I rather want simply to emphasize it in order to generate mission enthusiasm. Let me just make brief mention of Acts 8:4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Yes, this included preach-

ers, but the verse can never be completely appreciated without accepting the historical evidence that it included many converts who assisted them in witnessing of the gospel to many people, wherever they went. The Book of Acts shows how helpful, non-ordained people assisted Paul in the spread of the gospel by their faithful witness to others (see Acts 18:26). Think of the Lord Jesus Himself as He labored with the Samaritan woman as recorded in John 4. To me this is a beautiful example of the relationship between preaching (Jesus) and witnessing (the Samaritan woman). She brought to Jesus many from the city who responded as recorded in John 4:42, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." If we question how Reformed this is, we all know the beautiful expression in our beloved Heidelberg Catechism, as our fathers explain the prophetic office of every Christian: one of the purposes of being anointed by the Holy Spirit is "that I may confess His name and present my body as a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him" (A. 32). As a result of this we are able to walk in good works, one purpose of which is, "by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ" (A. 86). This I call witnessing.

Such activity God expects, and as we perform it, it functions as an indispensable support for the preaching of the gospel. Every member of the local congregation, every Christian, carries love of the neighbor in his heart. The love of the neighbor motivates him to carry a burden for his spiritual condition. It grieves us much to see a fellow human being making a mess out of his life, hurting himself and his neighbors, and, in the process of such sin, living on the slippery slope of destruction as described in Psalm 73. The love of God makes us care.

This produces action in at least three ways.

First, there is the need to try to reach out to such a neighbor. I recall that, when I first came to Singapore, I preached a sermon on I John 2:15-17 and emphasized the antithesis so strongly that a sister came to me afterwards and shared with me her frustration at that sermon. I understand much better now what she was driving at. There is no contradiction between loving the neighbor and "not loving the world," as described in John's epistle. A careful distinction must be maintained. We must not have friendships with the world that will deny our witness and corrupt our souls. Our avoidance of such friendships, however, must not separate us from the world so far that we do not have opportunity to witness to them. Any effective witness to our lost neighbor necessitates contact with him which can be interpreted as genuine concern. This takes much effort, to build bridges with the non-Christian so that witness can be effective. Much grace and wisdom is needed in this regards.

Second, when such contact is established, the Christian must know how to speak of the gospel and share faith. No one can do this better than the person who has

made the contact. I learned here in Singapore that I made mistakes in this connection when pastoring in the States. More than once, members would come to me and tell me that they had witnessed to certain individuals at work, and then they would ask that I take up the work. I kindheartedly agreed, and in most instances it was ineffectual. Most of the time they never wanted to meet with me. My being a "preacher" scared them away. What I should have said to my members is, "I will help you continue your work. No one can take your place at this crucial point of contact." Here in Singapore members have one-to-one Bible studies with those who show some interest. Sometimes they organize a "BS" (Bible Study) at work during noon break and use the time to discuss spiritual things. The point is, one-to-one sharing of the gospel is crucial in the early phases of witnessing.

Thirdly, when some degree of trust has been established, they invite the inquirer to a gospel meeting or Bible Study in the church to acquaint them with the church in a more informal setting. Sometimes they are ready for worship, but to most non-Christians the worship service is a bit intimidating. Ultimately, the goal is to get the inter-

ested person to come to church and hear the preaching of the gospel and to worship. Even then, when they show up, the members of the church must show genuine interest in them, sit next to them, help them find the Bible text, find the songs in the book, and afterwards sit down with them to discuss what they have heard. When the person is ready, he is taken into a membership class for formal training.

We do tracting. It is used by God in a very limited way. Never is tracting done by just inserting some literature in a mail box. This is generally useless. Rather, material must be given at the door and a brief conversation engaged in to be followed up later. God did use this lately at CERC when contact was made with a 91-year-old lady who has now been baptized in Christ, a great thrill for the church. Most of the time members come to the church and to faith in Christ by being personally worked with by the members.

This makes clear the twofold duty. Witnessing serves the preaching. The two must not be confused. Neither must they be neglected. They go together as Christ's way to make disciples.

May God give us enthusiasm for this important work we call "outreach." □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The Covenant of Marriage

2. Courtship Within the Covenant (cont.)

Where to Search for a Spouse

Jack had been wandering the aisles of a large hardware store for about a half hour before be-

ing approached by a store assistant. When asked if he needed help, Jack explained that his teacher in school had instructed the class to purchase a book on ancient history. He had been looking for that book for some time now but could not seem to find it. The assistant stood there

with his mouth open.

"Um, sir," the assistant finally replied, holding back a hearty laugh, "this is a hardware store. You cannot find a book on history in a hardware store. You are looking in the wrong place. You must find a store that sells books."

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Only a bit embarrassed, Jack did not dwell on how foolish he was to look for a book in a store that sells tools. Instead, he quickly drove over to the nearby grocery store, where he had spied a small rack of books while shopping one time with his mother. Five times he now went over this rack of books. Nope, there was no book on ancient history here either. This time Jack grabbed the arm of a passing clerk and asked where he might find a book on ancient history.

This clerk was not as nice as the hardware assistant. "Are you some kind of a nut or something?" the young clerk retorted sharply. "You are not going to find a history book on a rack that stocks only love novels and science fiction! Go to a book store!"

Once more Jack jumped into his car and this time drove to the Barnes & Nobles Booksellers about a block away from his house. It did not take long, then, to find the book that his teacher told him to purchase. On his way home Jack lamented, "I flew all over town searching for a book that was almost in my back yard!"

Jack was obviously foolish! Who could be so ignorant as to look for a book in a hardware store? Who could be so lacking in common sense as to search for a history book in a grocery store? It is true! Who could be so foolish as this? Yet, how often in my own ministry have I observed the foolishness of young people who sneak out on dates with unbelieving young men and women of this wicked world. Never would they be so foolish as to search for a book in a hardware store. But they would be so foolish as to search for a life's mate in the wicked, unbelieving world! The consequences of the latter are far more devastating than the former.

Everywhere the Scripture is clear: we may not date the unbeliever! We learn in Genesis 6 of the demise of the covenant line

prior to the Flood. In verses 1 and 2 we are told how this happened: "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 they took them wives of all which they chose." This scene is not foreign to us. Young men of the church (sons of God) looked upon the outward beauty, the sweet personality of wicked, unbelieving women (daughters of men). These young men were so spiritually shallow that they looked no deeper than mere externals. Because of this, they saw no reason that they could not marry these women and bring them into the church with them. Although the young women of the church at that time are not mentioned in this passage, we can assume that many of them too looked only upon the outward characteristics of unbelieving young men and married them. They assessed the young men of the world simply from the point of view of their good looks and warm personality, rather than whether these men loved and feared God.

We read of the result of such marriages in verses 4 and 5 of Genesis 6: "... when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." From these unions there came forth men of great renown in the earth. Their children were mighty, famous in the standards of this world. *But*, from a spiritual point of view, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The true church of God in this world dwindled, until just prior to the Flood there were only eight souls who remained faithful to God.

A similar phenomenon took place after the nation of Israel was given the land of Canaan. It was during the time of the judges, a time during which the spirituality of this nation was at a very low ebb. During this period the people of Israel did that which was right in their own eyes. They forgot God and what He had done for them in the wilderness, and they served the gods of the heathen around them. How did this happen? We read in Judges 3:5-7:

And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

The children of Israel did not destroy all the wicked nations as God had commanded them. Instead they "dwelt among" them. That does not mean that Israel simply lived in the midst of these Canaanites. They intermingled with them. They allowed their sons and daughters to make friends with these wicked people and to "date" them. The result is that the young men of the church married unbelieving wives and took them with them to live in Israel. The young women of the church were also given permission by their parents to marry unbelieving husbands. The result? The nation of Israel forgot Jehovah, ignored the covenant relationship in which they stood with Him, and turned to worshipping the idols of the wicked.

The New Testament sets forth for God's people today an underlying principle that must govern where we are to search for a wife or a husband. It is laid out for us in the clearest of terms in II Corinthians 6:14-18.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Implied in these Scriptures is the fact that we do not search for a marriage partner among unbelieving and worldly people. That is like looking for a book in a hardware store! It is like looking for a piece of candy in a dung pile! Parents may not allow their children to date in the wicked world. Neither must young men and women of the church even desire to look in the unbelieving world for a spouse. That is utter foolishness!

How can we who are spiritual ignore the disastrous effects this has upon God's covenant with us? God has called us out of the darkness of unbelief and sin. He has made us righteous in the blood of Christ. In that blood we have been adopted to be His sons and daughters. We are joint heirs with Christ to our Father's house of many mansions. By the very work of salvation in us, *God* has separated us from this world of sin. We are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" in this world (I Pet. 2:9). We belong to the family and household of God. When we deliberately ignore this fact and develop friendships or establish ties with the ungodly, then in practice we deny the very truths we claim to believe. We who are believers enter into

unholy union with unbelievers, despising God's covenant with us. This pollutes the covenant line and ultimately leads to divine severance from the friendship of God with our generations.

Furthermore, as was already established, dating is courtship. It is to be used to find a wife or husband with whom we can share a lifetime of fellowship and friendship. In marriage we will be able to experience in a limited, earthly way that blessed fellowship we have with God! Our marriage is not only to be a picture of this union between Christ and the church. It is a means by which we are given a real taste of that blessed union we have with our Savior and with our God! Will we achieve such when married to one who is an unbeliever? The true joy of marriage is bestowed by God upon a man and his wife who are heirs together of the grace of life. Is that not what we want? We will not find it when looking in the wrong place.

There are a number of excuses that have been raised to answer parents or pastors who insist that the unbelieving world is not the place to be looking for a spouse. The first of these is: I am not dating that person because I want to marry him. I am dating him just for fun. Don't worry, I do not intend to get serious with him.

This excuse is fallacious from beginning to end!

First of all, what *is* your relationship, then, with this unbelieving young man or woman? Is he just a friend? Are you just sharing some good times with him? If so, God's Word is clear: "... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). We may not date a young man or woman of this world just for their friendship, or just to have some good times with them. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy pre-

cepts," the young man of Psalm 119 says of himself in verse 63. This does not mean that I am not friendly towards unbelievers. This does not mean I cannot speak with them and express concern for their soul. But it does mean that I may not seek out unbelievers with the express purpose of companionship. God's Word prohibits that.

Secondly, the fallacy involved with such an excuse is the view of dating itself. Dating is not vain frivolity! It is not meant to be used for simple fun without any commitments or responsibilities. Dating is courtship; and it is to be used only to seek out seriously and earnestly that man or woman God has intended for one to marry. That is the sole purpose for dating. I may not, therefore, go out on a date with an unbeliever just for a good time.

A second excuse that is often raised is one by parents themselves: but I was an unbeliever when my husband or wife dated me and now I have become a member of the church. God used dating as a means to bring me into his covenant and church. I feel dating can be used effectively as a means of witnessing and bringing others to the church. We must answer this very carefully, of course. To such a one who by God's grace was incorporated into the church by means of dating we say: how thankful we are for that! God was good to you. He was gracious to make you see your sin and salvation in Christ. He was gracious to use, as a means to accomplish this your dating a young person of the church. That young person himself whom you dated was not obeying God when doing that, yet God sometimes saves His people despite the wrong they do. How gracious God is!

What happened to you, however, is not the rule, but the exception. Most often when young people date an unbelieving young man or woman they are drawn away from the church—not into it.

And there are also cases (and this is evident from Scripture itself) when that unbelieving young man or woman joins the church, yet is never truly brought to faith and repentance. Such people attend simply because this makes their spouse happy and it is the path of least resistance. The church then is severely weakened by such parents. Children grow up in the realm of the church and the covenant who do not truly know God and love Him. Instead, within the church these children serve the idols of this wicked world (its pleasure and its heroes) rather than the God whom we profess to serve.

A third excuse is one that I can find some sympathy for. There are times when God calls His church in a place where believers are, for the most part, isolated from fellow believers. There is a handful of believers, but most of them are related. Whom can these date, except an unbeliever? It is true that

this is a very difficult situation to be in. The only answer the Word of God gives to this dilemma is the godly example of Isaac and Rebekah in dealing with their son Jacob. Of their son Esau we read in Genesis 26:32, 33, "And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." In response to this situation in the life of their elder son, Rebekah spoke these words to Isaac concerning their younger son in Genesis 27:46: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" This prompted the action of Isaac in Genesis 28:1, 2: "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, 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." Such is the calling of godly young men and women who desire to marry in the Lord. They must go to the place where God's people dwell and there find a life's mate.

The rule of Scripture when searching for a spouse is this: we do not search in the wicked, unbelieving world! It is a hardware store, and we cannot find a book in a hardware store.

But this does not end the issue, does it? What about the church world in general? May my son or daughter go out on a date with one who professes to be a Christian, yet is not a member of my church or denomination? That question is much more difficult to answer. But it must wait for our next article. □

Book Reviews

I Believe ... Living the Apostles Creed, by Lester De Koster. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, Inc., 1996. 174 pp. \$14.95 (cloth). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Reformed thinker, teacher, and author Lester De Koster has written a brief, popular explanation of the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed. His addressing the work to his grandchildren lends simplicity, clarity, and urgency to the exposition of this summary of the Christian faith.

Much of the doctrinal instruction is sound, and much of the practical application (with which the book abounds) is godly. Defending the reality of the virgin birth as a miraculous conception and birth against the denial of it by modernism, De Koster writes:

Jesus Christ had to be conceived by the Holy Spirit because human generation, since the Fall, is not fitted to produce anyone who can

be true Savior and Lord. And the Savior must be born of a virgin to escape inheriting the depravity which natural descent imposes upon all mankind. Those who dispute or decry these miracles only demonstrate just how necessary they were. It is to cure just such blindness that Jesus came the way God miraculously provided (p. 95).

And:

The mode of Jesus' incarnation illumines the mode of our own rebirth into the kingdom of God. Just as a virgin cannot naturally bring forth new life, so we by nature cannot regenerate ourselves (p. 96).

Into the explanation, De Koster weaves many apt quotations from Scripture. His grandchildren must learn that the faith of the church is biblical.

Erudite scholar that he is, the author also makes judicious references to extra-biblical literature

and to secular philosophies. This enhances the work. Every Christian should be reminded, in connection with God's miraculous gift of the Savior in a virgin conception, that

ideologies like Marxism, Fascism, Nazism and assorted lesser delusions all have one notion in common, namely that the human being can redeem, can reform, can refashion himself. The goal of ideologies is creation of a "new man" (p. 94).

There is sharp attack also on some of the errors that undermine the faith *within* evangelical and Reformed churches today: theistic evolution; the feminism "which degrades home-building as 'kitchen slavery'"; the charismatic movement; and others.

The book, however, is seriously flawed. Works and working are made the main theme of an exposition of the church's *faith*. Then

the relationship between faith and works is misconceived. The Reformed confessions view the good works of believers as arising out of faith (Heid. Cat., Q. 91). The motive of their performance is faith's thankfulness for gracious redemption (Heid. Cat., Q. 86).

At best, De Koster fears that faith may cripple a life of good works; at worst, he views good works as an aspect of salvation alongside faith. Twice, he questions whether salvation is by faith alone. Both times, he erroneously accuses Luther of mistranslating Romans 5:1 as "by faith alone" (the text in question is, in reality, Rom. 3:28; the translation of this text with "*allein*" was correct, demanded by the contrast in the text itself). When De Koster comes to explain the necessity of good works in the light of gracious salvation, he makes salvation conditional upon our working. He asserts that we must "qualify" for salvation by working, as though this conception differs from the notion of merit (see pp. 17-21).

Having affirmed eternal predestination, De Koster immediately affirms the opposite, stating that God wishes "that all turn to Him and be saved" (p. 52). De Koster may opt for a contradictory Bible and, thus, a God of pure contradiction, but let him know that this makes all knowledge of God impossible and opens the door to every heresy. De Koster's Christian Reformed adversaries did this very thing with the Bible's teaching on women in office: yes and no.

Stripping logical harmony and consistency from the Word of God is not piety. Nor is it an incidental fault. It is fatal to faith and faith's obedience. I marvel at the refusal of those who have left the Christian Reformed Church to see this, even though the very evil that drove them out of the Church—women in office—established itself by asserting the contradictory nature of the biblical testimony.

In addition, it is not true that God "makes us free to choose or reject His way for living" (p. 7). The will of the unbeliever is enslaved to sin: he cannot choose God's way for living. The liberating work of the gospel consists of enabling and empowering the elect believer to choose God's way for living, although because of his depraved nature (which remains his life long) he does sometime choose the way of sin. Gospel freedom is the ability and power exclusively to choose God's way. ■

A New Hearing for the Authorized Version, by Theodore P. Letis. Philadelphia, PA: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2nd ed., 1997. 34 pages. \$3 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Contrary to the prevailing opinion, there are solid, significant reasons why the English-speaking church and Christian ought to use the *King James Version* (KJV) of Holy Scripture. Use of the KJV is not due to hide-bound traditionalism.

Theodore P. Letis demonstrates that the KJV is superior to the mod-

ern versions as regards its Greek text, its translation, and its English usage. In addition, "it is a link with our past as well as a unifying factor for the present." Letis conducts a "new hearing" for the KJV in language that the layman can understand.

The booklet points out some of the serious weaknesses of the modern versions. Especially dangerous is the theory of translation that controls the making of the modern versions: "dynamic-equivalence." Letis charges that this theory "allows the content and the form of Scripture to capitulate to the language, forms, and culture of the given receptor peoples, even at the loss of Biblical teaching itself" (p. 22). Where this theory of translation leads becomes clear in the recent admission by those in charge of the New International Version (NIV) that they are in the process of translating the NIV according to the dictates of the feminism of the West.

Ted Letis is qualified to help the believers and the churches that are concerned to have the full, uncorrupted Word of God in their English translation. An outstanding scholar in the field, with a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, he has devoted his life to work on behalf of the original text and faithful translation of the Bible.

The booklet can be ordered from The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 6417 N. Fairhill, Philadelphia, PA 19126. □

News From Our Churches

Evangelism Activities

A recent bulletin from our Loveland, CO PRC included correspondence from an individual

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

living in Finland. This reader of Loveland's home page on the Internet was very impressed by Rev. S. Houck's article "God's Sovereignty in Salvation," calling it "the best concise summary of the doctrines of grace that he had ever read." He ended his note by ask-

ing for permission to translate the article into his native language, giving all due acknowledgments and links to the original article.

The Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL began a project last month to mail to new residents in Medinah, Itasca,

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Roselle, and Elk Grove a letter of invitation to their services, a brochure about their congregation, and the tract, "Does God Love You?" They also placed an ad for their worship services in the flyer "Houses of Worship," which accompanies their local paper, the *Daily Herald*, and covers all of Dupage County.

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a program by the PR Psalm Singing Choir, Sunday, March 22. During the worship service that evening Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor at First, preached on the topic, "Singing to the Lord in Psalms." Rev. Slopsema used the occasion to address the issue of psalm-singing and singing versifications of the Psalms. It was also suggested that, in preparation for that special Sunday evening, one could read the pamphlet on psalm-singing by Rev. J. Kortering, published by our Grandville, MI PRC.

The Psalm choir, incidentally, is composed of people from West Michigan PR churches who love to sing the Psalms. It is under the direction of Dan DeMeester. The choir sings the Psalms in a beautiful and simple manner.

The choir presented this same program a week earlier at the Grandville, MI PRC.

Congregational Activities

The major item of business at last month's meeting of Classis West was the approval given to the decision of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX to disband their congregation. After 25 years of faithful witness and extensive evangelism efforts, the light of our church there will be extinguished on June 7. With the concurrence of the syn-

odical deputies, Rev. J. Mahtani was declared "temporarily emeritus" effective at the time of Trinity's closing. Pastor Mahtani awaits a call from another congregation.

Our Lord has not given growth to the congregation. There are only two families left besides the pastor, so there really is no way of continuing a consistory. Please pray for these two families who, for different reasons, cannot relocate to other of our churches immediately, and for Rev. Mahtani, who awaits God's will regarding the ministry.

Mission Activities

Rev. A. denHartog, pastor of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, gave a short slide presentation of his and Rev. A. Brummel's trip to the Philippines after a recent Sunday evening service. Rev. denHartog also used the opportunity to talk about the potential for a mission field for our churches in the Philippines.

School Activities

Rev. A. Brummel, pastor at the Edgerton, MN PRC, showed slides of the same trip to the Philippines recently at a PTA meeting of the Free Christian School in Edgerton.

The PTA of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI met back in February to hear Rev. C. Terpstra speak on the subject, "Our Children: Reaching their potential and finding contentment in who they are."

This year Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA celebrates twenty years of covenant instruction. To mark the occasion, Covenant planned two different events for the school year, the first was

an Adult Dinner Celebration on March 13. Included after dinner was a speech by Rev. M. Joostens on the topic, "God's Covenant Faithfulness," based on their theme text found in Lamentations 3:22-24. Also included in the program was singing by a choir of former students, greetings from teachers past and present, and a brief recounting of Covenant's history.

Food for Thought

"While wrongs are remembered, they are not remitted. He forgives not that forgets not."

—John Trapp □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Henry Miersma, in the death of her mother,

MRS. HATTIE VER HEY.

May she and her family find comfort in God's Word, "Blessed be God, ... the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation" (II Corinthians 1:3, 4).

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Henrietta VanOort, Sec'y.

TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA announces that they are in need of a teacher for the intermediate grades (3-5) for the 1998-1999 school term. We invite your applications and ask you to send it to the attention of the administrator, Mr. Fred Hanco, at Covenant Christian School, 9088 Northwood Road, Lynden, WA 98264 (school phone: 360-354-5436 or home phone: 360-966-7950 or e-mail: fredncathy@juno.com). Or send applications to the school board secretary, Mr. Dave Zandstra, 400 Cascade Way, Lynden, WA 98264 (360-354-1259).

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 1998 at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk