



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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Filled with the Spirit

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4

Pentecost!

What a glorious and significant event in the history of the church of Jesus Christ. This was the day that the resurrected and ascended Christ poured out upon His church the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, that He might abide in and with His church forever.

Without that Spirit the events of the death and resurrection of Christ cannot be understood, and they have no meaning or power for Christ's bride. It was under the

power of the Spirit that Peter was able to preach the first Pentecost sermon as he explained the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Joel so many years before.

The Spirit is none other than the third person of the Holy Trinity. The Father breathes forth forever the Spirit to the Son as the Spirit of the Father, saying, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, I love thee." And the Son breathes forth forever the Spirit to the Father as the Spirit of the Son, saying, "Abba, Father." And "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10).

It is this same Spirit that rested upon Jesus in His humiliation. We confess that Jesus "was conceived

by the Holy Ghost" (Apostles' Creed), which is what the angel Gabriel revealed to Mary in Luke 1:35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Immanuel is a name expressing this union of the divine with our human nature.

It was by His Spirit and Word that Christ taught His disciples and performed mighty works while sojourning here on earth. By this Spirit the human nature of Christ was sustained while our Savior suffered the wrath of God for our sin and guilt. He reconciled us with God, having given perfect satisfac-

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tion through the Spirit. On the third day He was raised from the dead by the Spirit, as the apostle Paul explains, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

Then, upon seating the ascended Christ at His right hand, the Father gave the Spirit to Christ without measure. This Spirit Christ then poured out upon His church, that He might dwell with her and realize the prayer which He brought to the Father on the night of His betrayal and capture: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:22, 23a).

That is Pentecost. The Father dwells in Christ and pours out all the blessings of Christ upon His church. What a joyous day! We have the blessings of salvation; the promise of God is realized. How rich our spiritual life is when compared to that of the saints of the old dispensation. They lived in the hope of the promise; we live in the realized promise. They lived by pictures; we live by realities. For them the way to the kingdom of heaven was not yet open; we are in that kingdom of heaven.

Or, to put it another way, they lived in the darkness of the night, while we live in the brightness of the day. The people in the old dispensation would shout from the valley to their officebearers on the mountaintops, "Do you see the day? Is the day coming?" And the prophets, seeing things afar off, would only reply, "Only a little streak, the day is not yet, it is still night."

When Christ came, there came the twilight, as prophesied by Zacharias: "whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in dark-

ness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78, 79). That was the twilight. But when Pentecost came, that was when the day broke. The Spirit was poured out, there was light, and Peter saw the light.

However, the Holy Spirit cannot be seen by the human eye. How was the church to know that the Spirit had indeed been poured out? The Lord gave unto them signs. Three signs were given, each saying something different about the Holy Spirit.

The first sign was the "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (v. 2). There was no wind present, nothing stirred. But the sound of a storm filled the whole house.

The second sign was "cloven tongues like as of fire" (v. 3). Again, there was actually no fire, but tongues *as of fire*, which "sat upon each of them."

And, finally, there was a third sign. The 120 "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (v. 4). Some would have us believe that the miracle was one of *hearing*, rather than of speaking. But that is not true. The disciples actually spoke in other languages.

Now what does this all mean? What did those saints on that blessed day understand? What does it mean to us?

The sound as of a rushing mighty wind tells us *how* the Spirit works. The Spirit works mysteriously. We can see the effects of His working. To Nicodemus the Lord explained how one must be born again, of water and of the Spirit. To help Nicodemus understand, Jesus used the picture of the wind: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). As the wind, so is the working of the Spirit irresistible. When the Spirit regenerates, one cannot resist it.

The cloven tongues like as of fire portray to us *what* the Spirit does. As the tongues were cloven, divided into two parts like the hoof of a cow or sheep, so the work of the Spirit is twofold. One aspect of this work is negative, a consuming of that which is of sin, a burning away of corruption. The other aspect is positive, a purifying of that which is in Christ, instilling in us the fire of the love of God.

And finally, the speaking in other tongues indicates to us *whom* the Spirit saves. God's church is no longer bound and limited to the nation of Israel, but is to be gathered from all nations, tongues, and tribes. Here we see the catholicity of the church and the fulfillment of God's Word through Noah to his son Japheth in Genesis 9:27: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." And Isaiah, as he prophesied of the kingdom of Christ, said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Is. 2:2).

The effect of the outpouring of the Spirit was seen immediately in those disciples (approximately 120) gathered there in one place. They spoke the wonderful works of God. That should be the result of the Holy Spirit living within us too. By speaking the wonderful works of God we manifest that we belong to Christ and that He dwells in us by His Spirit. Let us speak of the cross and of salvation, the promise and the realization of the promise. Let us be filled with the Holy Spirit through the preaching, then proclaim it to one another, to our children, to the church, and to all the world.

Then we will have a foretaste of what will be ours in heaven, where we will forever proclaim God's wonderful works. That indeed will be glory! □

1998 Synod of the PRC

Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, MI is the calling church for the annual synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America this year. Synod will convene on Tuesday morning, June 9, in the church building of the Hope church. The pre-synodical worship service will be held on Monday evening, June 8, at 7:30, in the Hope church's auditorium. Rev. Ken Koole, president of last year's synod, will lead the service and preach the sermon.

Much of the agenda is devoted to missions.

Both the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) and the Hudsonville, MI PRC report on the work of Rev. Ron Hanko in the British Isles. Missionary Hanko is working as pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland and as missionary in the British Isles. His work outside the area of the congregation is centered at present in Wales. The DMC arranged that candidate Daniel Kleyn and Prof. Herman Hanko helped with the work in Wales this past year. The DMC is recommending to synod that men be sent to the British Isles periodically to assist the missionary with the work. The purpose is to determine "whether or not to recommend in 1999 that synod approve calling a second missionary to the British Isles."

Home missionary Tom Miersma has been based in the San Luis Valley in Colorado for about four years. Synod of 1997 decided that this area has not shown the growth or interest which would warrant confining Rev. Miersma's labors to it. The DMC reports that

this is still the situation today. With the concurrence of the DMC, the calling church—Loveland, CO—recommends that the work in Colorado be evaluated by the end of this year, to determine whether Rev. Miersma remain there "or be moved to another mission field."

The DMC informs synod that Rev. Miersma has been preaching once a month for the Sovereign Grace Reformed Church in Spokane, WA. This church has asked the DMC to work with them with a view to their "becoming a PRC mission work and church." The DMC, Loveland consistory, and Rev. Miersma hold out the prospect of moving the missionary to Spokane, to work with this church.

Synod will decide on the proposal of the DMC that a second home missionary be called "for the eastern part of the U.S." He would work primarily with a group of some five families, mostly from the Roman Catholic Church. Rev. Miersma and other ministers have been working with members of this group for about two years.

The denominational Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) informs synod that Rev. Allen Brummel and Rev. Arie denHartog made a trip to the Philippines last December. They visited contacts, preached, taught, and held conferences. At the request of the FMC, Rev. and Mrs. Jay Kortering will visit contacts in the Philippines on their way to the United States in May of this year. The FMC desires to send two more delegations to the Philippines before synod 1999 "to prepare the way for establishing a mission field in the Philippines." The FMC is asking authorization from synod to work "toward the

possibility of calling a missionary to the Philippines in the next couple of years."

The FMC informs synod that after the 1996 synod's decision approving the calling of a missionary to Ghana, West Africa, the FMC approved the decision of the calling church—Hull, IA—to discontinue calling a missionary to Ghana. The reason was information that the government of Ghana permits foreigners to come into Ghana as missionaries only if an organized Ghanaian church sponsors them. The immigration officer of Ghana who was the source of this information added, "the Ghanaian authorities would then be looking at how and in what degree we were helping the people and the economy of Ghana. If we were building churches, schools, and hospitals, for example, the authorities would then grant us independent status." In subsequent correspondence with the Ministry of the Interior of Ghana, the FMC has learned that it would not be advisable to enter Ghana independently.

The FMC is recommending to the 1998 synod that "synod instruct the FMC to investigate the requirements associated with sponsorship and to proceed with sponsorship providing it does not conflict with the decisions of synod 1996 (Art. 70) and does not compromise the teaching and preaching of our Reformed distinctives." The committee is also recommending to this year's synod that synod approve a 1999 budget of \$101,345 for the general operating expenses of the Ghana field, and \$40,000 for the initial setup costs.

The Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) reports

on official visits by its members to the meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and to the meeting of the synod of the United Reformed Churches (URC). The CC is recommending to synod that the PRC discontinue sending observers to NAPARC. The grounds include: "1. The important doctrinal differences between us and the member churches make membership in this organization impossible. 2. We ought not to continue sending observers if we have no intention of joining."

The CC also makes a recommendation concerning relations with the URC. (The URC are basically Christian Reformed churches whose secession from the Christian Reformed denomination was occasioned by the opening of the offices of minister and elder to women in that Church.) The CC of the PRC is asking authorization from synod to send the following to the URC:

1. That the PRC and URC discuss those issues which have kept us separate since 1924, viz., common grace and the doctrine of the covenant.
2. That the PRC and URC determine if there are other issues which need to be resolved, e.g., remarriage of divorced persons, labor unions, perhaps church polity issues, and the use of hymns in worship.
3. That the PRC send observers to the next synod of the URC if we are invited and if the URC has the above recommendations on its agenda. Ground: God calls us to strive to manifest the unity of Christ's church, but it must be unity based on the truth of Scripture as interpreted by the three forms of unity.

The CC reports on a trip by Prof. Herman Hanko to the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS), sister churches of the PRC, this past year. The main purpose was his speaking at a Reformation Day Conference in

Singapore. He also preached and taught in Myanmar and in Singapore. Some of his teaching in Singapore was in the ERCS Bible School. The council of Hope PRC, Walker, MI, calling church of Rev. Jay Kortering (minister-on-loan to the ERCS), reports that the ERCS intend the Bible School to develop into a full-fledged seminary for the training of Reformed ministers in that part of the world.

The CC informs synod that the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand has disbanded.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, in a letter to synod, has addressed warm greetings to the PRC. The Presbyterian church particularly thanks the PRC for the training of their seminarian in the seminary of the PRC:

We would at this time officially extend our heartfelt thanks to you, both officebearers and people of the Protestant Reformed Churches, for so graciously opening up your seminary for the further training of our student, Mr. Mark Shand, for the ministry of the gospel, and your generous material and practical assistance.

We are grateful to know that you stand wholeheartedly committed to the Reformed faith as expressed in our respective confessions of faith. We deeply appreciate your firm adherence to covenant theology and particular grace. We value the emphasis you give to exegesis from the original languages, and your focus upon preparing preachers of the whole counsel of God. It is hard to put into words our gratefulness under God to you for extending a helping hand to us, a small denomination, in this vital task of preparing men for the ministry of the gospel.

One seminarian graduates from the Theological School of the PRC this year. Nathan Brummel will sit for his oral examination before the synod. With synod's approval of his specimen sermon preached before the synod and of his examina-

tion in various branches of theology, Mr. Brummel will become a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRC. In its report to synod, the Theological School Committee (TSC) recommends that two men from the PRC be admitted to the seminary in the fall of 1998.

In 1997 synod appointed a special committee "to investigate the advisability of investing a portion of the Emeritus Fund in mutual funds, and also to recommend proper management practices for the Emeritus Fund, including the investigation of other financial sources." In its report to the 1998 synod this committee recommends that synod make the churches "aware of the significant need faced by the Emeritus Fund and to ask our constituency to remember this need through extra giving and estate bequests." The committee notes that in the next 15 years, the assessment is likely to double from the present cost of \$135 per family. In the next 35-40 years, the prospect is that the costs will escalate to an amount that is about 10 times its present level. The conclusion of this committee is that additional study should be given to the following Emeritus Fund matters: "Actively pursuing other revenue sources for the Emeritus Fund; setting up administrative practices for the Emeritus Fund that are necessary to handle the increasing complexity of its operation; (and) presenting fair and consistent 'savings' techniques for ministers not in the Social Security program."

The Yearbook Committee reports the continued, steady numerical growth of the PRC.

May God increase the churches in number and virtue!

And may they display their virtue by faithfulness, wisdom, and zeal in the major assembly that meets, deliberates, and acts in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, this June, God willing. □

—DJE

■ Ignorance, Misapplication, or Another Explanation

I do not like to give criticism to one of the Lord's servants. But I must say that I was totally surprised by your statements under "Letters" in the 4/1/98 issue of the *Standard Bearer* concerning divorce.

I love the God of grace and the grace of God. I read everything that I can on the subject. Most of present-day works by Calvinists is not scholarly. I am glad to say that your paper is one of the rare exceptions. This is why I enjoy reading it so much. So this is why I was set back by your advice concerning divorce.

Regardless of one's position on divorce, we should not misapply Scripture to our side of the issue. We all make mistakes. But I cannot believe that you made one concerning Mark 6:18 with the statement—"Thy brother's (neighbor's) wife." I know that you know this was his real, actual, blood brother's wife. I do not have to give to you the history. You are a professor. To try to pass this passage off as speaking against taking your neighbor's wife after a divorce is totally misapplying the Word of God. We both know that what John the Baptist was preaching against here was the Mosaic law of taking your natural brother's wife as stated in Leviticus 18:16. The Mosaic law was not against taking another man's wife after divorce (Deut. 24:1-4)—just your brother's. As you well know, the law of Moses directed a man to marry the wife of his *deceased* brother if he had left no child.

I am caught between a rock and a hard place with this. If you were ignorant of this history, what kind of professor are you? If you knew and misapplied the passage to your side of the issue, what kind of a Christian teacher are you? Maybe

there is another explanation. If there is, please explain.

(Elder) Eddie Roberts
Faith Baptist Church
Madison Heights, MI

Response:

Surely it is not as bad as this?

In replying to a request for passages of Scripture bearing on the duty of a man twice divorced and now married to the wife of another man, to insert "neighbor's" in parentheses after "brother's" in a quotation of Mark 6:18?

Is it ignorance or deceitful exegesis to suggest, as I did, that the Baptist's condemnation of Herod for having his (half) brother's wife is properly to be explained as implying the condemnation also of a man's having his neighbor's wife, though the neighbor is not a relative by blood?

Certainly, the *doctrine* of my inserted, one-word interpretation of the text cannot be faulted. If the 10th commandment of God's law forbids *coveting* the neighbor's wife, it forbids *having* the neighbor's wife.

Reformed exegesis generally has seen more in the passage than only the condemnation of marrying a (blood) brother's wife.

In his commentary on Mark 6:17-29, John Calvin described the "atrocious character" of Herod's sin this way: "not only did he keep in his own house another man's wife, whom he had torn away from lawful wedlock, but the person on whom he had committed this outrage was his own brother." Calvin added: "John condemns the rape still more than the incest." In his indictment of Herodias, Calvin did not speak of an incestuous relationship, but of "the disgrace of a pretended marriage" (*Harmony of the Evangelists*, vol. 2, Eerdmans, repr. 1957, pp. 220-226).

William Hendriksen analyzed

the sin of Herod as "this incestuous and adulterous relationship (emphasis added). He concluded: "such a marriage was incestuous. Was it not also adulterous (Rom. 7:2, 3)?" (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, Baker, repr. 1979, pp. 236, 237)

Nor is this understanding of Mark 6:18 limited to Reformed interpreters. The Anglican scholar, Andrew Cornes, appeals to Mark 6:17ff., with the parallel passages in Matthew 14 and Luke 3, in support of his contention that remarriage after divorce is adultery.

It is not possible to contract a true marriage—a marriage in God's eyes—while your divorced partner is still living. It is only possible to commit adultery. This is because the first marriage still exists. It may be for this reason that Matthew continues to call Herodias "Philip's wife" after she has divorced Philip and been remarried to Herod Antipas (Matt. 14:3f./Mark 6:17f, cf Luke 3:19). (*Divorce & Remarriage*, Eerdmans, 1993, p. 214)

The Committee on "Marital Problems—Ecumenical Synod Report" was correct when it asserted in its report to the Fourth Reformed Ecumenical Synod (1958) that "most exegetes regard the marriage (of Herod and Herodias - DJE) as both adulterous and incestuous" (*Acts of the Fourth Reformed Ecumenical Synod of Potchefstroom South Africa*, p. 78).

To my mind, the *fundamental* teaching of Mark 6:18 is that remarriage after divorce to *anybody's* wife or husband is unlawful. That the neighbor sinned against is a relative aggravates the iniquity.

Would you, therefore, regard my "neighbor's" in parentheses as neither ignorance nor deceit, but as accounted for by "another explanation"?

—Ed.

■ For All Times, Condemned, Rejected, and Denounced

In your editorial, "Where are the Theologians of the Cross?" (*Standard Bearer*, April 1, 1998), you quoted Gerhard O. Forde as saying that Luther's Thesis 13 at the Heidelberg Disputation, condemning the Roman Catholic doctrine of free will, was "the only one from this Disputation actually attacked in the bull 'Exsurge Domine' threatening Luther with excommunication."

Would you give me the actual attack on Luther's Thesis 13 from the papal bull, "Exsurge Domine"?

(Rev.) Wesley Pastor
Christ Memorial Church
Williston, VT

Response:

In 1520, Pope Leo X published a bull, or official decree, "Exsurge

Domine" ("Arise O Lord"), threatening Martin Luther with excommunication if he did not repent and recant his teachings. The bull listed 41 of Luther's teachings, which it condemned as "deadly poison" and which were the ground of the excommunication. The 36th allegedly erroneous teaching of Luther was the following: "Free will after sin is a matter of name only; and as long as one does what is in him, one sins mortally."

This was a virtual quotation by the pope of Luther's Thesis 13 at the Heidelberg Disputation: "Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin."

About the 41 teachings of Luther that it condemned, including Luther's teaching that free will (the heart of the "theology of

glory") is a fiction and false, the bull declared:

For all times do we want them condemned, rejected and denounced. We order in the name of the holy obedience and the danger of all punishment each and every Christian believer of either sex, under no circumstances to read, speak, preach, laud, consider, publish or defend such writings, sermons, or broadsides or anything contained therein.... Indeed, they are, upon learning of this bull, wherever they may be, to burn his writings, publicly and in the presence of clerics and laity in order to avoid the punishment stated above.

The theology of (man's) glory has always recognized and detested the theology of the cross.

The feeling is mutual.

—Ed. □

Marking Zion's Bulwarks

Prof. Herman Hanko

Montanus: First Charismatic

Introduction

Solomon told us in the book of Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new under the sun. How often has not modern history proved that to be true. It is so in the world; it is so in the church.

The charismatic movement is of recent origin, and is a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. And yet it is as old as the history of the New Testament church. Precisely the evils of modern-day Pente-

costalism were found in the Montanist movement of the third century A.D.

There is a kind of a pendulum which swings in the church from one extreme to the other. It is often the pendulum between rationalism (which makes man's reason the final arbiter of truth) and mysticism (which makes feelings the final arbiter of truth). Both have in common that they abandon (or add to) the Scriptures as the authority of all faith and life. The one puts reason in Scripture's place; the other puts feelings there.

Reason and feelings are quite opposed to each other, and this opposition makes the pendulum

swing. Weary of the coldness of rationalism, the pendulum swings in the direction of mysticism; and then, frightened at last by the quagmire of the shifting sands of mysticism, the pendulum swings back towards rationalism. Both are reactions; both are wrong.

The great lesson to be learned by it all is simply this: *Sola Scriptura*, the one great principle of the Reformation.

In Montanism we have the beginnings of mysticism, the charismatic movement, and all revivalism. Yes, even the latter, for revivalism is not far removed from mysticism, and both share many common features, as we shall see.

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

Montanus and his followers

Phrygia is found in central Asia Minor. It was in this general area that the people later known as the Galatians settled, which people were the objects of the mission work of the church on Paul's first missionary journey. They were a volatile and excitable people, given to fanatical excesses, and some of these national traits carried over after their conversion. Many strange heresies found in the early church arose in Phrygia. One of them was Montanism.

Montanus, after whom the heresy is named, was born a heathen and may have been a mutilated priest of the heathen goddess Cybele, whom the Galatians worshiped. Around the middle of the second century, somewhere between 150 and 170, Montanus was converted.

It was not long before Montanus began to have some strange ideas of what Christianity was all about. He was of the opinion that most of the Old Testament was the time of God the Father; the first century in the new dispensation was the period of God the Son; and with his own birth and conversion, a new age dawned: the period of God the Holy Ghost.

His chief appeal to Scripture was to the lengthy discourse of Jesus to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, a discourse dealing chiefly with the "Paraclete," the Spirit of truth whom Christ promised to send to the church. Montanus became convinced that perhaps he himself was the Paraclete; or, if not the Paraclete Himself, then the inspired organ through whom the Paraclete spoke.

Usually the Paraclete, so Montanus claimed, spoke through him while he was in a trance or in a state of ecstasy; but what he spoke was infallible and had to be taken by men as from God Himself.

He very soon gained a following, and his influence spread rapidly. His views were adopted by

many in the church, and, as especially Rome and North Africa were affected by his teachings, the whole church was thrown into commotion. His heresies became the occasion for the first synods to be held in the post-apostolic church.

I suppose even then his whole movement would not have attracted the attention that it did if it had not been for the fact that one of the greatest of all the church fathers, Tertullian himself, joined the movement. This is always very difficult for me to understand, for Tertullian's writings are some of the most notable of all the church fathers, and his teachings of the Trinity were the clearest and most biblical of any writer prior to the Council of Nicea. In fact, Tertullian's insights did more than any other single writer to shape that crucially important doctrine of God.

Yet he joined the Montanist movement. It is a powerful lesson to us that the greatest of men in the church of Christ are prone to error and susceptible to false doctrine.

The views of Montanism

Heresy never arises in a vacuum. It is almost always a reaction to some weakness in the church. It is almost always present because the church has unpaid debts. A weakness in the church, in life or doctrine, creates a vacuum which a heresy rushes to fill.

So it was with Montanism. At the time the sect arose, the church had, generally speaking, enjoyed a fairly long period of peace, of freedom from persecution, and of prosperity. The result was that the church had become, in some measure, very much attached to this world, possessor of more material goods than had been the case since her beginning, worldly-minded in her outlook, and without the spiritual characteristic of a church which looks for the return of Jesus Christ. She had accommodated herself to the world for "the long

haul," so to speak. Montanism was a reaction against the rationalism of Gnosticism (see our last article, May 1, 1998) and the moral laxity of the Roman church.

In addition to these characteristics, the balance of power was shifting in the church from the people of God functioning in the office of believers to an ordained clergy, an ecclesiastical priesthood, which was to develop into the episcopal system of Roman Catholicism.

Against all these things Montanism reacted. It doesn't sound all that unfamiliar and does not strike one who knows the times in which we live as being excessively strange.

The chief characteristic of Montanism was its belief in continuous revelation. All the special gifts of the Holy Spirit were continued, claimed the Montanists; and the result was that miracles, too, were part of the proper exercises of those who possessed the Holy Spirit. But prophecy was the main gift which was continued.

All those who were truly spiritual were endowed with these special gifts. No distinction was to be observed between clergy and laity, for men, women, and children alike were and ought to be prophets and prophetesses. Indeed, shortly after Montanus began his teachings in Phrygia, two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, left their husbands and homes to join Montanus and become prophetesses in his group.

The prophecies given to the truly spiritual were usually given in ecstasies and trances, and Montanus described one who was in such a trance as a "lyre" or harp on which the Holy Spirit plays the melodious songs of heaven—a figure often used to this very day to describe the prophecies of those who claim to possess the gifts of prophecy.

While Montanism was intended to do away with the horrible sin of setting clergy above laity, it had its own levels of holi-

ness. Only those who possessed the Spirit and could show the special gifts of the Spirit were the truly holy; the rest were looked down upon as "carnal."

It was this idea that led the Montanists to the notion of a "pure church," another idea which has lingered through the centuries and which has had its own attractiveness. Only the truly spiritual could belong to the church, so that the church was composed only of true believers. How often has it not been true that this notion of true believers dominated the thinking and life of the church. In fact, this very idea lies at the bottom of the main tenet of Baptist thinking: the baptism only of believers. It is the "pure church" ideal. It is not surprising, therefore, that Montanism denied infant baptism and insisted on believers' baptism.

Such views of the church led, in turn, to a very rigid view of morality and discipline. The Montanists were, in their protest against worldliness and carnality, almost ascetic. They believed that in times of persecution believers ought actively to seek martyrdom. They had no sympathy for those who lapsed—i.e., for those who under the pressure of persecution denied their faith, but later repented and sought re-admittance to the church. No lapsed member could ever again belong to the church here upon earth.

Tertullian went so far as to say that anyone who became guilty of any one of the seven deadly sins had forfeited all right ever to be a member of the church on earth.

They viewed the institution of marriage with a great deal of suspicion. They were flatly opposed to remarriage, even when one's spouse died; and they generally considered marriage itself to be God's grudging consent to man's irresistible tendency to indulge in fleshly lusts.

In eating and drinking, in pleasures and dress, in demeanor and conduct, they were gloomy, sober,

not given to anything which could be construed as the enjoyment of what belonged to this world. They were an unhappy lot.

While the early church during the time of the apostles tended to believe that the Lord was coming within the lifetime of the saints then living (see Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, e.g.), these hopes of Christ's imminent return tended to fade away, and the church became increasingly aware of the fact that it was the will of God that the church be on the earth for a great number of years. The loss of the hope of an imminent return of Christ soon left a mark of worldliness on the church. As Montanism rejected the worldliness of the church it saw the church's salvation in a renewed emphasis on the immediate return of Christ. It became a sect which taught that Christ could come at any moment, and it attempted to persuade the church at large of the truth of this assertion.

When persecution once more broke out under Antonius Pius, this persecution was interpreted to mean that the final persecution had come and that the church was about to witness the return of Christ and the establishment of the millennium. It is strange that so often those two ideas seem to go hand in hand: special revelations from God and the imminent return of Christ, the date of which can be predicted.

The significance of Montanism

The ecstasies, trances, visions, and special revelations of Montanism were its chief characteristic. Nor were the Montanists able to keep this aspect of their teaching within reasonable bounds. Montanism was characterized by frenzied activities of those in trances, by extremely unusual and bizarre manifestations of the Spirit, by irrational behavior which was condoned on the basis of an appeal to the work of the Spirit, and by utterances in strange tongues

and with strange noises that neither God nor man could understand. In a more modern period, the charismatic movement emphasizes the special gifts of the Spirit, and revivalism gives evidence of bizarre behavior as being manifestations of the Spirit's presence. They come together, however, and show beyond doubt that they have much in common. To open oneself to revivalism is to cave in to the great evil of Pentecostalism. The two came together in Montanism; today's movement is no different.

Thus it is that Montanism, with its emphasis on special gifts, and with its trances and visions, was guilty of an excessive supernaturalism and puritanism which denies the true character of the work of the Holy Spirit. One scholar is right when he says: "The religious earnestness which animated Montanism, and the fanatical extremes into which it ran, have frequently reappeared in the Church after the death of Montanism, under various names and forms, as in Novatianism, Donatism, Anabaptism, ... Puritanism, Pietism, ... by way of protests and wholesome reaction against various evils in the church. And what may appear perhaps more strange, several of those very doctrines of the Montanists which in their earliest rise were pronounced heretical gradually made their way into the Church of Rome...."

The antidote to all such error is the great Reformation principle *Sola Scriptura*. And that principle means not only that Scripture is the sole authority for faith and life, but also that Scripture is all that we need to know for our salvation. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture leads one who holds to it to anchor his soul firmly in God's Word and to seek for nothing else. □

■ Pastoral Network for the "Paranormal"

One is hardly surprised at the changes taking place in Reformed churches. Still, it does come as a bit of a shock to hear of a "pastoral network for the 'paranormal'" in Reformed denominations. The Ecumenical News International, December 10, 1997 reports:

Dutch churches have created a pastoral network for people with paranormal gifts and experiences.

The network was initiated after the home mission organizations of the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) noticed that an increasing number of people both inside and outside the church wanted to talk about their experiences.

Henk Kuyk, a pastor and secretary of the NHK/GKN commission of pastoral work, who helped create the network, believes that the churches should not reject these people but try to understand them.

"Some people have a more than usual sensitivity for these things, which other people miss," Kuyk said.

According to Kuyk, western culture is dominated by knowledge and methods of perception based on western science and techniques. Other sources of knowledge and methods of perception are hardly considered in western societies, he suggested.

He pointed out that the Bible contained many stories describing visions, dreams, hearing of voices and healings, experiences that today might be described as paranormal.

"In our church life and theology such events are mostly seen as belonging to the past," he said.

Dutch church workers have found that people with particular

experiences and gifts—usually described as paranormal—often feel isolated and encounter denial and rejection.

The situation was aggravated, Kuyk suggested, when people were told that their experiences were wrong, sinful or even the work of the devil.

Christians with paranormal experiences and gifts find such judgments difficult to swallow. They feel trapped with their faith between their experiences and the judgments of others.

Hence: a pastoral network for the "paranormal."

It would appear from Scripture that there were indeed certain "paranormal" experiences. One thinks of the vision of Peter when he saw the sheet with unclean animals let down from heaven. He heard too the voice saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." One also recalls the incident of the young maid in Philippi who had, apparently, certain "paranormal" revelations about the future.

In the first instance, there was infallible, divine revelation. In the second instance one sees the work of a demon in the young lady. So one wonders how the "paranormal" must be judged by the "pastoral network" today? Would these "paranormal" events be infallible revelation—or the work of demons? There seems to be no third alternative.

■ "Why Aren't Conservatives Talking About Divorce?"

Our editor in past editorials has been capably setting forth the scriptural instruction concerning divorce and remarriage. He correctly expresses concern that conservatives and evangelicals are not saying much about the problem. While many deplore the growing rate of divorce and the prevalence of remarriage, it is nevertheless accepted in most conservative

churches as inevitable and as acceptable. As the editor pointed out, those who divorce and remarry can freely sit at the communion table as though there is nothing wrong with their new relationship.

In an article titled as above, William R. Mattox Jr., in *Policy Review*, Summer 1995, Number 73, analyzes this divorce situation. He begins by deploring the "tragic suicide of Kurt Cobain last year...." (No, I don't know who he is—but the article states that he is "a cutting-edge cultural icon married to alternative rock's premier feminist....") The suicide was connected with a recent divorce.

The author makes some interesting points which are worth considering:

...As Barbara Dafoe Whitehead argued in her celebrated article on family break-up in the *Atlantic Monthly*, divorce—like illegitimacy—is strongly linked to a wide variety of negative outcomes for children, from child abuse and neglect to serious juvenile crime. A 1994 study of juveniles in the Wisconsin correction system found that 1 in 3 came from divorced or separated homes. Several studies show that unmarried girls whose parents divorce are much more likely to engage in premarital sex and get pregnant out of wedlock than girls from intact households. A 1994 study by researchers at Duke and North Carolina State University reported that family dissolution is a stronger predictor of suicide for young males than such factors as unemployment.

Despite the clear impact of family break-up on children, "some people aren't comfortable talking about divorce and adultery," former Education Secretary William Bennett told a Christian Coalition conference last year. "But it seems to me we have to talk about them. They are before us, and they have great consequences."

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Great indeed. The number of children directly affected by divorce has more than doubled in a generation, from 463,000 in 1960 to 985,000 in 1991. Until political and cultural leaders give proper attention to the educational decline—we stand little chance of reversing these trends.

The article contains suggestions by the author to reverse the trends toward divorce and remarriage. He speaks of "rebuilding the walls." Though many of his remarks pertain to the secular and civic, he also emphasizes the responsibility of the churches in this whole affair. His conclusions concerning the churches are revealing.

Over the last three decades, the walls surrounding lifelong marriage have crumbled. The age-old social barriers to divorce, promiscuity, illegitimacy, and cohabitation have been removed in the name of promoting personal freedom and self-expression. A growing number of people—especially those in Cobain's generation—now know first-hand that the walls that were thought to entrap and restrict were really there to protect.

...Challenge the church. No cultural institution is more important to the restoration of marriage than the religious community. Churches and synagogues claim a time-honored, divinely-ordained role to help couples understand the moral and spiritual nature of their marriage vows. Religious institutions bear a unique responsibility for helping those embarking on and struggling to maintain marriage commitments. Similarly, only faith communities can offer redemptive hope to people who have experienced marital failure.

While religious leaders do not bear full responsibility for the absence of public discourse about divorce, they can hardly blame others for the failure of many marriages. Author Michael McManus notes that many churches have become "blessing machines" that wed interested couples but offer few marriage-related services, like counseling for engaged and mar-

ried couples, practical advice on how to strengthen troubled marriages, and mentoring programs for younger couples.

Sermons that warn against divorce or condemn the casual termination of marriages are not popular among some ministers, McManus says. Sermons that acknowledge that the Bible prohibits remarriage in some cases (Matthew 5:32) are even less popular, even though unqualified acceptance of divorce and remarriage can only discourage marital perseverance.

The failure of the church (particularly the Protestant church) to significantly influence the surrounding culture can be seen in the fact that four of the six states with the worst divorce rates in the country (Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee) are found right in the heart of the Bible Belt.

When religious leaders take seriously their responsibility for strengthening marriage in their congregations and their communities, divorce does decline....

One additional point is made by the author which deserves emphasis.

Valorize marital toughness. There is a common misconception that couples who have good, solid, enduring marriages are "lucky." Supposedly, happily married couples do not face any of the conflicts and struggles that other couples face. They do not go through rough times or encounter serious relational turbulence.

The truth is, every marriage faces trials and hardships and breakdowns in communication. Yes, some couples manage to limit conflict better than others, but every marriage faces difficulties. Ruth Bell Graham was once asked if she had ever contemplated divorcing her husband, evangelist Billy Graham. "No," she said, "but I have considered murder."

If every marriage faces challenges, why is it that some survive and others do not? According to John Gottman, of the University of Washington at Seattle,

couples that succeed work hard at resolving conflict....

There are others, then, who deplore the timidity of the church in facing and condemning this great evil. There is a degree of recognition that Scripture itself does not allow divorce and remarriage. The consequences of this great evil are recognized even by unbelieving "authorities." And, so we confess, Scripture is very clear on the subject. Though one would not expect the unbeliever to be consistent in building the walls which maintain marriage, at least the church ought to be faithful and call back to the clear teaching of the Word of God.

■ RICO's Threat to Free Speech

Cal Thomas, from the *Los Angeles Times* Syndicate, expresses great concern about a decision of a federal jury in Chicago which invoked the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) to convict two pro-life groups and three pro-life leaders of extortion. He writes:

The organizations and individuals convicted had aggressively promoted their views outside abortion clinics and, on occasion, turned away women seeking abortions. A 1994 law already bans the blocking of abortion clinics, and plaintiffs made clear their ultimate objective is to outlaw even demonstrations at places where abortions are performed.

...In this new decision, under RICO, damages can be trebled, and the class-action verdict allows the nation's 900 abortion clinics an opportunity to win "damages."

The morality of claiming the demonstrations "restrain trade" aside, this decision could come back to haunt those who invoked RICO in an attempt to silence protests while their grisly work continues.

The article concludes:

In modern times, free speech and expression sustained the civil rights movement and ended an

unpopular war. The First Amendment protects flag-burners, pornographers and rotten television and radio.

Now only protests against abortion are to be singled out for special penalties, though the author of RICO, University of Notre Dame Prof. G. Robert Blakely, said its sole intent was to curtail organized crime, not organized protest.

If the First Amendment doesn't protect all, it potentially protects none. Should the pro-lifers not

win on appeal, the government will feel free to muzzle anyone or anything of which it disapproves.

Whatever one might say about the wisdom and propriety of picketing, the fact is that Thomas makes a valid point. Think of what the government can do if it can blame and punish groups and individuals for crimes committed by others. And assess triple damages, no less! When, in preaching, we strongly condemn the sin of abortion, which is nothing less than ap-

proved murder, would we not also be liable to triple damages when some crazy individual decides to blow up abortion clinics or kill abortioners? When we condemn the sin of homosexuality, and some individual decides he will kill homosexuals, will the churches be subject to triple damages because of his insane act? It almost seems so in light of the decision mentioned above. One can envision the church having increasingly difficult times in our land. □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Christ, Our King (1)

There is yet one aspect of Christ's office as Mediator which we must consider — the kingly aspect. God has ordained His Son, Immanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be King over all the works of His hands.

An Eternally Appointed Dominion

It is clear from Psalm 2 that Christ's kingly dominion was appointed from eternity. His is a dominion exalted far above the kingship of Adam.

Adam, the first man, was created king under God. To Adam God gave dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. To man was given the anointing to serve God as king in the creation. He was to rule in the name of God over all things.

But in the light of Psalm 2, it becomes evident that Adam's royal

office was only a reflection of that which was eternally appointed for God's only begotten Son, the Messiah, our Lord Christ. Adam's dominion was a *limited* dominion. It was limited to the earth. He had a complete dominion in the earthly sphere; but it was only an earthly dominion. For Adam himself was earthly. He was not the Lord from heaven.

And Adam fell. We have considered the devastating effects of the fall with respect to the other aspects of his office. The same devastation came upon his royal office. Not only was the royal power of man diminished when God cursed the creation, but man was no longer king under God.

He remains king. The dominion of man over the creation is still seen today, though that dominion is even limited over the earthly creation. But the real problem for man is that he wants to rule now *without* God. That is true in every sphere and relationship of life. Consequently there develops in this world a kingdom of Satan, a kingdom that continues to develop and will culminate in that which

Scripture exposes as the world-power of Antichrist.

Apart from the new birth in Christ Jesus and His dominion in our lives, we are all prophets, priests, and kings under the devil. The expression of that truth comes out in our old man day after day after day.

But it was God's purpose from eternity to raise man to such an exalted position that all things would be subject to him. And that purpose never changed, never could change. All things stand strictly in the service of God and His eternal good pleasure. Christ shall have dominion! God has set His Son upon His holy hill of Zion.

All pointed to Christ, eternally set in God's counsel. Only in Christ would all things on earth and in heaven be united and belong to His one dominion.

That Psalm 2 is written by David and refers to personal experience does not change this truth. For David stands as a type of Christ. We ought not forget that Psalm 2 is very specifically prophetic. Proof for that is found in Acts 13:32,33, where Paul preaches,

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"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The same proof is found in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapters 1 and 5.

Christ Himself is the root of David. He is the Messiah, anointed to rule in Jehovah's name. He rules according to the will and law of Jehovah God. There is no wrong found in Him.

Against Him the heathen rage. They say of God and of His Christ, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." There seems to be no conceivable reason. It is not that He is an inept governor, who rules wickedly. He is a righteous King. But against Him men rage, simply because He is God's anointed, and they hate God and His precepts, His truth, and His righteousness. They imagine a vain thing.

Jehovah speaks, the Almighty. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." The language is very strong. "I have set fast my King. All the raging of the heathen is vain. My Christ reigns," says God.

And the response of His Anointed is this: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:7-9).

Before the foundation of the world God had ordained His Son to be King over all the works of His hands. Even though it remains true that the first man plunged himself and us all into the abyss of guilt and misery and death by his act of willful disobedience, and for

that rebellion was responsible before God; nevertheless, that fall was no accident from God's viewpoint. For it pleased God that in Christ, not Adam, should all fullness dwell.

Though the powers of darkness set themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed—as far as their own motivation is concerned—and would gather together in their attempts to kick God and His Christ off the throne, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." The very Son of God, the only begotten, Jesus the Messiah, is eternally ordained to be the Firstborn of every creature, King over all things. And as the Lord of His elect brethren and with them, He shall forever reign over all the works of God's hands. So He reigns as God's Christ, the Anointed.

The Exercise of His Dominion

The exercise of His dominion is unto God's glory and to the salvation of us who believe.

He is King of His church, first of all.

It is necessary to call attention to this truth, because there are those in the church world—especially dispensationalists and premillennialists—who deny this. They are those who teach that Christ is the King of the Jews, but the Head of His church. They make separation between Jew and Gentile, between the nation of Israel and the church. And, although with some variation, they teach that when the Jews rejected Christ, He turned to the Gentiles with the purpose of gathering for Himself a church of which He is the Head. He is not the King of that church, they say. When Christ has gathered His church from among the Gentiles, He will return to the Jews. And in the nation of Israel He will reestablish the throne of David in Jerusalem and reign as King over Israel.

But this teaching is contrary to the truth of Holy Scripture.

In the first place, it denies the unity of the church throughout the ages. Scripture clearly teaches the unity of the church throughout all ages, Old and New Testaments. Although in the Old Testament time of types and shadows that church was given a national form, it is clear throughout Scripture that the church of the New Testament is one with the Israel of the Old Testament. That truth will require further exposition when we get to a consideration of the doctrine of the church.

Secondly, the Bible does not speak of the kingdom of God as an earthly kingdom. On the contrary, Jesus gave this testimony before Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Furthermore, we read in Ephesians 3 that the mystery of Christ, hidden in ages past, is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (v. 6). There is no longer separation between Jew and Greek. Christ is King over all. All the righteous are the children of God's kingdom, governed and preserved by the eternal King of kings.

Christ rules in His church by His Word and Spirit. Jesus Christ exercises a kingly authority over and works by the power of grace in all whom He makes subject to Himself by the gospel. Christ establishes His kingdom in the hearts of us His elect by sending forth His regenerating Spirit, making our hearts subject to His rule and ruling in our hearts according to His purpose.

Not only so, but He sends forth His armies of prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, who are under the leadership of the Spirit, armed with the Word of God which is sharp and powerful, going forth conquering and to conquer. He shakes the hearts of His people right to the foundations, overturning every vain hope and

high thought that exalts itself against Him.

By that rule of His grace, Christ calls us out of darkness into the light of His glory and grace, into the kingdom of heaven. That explains why, even on this earth, we

are citizens of the kingdom of *heaven*. Our great King establishes in the hearts of His people a spiritual rule, even writing His law on our inmost hearts, so that it becomes our delight to do His will. He rules in our hearts by His grace,

giving us the desire to repent of our sins and to bow in willing and humble obedience to Him.

That is the reign of Christ in the hearts of His people. But His sovereign rule embraces much more. □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

The Prediluvian Period From the Protevangel to the Flood

Introduction

The period of sacred history which we are about to discuss extends from the time of the fall and the first announcement of the promise to the time of the destruction of the first world and the salvation of the church by water. This is a period of some sixteen and one-half centuries according to the chronology of Scripture itself. To that chronology and its significance we will give our attention later.

What we wish to stress at the beginning of our discussion, first of all, is that we are dealing with a distinct period of Old Testament history. It is generally recognized that this is indeed one of the several main periods of the history of the old dispensation. Rather frequently, however, this is only a matter of noting some convenient chronological divisions of history. What we must note carefully is that the character of the *history* of this period marks it as a distinct and unified period. It is one of the great epochs of Old Testament his-

tory, having its own distinct character and significance, in the light of Scripture.

In general, of course, this period is that of the beginning of the development of the human race as a fallen race and that, too, in a fallen and cursed creation. In close connection with this, this is the period of the beginning of the gathering of the church out of the whole human race. It is the period of the beginning of the realization of the promise of Genesis 3:15. As such, this period forms a unity with all the rest of the history of the old dispensation and, in fact, with all of history.

But what constitutes the distinctive unity of this period? It is the fact that the line of this period is a downward one, reaching its depth at the point when the first world has filled its measure of iniquity and has become ripe for final judgment. In connection therewith, it is the fact that there is a distinct revelation of the wonder of salvation by grace and of the victory of the seed of the woman, according to the promise, in the Flood. This is confirmed by the fact that Scripture itself views both the judgment and the salvation of this period as typical of the final

judgment and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ at the consummation of all things.

A few introductory remarks calling attention to some of the important characteristics of this period are in order.

First of all, a few remarks are necessary concerning the biblical *account* of the history of this period.

It must be stressed that Scripture does indeed furnish us with an *account of history* in those chapters of Genesis which cover this period. It is well that this is stressed in our day, when this is widely contradicted even by those who claim to hold to Scripture. They contradict the historical character of the biblical record in the interest of upholding the theory of evolutionism. They attempt to adjust Scripture to that theory and to the allegations of those who appeal to scientific discoveries and scientific dating processes which allegedly make it impossible and unscientific to accept the Genesis record as a reliable historical account.

Now it is not our intention to enter into a lengthy debate about these matters. It is certainly not our intention to attempt to meet these theories and disprove them

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on their own ground. But it is worth our while, taking our stand in Scripture, to point out that Scripture itself presents the record of Genesis as the record of history, of historical facts and events in the most literal sense of the word. There is not a scintilla of scriptural evidence to the contrary; and it is, of course, such scriptural evidence which must be adduced in order to convince the believer.

First of all, we may notice that the record of Genesis itself leaves no other impression than that it is a record of history. This is, indeed, a weighty item. Any alleged evidence or reasons for understanding Genesis in another sense than in the historical sense must needs come not from that record, nor from other parts of Scripture, but from the outside. The *natural* way to read the account is as an account of history.

Secondly, all the rest of Scripture confirms this. Not only can no reasons to the contrary be adduced from that record itself, but it is also a fact that Scripture everywhere simply refers to this account as an historical account. This is true of the record of Cain and Abel. It is true of Scripture's mention of Enoch. It is true of Scripture's references to the world of Noah's time and to the Flood. In other words, one must contradict the repeated evidence of Scripture itself and thus assume a position contrary to Scripture in order to maintain the denial of the historical character of the Genesis account. (Thus, for example, with reference to Cain and Abel, there are such passages as Jude 11; I John 3:11, 12; Heb. 11:4; Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:50, 51.)

In the second place, we may notice that the account in Genesis is *selective*, even severely so. By "selective" we do not mean, of course, that Genesis selects from various sources and accounts. We mean that in Genesis are recorded for us only those facts and those events which it is necessary for us

to know with a view to the revelation of God's promise and its realization, with a view to the revelation of the wonder of grace. As we noted, this period includes more than sixteen centuries of history, but it is covered in only a few chapters of Holy Writ. The lion's share of one of those chapters is devoted to the incident of Cain and Abel, the rest of that chapter being devoted to a brief tracing of the line of Cain. Another chapter is devoted entirely to the genealogy of Adam-via-Seth. Another is devoted for the most part to the immediate prediluvian period. Another is devoted to the account of the Flood itself. Yet we must remember not only that the account is truly complete, but also that a careful and consecrated study will show us that it is much more complete than might appear on the surface.

Finally, as far as the account is concerned, we may notice that all of this history belongs to a period when there were as yet no Scriptures. The Scriptures which tell us concerning this period were written much later. We will not now enter into any details as to how the Holy Spirit may have accomplished this through Moses. Suffice it to mention that for the believer this constitutes no obstacle whatsoever as far as the veracity and reliability of the account is concerned.

Turning now to the *contents* of this account, we may make a few introductory observations also.

In the first place, it strikes one that the account of the Word of God is altogether different from that of unbelieving historians. Merely to place this account alongside of many an account in history books, which describes a long process of development of mankind and of civilization through all kinds of long "ages," is to see this difference.

In the second place, there is in this period immediately a very sharp division of the race into children of light and children of dark-

ness. According to the counsel of God, Adam is the progenitor of two peoples: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the sons of God and the children of men, the righteous and the unrighteous, the elect and the reprobate. Sin and grace are the means to realize this cleavage in the human race. After the Fall and the announcement of the protevangel, the Lord does not tarry. Immediately, this separation is a historical reality, first in the conflict between Cain and Abel, and thereafter in the division between the line of Seth and the line of Cain.

In the third place, it is plain that already in this period the Lord establishes His covenant organically in the line of continued generations. This was not as yet revealed in so many words, though it was suggested in the protevangel with its prediction of a twofold seed. Later this is explicitly declared to Noah and still more definitely and clearly to Abraham. But a study of the account of Scripture reveals clearly that from the very beginning the Lord God caused His covenant to run in the line of continued generations. His grace selects a certain race, certain generations, which in the outward sense are the generations of His people. True, the Lord does not do this at this particular period by singling out one nation as He did in Abraham and Israel. The fact remains, however, that God's work is accomplished in the line of generations.

At the same time, it is plain that the generations of Seth, the generations of the covenant, are already at this time the generations of God's people in the outward, historic sense. Not all in those generations are spiritual children of God. In the generations of Seth are the spiritual children of God, in distinction from the line of Cain. Nevertheless, all the children of Seth are by no means children of God. On any other basis, it is impossible to understand either the

intermingling of the children of God and the children of men before the Flood or the fact that only eight persons were saved in the ark.

In the fourth place, one of the most striking characteristics of this period is the rapid decline and speedy degeneration of the race along the line of the descendants of Cain. In a period of time of the approximate length of the period from the First Advent to the Reformation, the whole world became ripe for the final judgment of the Flood. This implies that in so short a period the measure of iniquity was filled. Like a wild fire fanned by a strong wind the power of iniquity spreads through the whole race, rapidly developing, until the process of corruption is finished and just one family of the righteous is left as a remnant, the only exceptions to the destruction of the

Flood. One is reminded of the words of Psalm 73:18, 19: "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." To be sure, the Word of God teaches us that things always develop rapidly, as rapidly as possible. There is no restraint, no tarrying nor delay in the work of God. But particularly rapid is the development in wickedness and the coming of destruction in this period before the deluge.

Finally, we may notice that the Word of God presents the history of this period in such a way that Jehovah God and His work are very much on the foreground. Not only is God accomplishing His work throughout the period, but He directly reveals Himself in connection with the various events of the period. In fact, it is striking

that at the beginning and at the end of this period in the biblical account—in connection with Cain and Abel and in connection with Noah and the Flood—the Lord our God directly reveals Himself and appears on the scene of history. He is the God of the promise. The reins of history are in His hands. He realizes His own promise and maintains His own covenant in and through all the developments of this period.

These and other characteristics of the period we shall note as we study it in detail. As we said, the narrative is very brief. Yet when we gather all the data which Scripture offers about this early period, we shall discover that all the elements necessary to give us a clear understanding of that time from the viewpoint of the development of God's covenant are present in the narrative. □

Ministering to the Saints

Prof. Robert Decker

The Discipline of Officebearers (1)

The elders of God's church are called upon occasionally to discipline a fellow officebearer. Article 79 of *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (hereafter, the Church Order) outlines the procedure to be followed in removing a minister, elder, or deacon from office. Article 80 lists some of the "gross sins which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office." Thus, strictly speaking, these articles do not

speak of the discipline of officebearers, but of the procedure to be followed in removing them from office if they should fall into public, gross sin. If a man were removed from office because he committed a public, gross sin and if that man remained impenitent, the elders would need to proceed to discipline him as outlined in Articles 75 - 78.

While these articles speak specifically of removal from office, they are properly placed in this section of the Church Order, since removal from office certainly belongs to the sphere of discipline. For the same reason, removing a man from office is part of the work of the el-

ders of the church. Not only are elders appointed by Christ through the church to care for and rule the congregation, they are also called to rule over their fellow officebearers. Removing a man from office who has fallen into public, gross sin is the work, therefore, of the consistory.

Given the events which gave rise to the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924-1925 this is a very important truth. No classis or synod may suspend or depose from office. A classis or synod which would do so would be violating the principle of the autonomy of the local church. Suspension and deposition is the work

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of the consistory because it belongs to the sphere of discipline, the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The discipline of officebearers is a very serious matter, more serious than the discipline of other members of the church. This is the case because officebearers represent Christ Himself, *the Officebearer* of God's church. The minister, by virtue of his calling, represents the chief Prophet, the elder represents the King, and the deacon represents the merciful High Priest of the church. The officebearers function in the church in the name of Christ and as clothed with Christ's authority. This is why Holy Scripture calls the church to count the elders who rule well worthy of double honor and warns the church, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (I Tim. 5:17-19). Consistories must insist that this latter rule be followed. At least two must bring charges against an officebearer. Even at that, the consistory must investigate those charges thoroughly.

If an officebearer is deposed from office but repents of his sin, he must not be further disciplined. He may very well be unworthy, on account of the sin, to hold office in the church of Christ, but repentance makes further discipline improper.

Articles 79 and 80 speak of those sins which render a man worthy of suspension and deposition. Article 79 speaks of "public, gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or worthy of punishment by the authorities." Article 80 lists these sins.

These sins of which the Church Order speaks are gross. They are gross not from the viewpoint of God, to whom all sins are gross, but from the viewpoint of the church over which the officebearers rule. They are "public, gross" sins. They are sins which require punishment from the civil authorities. They are sins which may very well

result in the perpetrator being imprisoned and even executed. They are sins reported by the news media. Such "public, gross" sins become the occasion for the ungodly to slander the church and speak evil of the holy name of Jesus to whom the church belongs. Further they are sins, according to Article 80, "which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication."

It ought to be noted that private sins committed by an officebearer but repented of need not be reason for suspension or deposition unless the sin be of such a kind that it makes him unworthy to serve in one of the special offices of Christ in the church. Such a sin would be a direct violation of the qualifications for office of which Scripture speaks in several passages. A man may be guilty of child abuse or of criminal sexual conduct, and that sin may not be publicly known in the church. In such cases the man would have to be deposed, and both the deposition and the reason for it would have to be announced to the congregation, along with the fact that the man has confessed his sin and left it.

Let it be understood that the list of sins found in Article 80 is not intended to be exhaustive. The article lists only those gross sins "among which are worthy of being punished." In other words, the article lists only the chief ones. To use the language of the article itself, it speaks of "the principal ones." These are direct, flagrant, shameful violations of the law of God and of the principles of the Word of God which govern the church of Jesus Christ.

The list contains the following "gross sins."

1) False doctrine or heresy. Let it not escape our attention that this is the first sin on the list. The fathers regarded false doctrine, heresy, very, very seriously indeed! And for good reason. When the church succumbs to false doctrine

she is soon destroyed! One who teaches false doctrine consciously and deliberately perverts the truth of Scripture as that truth is set forth in the confessions of the church. Such a false teacher is unfaithful to the vows he took when he was ordained into sacred office in the church and when he signed the Formula of Subscription.

2) Public schism. This is the sin of dividing or splitting the church or the denomination. It is often the direct result of false doctrine. The minister who teaches false doctrine almost invariably has supporters among the consistory, the congregation, and at the broader assemblies. The result is that the church or denomination splits. Those who foment schism in the church have various motives: defiance of authority, the desire to advance themselves, or self-justification. Whatever the motive, the sin of creating schism in God's church is a sore evil and, therefore, worthy of suspension and deposition.

3) Public blasphemy. This is the sin of wicked scorning of things holy. Mocking God's church, His people, His holy name, or His inspired Word is indeed a terrible, gross sin.

4) Simony. The attempt to gain an office (usually minister, but it could also be that of elder or deacon) or the attempt to sell an office in the church for money is the sin of simony.

5) Faithless desertion of office. This happens when one who has been properly called by Christ through the church willfully forsakes and refuses to perform the duties of that office. To abandon the sheep of Christ and refuse to care for them is as well a terrible sin.

6) Intrusion upon the office of another. This gross sin is the attempt to labor in one of the special offices without a proper call, or it is the attempt to labor in a congregation where the Lord has called another.

7) Perjury. Lying under oath either in the civil courts or in the church of Christ is the sin of perjury.

8) Adultery. This, of course, is the terrible sin of being unfaithful to one's marriage vows and wife.

9) Fornication. This is the sin of sexual uncleanness. Any form of this is fornication and may not be tolerated in an officebearer in Christ's church.

10) Theft. This sin against the eighth commandment of God's Law is that of appropriating that

which belongs to one's neighbor.

11) Acts of violence. This would be any kind of physical attack upon one's neighbor, including the worst of this, murder.

12) Habitual drunkenness. Repeated drinking of alcoholic beverages in excess constitutes this sin. Officebearers are called of God to be sober, temperate, in control of their faculties. If they are habitually drunk they certainly are not able to care for God's people by ministering to them, ruling them, or bestowing the mercies of Christ.

13) Brawling. This refers to the sin of quarreling and fighting with fellow church members.

14) Filthy lucre. This gross sin is the pursuit of dishonest gain. The sin of covetousness is the root of this sin.

The above are some of the public, gross sins, the principal ones which render a man worthy of being put out of office in the church. In most instances one of these sins makes it impossible for the deposed officebearer ever again to serve in office in Christ's church. □

That They May Teach Their Children

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Covenant Children—the Organic View

That the Lord establishes His covenant with believers and their children means that believers' children are covenant children. They are to be viewed as such by believing parents and their teachers in the Christian school.

Most Reformed people would agree with the above, even though different explanations are offered as bases. The conundrum for many is reconciling this confession with the truth of sovereign, double predestination, and with the fact that there are many Esaus in the church, Esaus born into covenant families. One theological explanation offered is that believers presume that all their children are regenerated before they are baptized. This, however, is contrary to Scripture and the experience of the church, and simply cannot be maintained.

A second proffered solution is

that God establishes a covenant objectively with each baptized child. This covenant is conditional, and is either ratified by the child when he believes, or broken when he rejects it. This must be rejected for many reasons, especially that God would establish a covenant with the reprobate seed, knowing them to be children whom He eternally rejects.

A conditional covenant must necessarily be rejected if the covenant is a bond of friendship. It is the assertion of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and, we believe, the truth of the Bible, that the covenant is a bond or relationship of friendship that God sovereignly establishes with His people in Christ. Thus, the covenant is with Christ and with all those who are in Him, namely, the elect. It is also true that parents in the Protestant Reformed Churches view their children as covenant children.

Does it follow, then, that these parents presume regeneration for each of these children? No—though they do believe that the *elect* seed

are generally regenerated at a very young age, most probably before birth.

Do these parents then try to distinguish among their children, which are elect and which are not? No.

Do they treat them all as potential reprobates? They emphatically do not.

Are all their children in the covenant by virtue of their birth and or baptism? No, the true spiritual seed only are in a relationship of friendship with God.

Yet one may object, How can you view your children as covenant children when you cannot be sure that all of them are elect? The answer to that question is that parents view the children organically. Parents and teachers are to consider all children of believers to be covenant children because of the organic connection each child has as a child in a covenant home. This child was born to *believers*. These believers have the promise of God, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed

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after thee in their generations" (Gen. 17:7). How else can they view their child, but as a covenant child?

To put it another way, believing parents view all their children as covenant children for the same reason that a preacher calls the congregation "beloved in the Lord" and Paul calls the members of the church in Philippi "saints." One can object that not all in the church of Philippi were "saints," and not all members of a given congregation are in fact "beloved of the Lord." However, the inspired apostle, and the minister today, views the congregations organically. Because Christ died for His church and redeemed her, the congregation is addressed, "Beloved in the Lord." The individual member we are to regard as a believer using the judgment of love (Canons III, IV, 15). The presence of unbelievers in the midst does not change the organic view one must have of the congregation and the individual members.

This idea of an organism is a concept that is crucially important for a right understanding of the covenant. It is also found throughout the Bible.

Notice, for example, that God both views and deals with *all men* organically. God viewed the race of mankind as organically connected to Adam. Adam is the head of the race. When Adam fell, the race became guilty before God exactly because of that relationship.

God also deals with *His people* thus. Israel was the people of God. When Achan sinned at Jericho, taking of the accursed thing, God was angry with *Israel!* "Israel hath sinned," He told Joshua. How so? Achan was a part of the organism of Israel.

Not only that, God views *His world* as an organism. This is expressed in the well-known John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." God loves His world

(the *cosmos*). However, He does not love every member of the human race. He hates the reprobate, as He states in Romans 9 concerning Esau. John 3:16 and Romans 9 can only be "reconciled" by the truth that God loves the organism—the *cosmos*—and eventually cuts off the members whom He rejects.

The organic concept found in John 3:16 is illustrated by the activity of an orchard owner. The grower may well love the apple tree that stands before him. It is valuable, and he will care for it. That does not mean that he loves every part of the tree. He cuts off all the dead branches. He cuts away the suckers. He also prunes the tree, cutting off living branches that an inexperienced observer might think ought to remain. The orchard man, however, knows what he is doing. He is making the tree that he wants, the tree that will produce the most fruit.

God knows what He is doing with the "tree"—His world. He cuts away the dead branches. He prunes all the unwanted branches, that is to say, the members of the race whom He has eternally rejected, even those of whom we cannot see why God rejects them. He will conclude His work when He has the organism, the living tree that He wants. It will produce the most fruit that the organism can produce.

These scriptural examples demonstrate that the concept of an organism is biblical. The same organic conception is used with reference to believers and their seed. God calls children of believers "the heritage of Jehovah"—God's chosen inheritance (Ps. 127:3). If the Bible did not say that, who would dare to maintain it? It is also why God calls Israel's babies "my children" (Eze. 16:20). Again, we ask, Is it because all these children are His inheritance? Does God love them all? No, there are Esaus among the covenant seed. God knows this full well and does not love them. Rather it is because He

speaks of the seed of Israel organically, as part of the plant.

Likewise, believing parents rightfully call their children "covenant children," "the heritage of Jehovah," and "children of God" because of the covenant of God with believers and their children. They do not insist that all their children are elect. However, they know that the Bible calls their children "the seed of believers," and thus, "covenant children." When they deal with any one of their children individually, parents also use the same judgment of love that is required in the church. Unless and until a child shows himself to be a reprobate, he will be treated as a covenant child.

This is the organic view. It is not an easy concept, to be sure. But it is very surely biblical.

Consider then what this means for the parents who are entrusted with the care and nurture of children whom God calls "my children." What a fearful thing it is! What careful attention is given to the nurture and rearing of these covenant children! Believing parents know they have but a few years to train up these children in the way they must go. Fervent prayers arise to their heavenly Father for wisdom to teach their children aright. For the sake of these children, parents do give their all. Personal desires (including entertainment, recreation, and vacations) are subordinated to the goal of giving good instruction to covenant youth. No amount of care and expense is too great for this high calling—to rear God's children properly in the fear of the Lord. Understanding this, one comes to appreciate the zeal for the covenant Christian school found among Reformed believers.

All of this profoundly affects the attitude of the covenant teacher. The teacher in the Christian school classroom views the students as covenant children. Oh, sinful children they are, to be sure. They are after all from the organ-

ism of the fallen human race. Nonetheless, the elect covenant children have a new heart. They have been grafted into Christ and have His life in them. The Spirit of Christ lives within them, for they are covenant children, and God so dwells within them in covenant fellowship.

The Christian teacher works accordingly. He disciplines as needed, with reproof from the Bible, being fully confident that the Spirit will apply it to the heart and life of every elect child. The teacher instructs, basing all instruction on

the Scriptures. Christian education is Christian nurturing. The Spirit uses this kind of instruction to mold the child, to shape his thinking, his attitudes, and his heart.

And what of those children so instructed who are, in fact and unknown to the teacher, reprobate? What happens to the proper nurturing, the godly correction, the Christ-centered instruction? It has the same effect that the preaching has on the reprobate in the church: it hardens, drives out, and—terrifying to think about—stands to their eternal condemnation. This

thought will cause the teacher to tremble as he looks over his students. The same is true for the parent and grandparent, considering the possibility that his little boy, or his little granddaughter, may be a reprobate. But unless and until that becomes manifest, all these children will be taught, disciplined, and prayed for as covenant children with the perfect confidence that God will use it all for the nurture of His chosen children.

Truly, the covenant of grace motivates all proper Christian instruction. □

Contribution

Deborah Benson

Famine In the Land

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing of the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

Amos 8:11, 12

Amos brought the word of the Lord to Israel. Israel had fallen, fat and lazy, away from the word of the Lord. The priest, Amaziah, brought the words of Amos to the king, Jeroboam. The response? "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court" (Amos 7:12, 13).

Note that the famine is of the hearing. Was the word of the Lord

not present in Israel when Amos was told to "flee away"? Of course it was. Amos himself had been sent of the Lord to bring it! So today, the word of the Lord is present. There are faithful bodies of believers, around the globe, presenting the word of the Lord. Our own churches are among them. The word of the Lord will go forth among all nations as He promised, and draw out those whom He has elected. Even in this dismal day of famine, God's people will come under His word. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

The temptation is to resign oneself and say, "If God sends His word and withdraws it as He wills; gives hearing or not as He wills, what can we do? What difference does it make?" It should make a world of difference to us, for our Lord states in Matthew 16:2-4, "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red

and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

An evil and adulterous people run to and fro looking for a sign, and find it not. Yet those blessed people (the little flock) who discern the signs of the times are those among whom the word of the Lord is heard. Discerning the signs of the times is an assurance itself, amid the famine, that our Lord is yet among His people! Oh how we need that assurance!

In an age when the word of the Lord is not heard, we may expect that frantic and desperate wickedness will abound. We may expect spiritual darkness to grow. We may expect corruption of men's minds to run in ever widening circles. We may expect to see (and do already see) the ugly head of Satan wielding and controlling the mass deception of the institutional church. We may expect, if it were possible, that even the elect would be deceived. The famine ever grows! The running to and fro increases. We shall yet pray that the

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mountains would cover us! Come quickly, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

In the institutional church

Is anything different in the institutional church of today, from what it was in the day of Amos? Those churches which name the name of Christ and yet fail to hear the word of the Lord? *Just as Amaziah, they are unable to hear the word of the Lord, and unable to bring it to the people who run to and fro.*

A recent article in the April 10, 1998 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, entitled, "Can You Go Back?—More Professionals Return to Church or Synagogue; Having It All Isn't Enough," was very telling in this regard. The article asserts the following: "Churches and synagogues across the country report a small but growing group of successful baby boomers walking through their doors, and not just in the Easter-Passover season. But this new class of churchgoers is in an unusual spot: They're not quite sure how, or where, to go back. Religious institutions, in turn, don't always know how to reach out to them."

In the above mentioned article, a series of examples was given of the "search" which is going on by the "successful baby boomers." It is what Amos describes as "running to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and (they) shall not find it." "Successful baby boomers" are not the only group in which the "running to and fro" can be seen. They are but one drop in an ocean of evidence.

One man, after building a multi-million dollar corporation, stated, "My goals have typically been material goals, I've never really had a spiritual life." He initially went to a church which he described thus: "I saw a bunch of old people, the minister wears robes and a crown and the building itself was very formal and ornate." He eventually tried a community, non-denominational church which he now attends. The

informal services in an old warehouse appeal to him, and he likes the pastor, who is a charismatic speaker, dresses casually, and shares his interest in boats. His daughter even attends youth group now and she states that it features "a cool band."

Informal services, an appealing warehouse, nice pastor, a charismatic speaker, casual clothing, boats, and a cool band! It would seem glaringly obvious that this particular man's goals are still material.

Let's suppose for a moment that the following occurred one Sunday morning at the above mentioned church. The charismatic pastor rises to the pulpit, dressed in a suit! He opens his mouth to speak, even as his eyes well up with tears! "Brethren," he begins, "we are deep in our sins. After careful study of God's Word, I am compelled to inform you that the principles which have governed this church, and my ministry to date, have been centered mainly on those things which please us. Beginning this morning, a series of *sermons* will be *preached* on the Attributes of God. In addition, the services we have become accustomed to, while they are fast-paced, fun, and emotionally charged, are not in accordance with what God commands for worship of Himself. Therefore, if we are here to worship God, we will do so according to the instruction of *Scripture*. It will be difficult for all of us! We have all become comfortable with our "self-styled" religion. No more testimonials, no more "cool bands," no more lay preachers, no more altar calls, no more children's church, and no more moralistic, unfounded messages. We will begin by singing from the Psalms, we will continue with congregational prayer and the giving of offerings. Following this will be a sermon, focused on and limited to the study of who God is, concluding with the singing of Psalms of praise." Sensing unease and unrest amidst his

large congregation, he continues, "By the Word of God alone, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the Lord God opens eyes and unstops ears. My ministry and life of faith must continue on the basis of a knowledge of His Word, no longer on the feelings I have become so accustomed to following. It is my hope and prayer that the God of all grace will move by His Word and Spirit, so that we may grow in grace and knowledge together."

The very idea that this might occur seems laughable. Why? There is a famine. Can we stretch it just a little further? What would you expect the response to be? Old Testament language: "O thou seer, go, flee thee away...." Modern English: "The Board of Elders of this church regrets to inform you that our pastor has found it necessary to continue his ministry in other areas. While we have noted a change in direction of late, we send best wishes with our pastor, even as he continues his spiritual journey elsewhere. Effective immediately the Board of Elders will begin to interview candidates for this pastoral vacancy. Interviews will focus on fresh and innovative ideas, with a view to filling the position with an impact oriented minister. We believe these are qualities more suited to our needs." *At least Amaziah was direct and honest!*

And the baby boomer in the example? More than likely he would be comfortable again, free to continue his "pursuit of spirituality" in material things. The suggestion in the above hypothetical situation is not that such a transformation, in the pulpit or the pew, is impossible for the Holy Spirit to accomplish. The suggestion is that, in a famine of the hearing, it is very rare. Just as in a famine of meat and bread, it is rare to find anyone at all sitting at a table laden with a lavish feast.

Also in the *Wall Street Journal* article was a list of the attempts of different pastors to satisfy the

needs of "baby boomers." Convinced that there is a vast "ministry" untapped among professionals in that age group, pastors have begun to help them develop their spiritual side. One example follows.

A certain pastor is concerned about these "searching" professionals. He says they have, "no one to talk to where they say, 'things aren't going well for me.'" Most of them are not comfortable with "sharing" activities, so this kind pastor has taken occasionally to holding Sunday services which honor professionals. He says, "I thought it was useful to remind them that on a good day they can do a lot of good."

II Timothy 3:1-5, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*"

Results in the culture

This famine of hearing has its effects in the culture as well. The culture becomes visibly frantic in its wickedness. A few current examples:

The area of behavioral research. Man is so frantic to become immortal! If you don't wear your seat belt, *you're going to die!* If you don't exercise regularly, *you're going to die!* If you don't eat right, *you're going to die!* If you don't wear a helmet while bicycling, *you're going to die!* If you don't detach your air bags, *you're going to die!* (This year, that is. Last year you were going to die if you didn't have an air bag.)

The area of biological research. Recently a noted scientist reported on a radio program that it would be a short number of years (he said three to five) before we could har-

vest human organs from human fetuses developed for that purpose without the benefit of a head or brain. The electrical impulses needed for the growth and operation of the internal organs would be provided by means of computer. This research is currently being conducted in Great Britain, where the maintenance of headless frogs is being used to prolong the life of "healthy frogs." The scientist commented that one could not protest to this use of a fetus, as is done in the area of cloning, because, without a head, there could not be considered to be "life." Imagine, the image-bearer of God, a cash crop!

In the political arena. Would any reader disagree that our president's alleged activities indicate a stellar example of frantic wickedness? In the discourse over whether "character counts," we hear the overwhelming conclusion that it in fact does not count! Remember the response to the State of the Union Address? If I can buy a house, if I can get a raise, if I can be assured that neither I nor or my sons will go off to war, etc., then *nothing else* counts. In essence, our nation responded loudly with, "I am all that counts."

In the youth. Foul language, unkempt appearance, pierced through every body part, hollow eyes, mindless speech, drugs, teen pregnancy, abortion, rebellion, theft, gangs, occultism, suicide, and cold-blooded, premeditated murder. All this and more, characterize the youth of this period in history.

In viewing all the evidence one could find on the demise of our culture, one might be reminded of an ant colony. When the ants are busily going about the business for which they were created, they are a confident, courageous, focused, strong, and productive group. Remove their "compass" by inserting your foot into the ant hill. The result will look something like the life of our culture: frantic, defensive, scattered, weak, and unpro-

ductive! In any culture, this will be the result of God's withdrawal of His Word. The grounding and guiding principles of life itself are absent, even if they had only been intellectually embraced, (formerly) by the culture as a whole.

And Among Us

And what of us? In this famine, we are a rarity. We sit at a table laden with a lavish feast. The masses hear not the Word of God, because God has chosen to withdraw the hearing of it. They *cannot* hear it. We, on the other hand, have been abundantly blessed (*wholly undeserved*), with God's preservation, presentation, and *hearing* of the Word of the Lord among us. Shall we not examine ourselves?

A recent (two-year), member of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), was asked the following question: "In your experience in the PRC, what is the most glaring example of the precious gift of truth being taken for granted?" He responded thus: "When I came to the PRC, I cried at every sermon, I couldn't believe someone was actually preaching what the Scriptures teach! When I hear the complaining about sermons that goes on, I want to take people and put them out in the 'other' churches for a year, so they know what they have!" Perhaps familiarity does indeed breed contempt!

One of the criticisms often leveled against Reformed believers is that they are arrogant. It stands to reason that the criticism would be partly true and partly the result of ignorance about Reformed doctrine or Reformed believers. Either way, seeing we enjoy such a marvelous feast, it behooves us to ask ourselves a few questions now and again, just to remind us of the reason for which we should be humble. *Who chose me to attend the feast? Who brought me to the table? Who prepared the food? Who labored so that the table might be spread? Who applies its benefits to my soul?*

Is there anything at all which I did to deserve a seat at this table?

And, finally, are we hungry? When the seats aren't comfortable? When the sermon is "too long"? When the voice of Christ exposes our sin? When our conscience is pricked? When we are led through trial? When there is a dispute with our brother? Whatever our petty personal "issues" might be, they are nothing compared to the grandeur of the banqueting table that our gracious God has prepared. Come to His banqueting table hungry. No! *Famished*. Against the backdrop of the current famine in the land, we ought to run to church

on Sunday, morning and evening, to Bible Study, to catechism, and to fellowship with like-minded believers any chance we get!

The 6th chapter of Amos begins, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." May our prayer be that we are not "at ease in Zion." For in that day the Lord will bring upon us a famine, and His Word will not be heard among us.

The Book of Amos ends with this beautiful promise for restoration of God's people, who of themselves would be running to and fro, never hearing: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and

they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

Thanks be to our merciful God, whose Word among us and the evidence of our hearing of it give full assurance of His most awesome work: bringing us again from captivity, and restoring to us our eternal portion in the land He has given us. Thanks, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. A. Brummel, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, MN, has received the call to serve as pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC.

Candidate D. Kleyn and his wife moved to Pittsburgh, PA in early May to work there for three months with the group which has been receiving preaching and teaching regularly.

The Consistory of the Loveland, CO PRC has approved the request of our seminary faculty that Mr. Garret Eriks fulfill his intern requirements there in Loveland from July 1 through December 31. Mr. Eriks will, the Lord willing, participate in the teaching of catechism, leading of societies, and preaching, and generally becoming acquainted in the work of the ministry on a practical level.

Young People's Activities

On April 19 the young people of the west Michigan PR churches were invited to an Easter Mass Meeting at the Grandville, MI PRC. Rev. A. Spriensma, pastor at Grandville, spoke to the young people about the importance of "Spirit-Filled Worship," stressing the importance of worshipping together and that we are not ob-

servers, but participants, in the worship service.

On Friday and Saturday, April 24 and 25, the young people of the Byron Center, First in Holland, and Kalamazoo PR churches got together for an overnight outing at Son-Life Camp in Wayland, MI. The two-day retreat considered the place of prayer in the young Christian's life.

On that same weekend, there was also a Spring Post-High Retreat held at Pine Trail Camp in Saugatuck, MI. All the young adults from area PR churches were invited to attend. Besides the obvious camp activities like hiking and canoeing, time was also spent around God's Word, discussing the subject of "The Last Times."

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC sponsored a spring lecture at their church, April 23, on the subject of "Prayer." Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor at Kalamazoo, was the speaker. He answered such questions as: Is prayer necessary? Does prayer change God's mind? And for what ought we to pray?

The Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL sponsored a seminar on personal evangelism on May 1 and 2 at the Holiday Inn where they hold their regular worship services. On Friday night Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, spoke on "The Faithful Witness: Our Call to Personal Evangelism." Saturday there were two

workshops and two classes for children. "The Nuts and Bolts of Personal Evangelism," by Rev. J. Mahtani, and "Confronting the Modern Evangelical with the Gospel of Grace," by Mr. Todd Lang; and, for the children, "Joseph in Egypt, a Faithful Witness," by Rev. C. Haak, and "A Class for Children," by Mrs. Sue Poortinga.

The Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI planned a Spring Lecture for May 1 with Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, speaking on "God's Word and Man's Revising: The Controversy Over Gender Inclusive Language."

Two of our congregations recently invited their communities to a special worship service. The Grandville, MI PRC did so on Good Friday, April 10, and the congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI did the same on May 3 for their morning service when their pastor, Rev. R. VanOverloop, spoke on the subject "Faith Alone."

Congregation Activities

The council of the First PRC in Holland, MI has informed their congregation that they have decided to preserve the current and original name of their church, and to postpone action on the proposal to change the starting time of their evening service. You may remember that these two changes were proposed to coincide with their moving into their new

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

The Standard Bearer

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Louis Elzinga
4 Riverbend Ave. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49544

PERIODICAL
Postage Paid at
Grandville,
Michigan

church home this spring.

Beginning May 3, the congregation of the First PRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada began meeting at 11:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. This is to continue through Sunday, October 18 D.V.

The choirs of the congregations in Edmonton, Hope in Redlands, CA, and Southeast in Grand Rapids, MI presented their annual Easter or Spring concerts for the edification of their church members in April.

It was about the first of June when the Bethel PRC in Grand Rapids began the actual building of their church building.

As many of us know, our Trinity PRC will hold their last Lord's Supper on June 9. After 25 years of labor it is the will of God that this church disband. As difficult as this is, we must not look at this only from our perspective, but be assured that "He is my

refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him will I trust" (Ps. 91:2). Let us remember Rev. Mahtani and the saints there in our prayers.

Food For Thought

"Happy is the man who has been enabled to endure; he rises from the depths of woe like a pearl-finder from the sea, rich beyond comparison."

—Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God we remember the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents,
PROF. HERMAN and WILMA HANKO.

We are grateful to God for the covenant instruction and godly example that they have given us. May God continue to guide them by His counsel through the years to come.

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel (Psalm 128:5, 6).

✿ Ronald and Nancy Hanko

8 children

✿ Neal and Jeanne Hanko

4 children

✿ Kenneth and Mary Hanko

2 children

✿ Steven and Beverly Hanko

4 children (1 in glory)

✿ Carlyle and Marcia Miersma

5 children

✿ Timothy Hanko

✿ Daniel and Sharon Kleyn

✿ Philip and Karen VanBaren

2 children

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope PRC, Walker, expresses their sincerest sympathy to Ken and Pam Engelsma and family in the death of Pam's father,

MR. JOHN VELDMAN.

May they experience the grace and comfort that the precious words of our Lord afford: As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness (Psalm 17:15).

Rev. J. Laning, President
Connie Meyer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC (Grand Rapids) express their Christian sympathy to the family of

MR. RON ENGELSMA.

May they find comfort in the assurance that Christ gathers and preserves to Himself a church chosen to everlasting life and that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. XXI).

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-19).

John Buiter, Pres.

Michael Lotterman, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 27, 1998,

BOB and RUTH GARVELINK

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, D.V. We thank God for them and the covenant love and instruction they have given us through the years. We thank God for the many happy years He has given them together, and we pray that He will continue to keep them in His care for many more years to come.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children (Psalm 103:7).

✿ Craig and Samantha Garvelink

✿ Denise Nink

✿ David and Kim Monsma

✿ Dan and Pam Kramer

13 grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27 we celebrated the 65th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

MR. and MRS. MAYNARD VEENSTRA.

We as a family are thankful to our heavenly Father for the faithfulness He has shown us through their love, guidance, and prayers. May our gracious God continue to bless them and preserve them in their life together.

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

✿ Jay Veenstra

✿ Ira and Mary Veenstra

✿ Arie and Ann Griffioen

✿ Helen Veenstra

✿ June VanDenTop

✿ Gerald and Clara VanDenTop

✿ Hazel Besselsen

✿ Merle and Kay Veenstra

30 grandchildren, 90 great-grandchildren

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI expresses its Christian sympathy to Hermie Veldman in the death of her husband,

JOHN VELDMAN;

and to Hulda Kuiper and Gerald and Celia Feenstra in the death of

WINNIE KUIPER,

the mother of Hulda and Celia.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15).

Dave Dykstra, Pres.

Judy VanBaren, Sec.

REMINDER!

The *Standard Bearer* is published only once per month in June, July, and August. And, since the July issue treats the decisions of the synod of the PRC, you may expect this copy to be a bit later than usual in the month.