



**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

# ***The Standard Bearer***

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**Vol. 75, No. 21  
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# Jesus' Other Sheep

*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.*

John 10:16

## "Other sheep."

Our Lord had just said, "I am the good Shepherd." In distinction from hirelings, who do not own and love the flock but who prove to be thieves and robbers, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for His flock.

When Jesus speaks of "other sheep," He adds, "which are not of this fold." There were sheep, the believers of the past, who had been safely brought into the enclosure, the sheepfold of the saints. Most of them were already rejoicing before the throne in glory. This was obviously the church of the old dispensation, gathered mainly out

of Israel as a nation, the nation that was typically separated from all the nations of the world as God's peculiar possession. Now Jesus speaks of other sheep, plainly referring to the church of the new dispensation, and thus referring also to us.

We are called "sheep." Immediately we think of helpless, dependent creatures. Many animals can forage for themselves, but sheep are dependent upon a shepherd to feed them in green pastures and to provide calm, quiet waters for them to drink. They have no protection against predators. A lion has its claws, a bull has its horns, a bee has its sting, and a dog has its bite, but a sheep is defenseless, a ready prey to wild animals unless well protected.

Still worse, a sheep tends to wander. If you have ever watched a sheep dog that is constantly alert

for any stray sheep, you will realize how a sheep will repeatedly try to break away from the flock to wander away on its own. And once having wandered away, it does not have enough sense to find its way back, but, if not sought for by the shepherd, soon perishes.

Sheep can also be stubborn. If two should get into a fight, they will stand back and crash head on against each other so often that one of them is either seriously injured or killed.

That is the picture that Christ draws of you and me. We are helpless, dependent creatures, who are given our life and breath by God from moment to moment. In Him we live and breathe and have our being. Without Him we can do absolutely nothing. Yet it is also true that, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." By nature we are

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stubborn, rebellious, wandering sheep, totally depraved, incapable of any good and inclined to all evil. Humbly we confess it.



"Other sheep I have."

The emphasis falls upon the Good Shepherd. Shepherding was a common occupation in the old dispensation. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherd-kings. Moses shepherded the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. David was a shepherd-lad and spoke of it in his psalms. Still today shepherds are seen in Palestine with their staffs, leading their flocks or watching over them as they graze in green pastures. These shepherds often become attached to them, carefully grazing them and guarding them from predators. David speaks of having fought off a lion and a bear.

Jesus claims all true believers, the entire church of the old dispensation, as His own, as those whom He has already brought into the fold in glory. Now He speaks of *other* sheep, referring to the church of the new dispensation that must still be led into the fold.

He does not say, "Other sheep I *desire* to have." Nor does He say, "Other sheep I *might* have," or "I *will* have." No, He says, "I *have*." Before the foundations of the earth Jesus was the chosen of God to be the Christ. To Him was given the elect of all the ages, the church, His sheep. He and His church are as one. He has a rightful claim to them, to you and to me by eternal, sovereign election. I am inexpressibly thankful to believe that I am eternally one of His sheep. I belong to Jesus, the eternal Christ of God.



"Them also I must bring."

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. He knows them as given to Him by the Father. He knows them as His very own, His personal pos-

session. He knows them by name with all their weaknesses, frailties, and sins. This very fact lays upon Him a great responsibility, a powerful "must." He is deeply aware of the mandate laid upon Him by the Father even when He says, "Them also I must bring."

It was for that very reason that the Son of God had come into the flesh, taking upon Himself all the weakness of sinful flesh, like unto the brethren, sin excepted. He bowed willingly under the burden of the wrath of God, not because of any sin of His own, but because He bore all the sins of all those given to Him of the Father.

All His life He walked in the shadow of the cross, for He was aware that His "must" required laying down His life for His sheep. It demanded of Him the perfect sacrifice for sin by suffering the torments of hell in our stead. He surrendered Himself to the painful, accursed death of the cross for you and for me. A *Christus pro omnibus* (Christ for all) is no Savior. He laid down His life for His sheep. "Blessed Savior, Thou hast bought us, Thine we are." What a wonder of sovereign mercy and boundless grace!



"They shall hear My voice."

Having accomplished the atonement of the cross, Jesus died our physical death and rose again as Victor over death and the grave to proceed onward into a new, glorious, heavenly life at the Father's right hand. He was taken up into glory to intercede for us before the throne of grace and to present our prayers before the Father, in order to bless us with every blessing of salvation.

On Pentecost He returned to His church, to us, by His indwelling Spirit. We hear His voice, for He now speaks to us through His Word and by His Spirit. We go to church on the Sab-

bath to hear Jesus speak to us as we bow in humble worship. The minister is the under-shepherd called of God to bring us the Word, that through Him we may hear Christ. By the power of Christ's Word and Spirit we are marvelously renewed; unbelievers are changed to believers; sinners are changed into saints; children of Satan become sons and daughters of the living God. In the midst of our sin and misery we hear Him say to us personally: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Rebels, wandering sheep, confess: "My Lord and my God."

We believe! By that amazing wonder of grace we are not only given the ability to believe, the willingness, but also the believing itself. It is all of God. We are brought into the fold, the church, where we are fed in green pastures and find refreshment by still waters. He restores our soul. He leads us in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. He feeds His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs with His arms, and carries them in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. All this purely in efficacious mercy from the God of all grace!



"And there shall be one fold (flock) and one Shepherd."

The church of all ages is one flock. Though we distinguish between the sheep of the old dispensation and those of the new, the two are still one flock in heaven. Though the church is spread over the centuries of time, scattered throughout the nations of the

A  
*Christus*  
*pro omnibus*  
*is no*  
*Savior.*



world, divided into races and languages, it is still spiritually one universal church, united as one in Christ. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

We believe a holy, universal church, which the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word out of the whole human race, chosen unto everlasting life and agreeing in true faith. We also believe that we are and forever shall remain living members of that

church.

Our Father loves His church, as does His Christ. No man can possibly snatch us out of their hands. We base our eternal security on our unchangeable God, who has begun a good work for us and in us and will surely finish it.

Our Lord is now busily engaged in heaven drawing His sheep unto Himself, that they may be where He is forever. Even now He is preparing a place for us, so that when we are ready for that place, and that place is ready for us, He will reach out His arm, take us into His bosom, and bring us with Him into the fold.

He will also raise our mortal

bodies in the likeness of His glorious body in the day when He fully subjects all things unto Himself.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of God forever.

Even there Christ will be our Good Shepherd. Eternally we will be dependent sheep, always receiving from Him grace for grace, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord as we with body and soul reflect the glory of God that shines upon us through Him. One flock and one Shepherd!

Jesus is our eternal Lord, the Shepherd of His sheep, to the praise and honor and adoration of our God! □

## Editorial

# Narrow Is the Way

**T**he church ought to embrace "homosexual people who live faithfully in covenanted partnerships."

This is the plea that Lewis Smedes addresses particularly to the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

Writing in the May, 1999 issue of *Perspectives*, Smedes urges the acceptance of practicing homosexuals in the CRC. He exhorts the CRC to "embrace," that is, accept as members of the church in good and regular standing, "Christian homosexual people who have committed themselves to a monogamous partnership" (all quotations in this editorial are from the article by Lewis Smedes in the May, 1999 issue of *Perspectives*, pp. 8-12).

*Perspectives* is a religious periodical, "A Journal of Reformed

Thought." It is edited and largely written by theologians, teachers, and other prominent, influential persons in the Reformed Church in America and in the CRC.

Dr. Lewis Smedes is a minister of the gospel in the CRC.

### Smedes' Plea for Homosexual "Marriage"

It is not the purpose of this editorial to criticize Smedes' plea for the approval of the practice of homosexuality in the CRC. Something might well be said in this regard. No doubt, reflecting on the plea by a renowned Reformed theologian for approving homosexual relations would be beneficial. Strong pressure is now being exerted by the evil one upon all churches, "conservative" as well as "liberal," to cave in to the world here also.

Critique of the plea for approval of homosexual sex would note that the learned Dr. Smedes professes ignorance as to the meaning of the Holy Spirit in those passages of Holy Scripture that treat of homosexuality, particularly Romans 1:18-27. Smedes does not know who they are who are described in the passage: "Who were these people, the ones who were having sex with partners of their own gender? ... Nobody knows for sure." Nor does he know what is meant in the passage by "against nature": "What he (the apostle—DJE) meant by 'contrary to nature' none of us knows for sure."

The doubt of our unbelieving age that increasingly prevails in the churches has blinded Smedes' mind to the clear testimony of the Word of God. The people spoken of in Romans 1:18ff. are men and



women who perversely lust for people of the same gender and then perversely engage in sexual acts with them as best they can. The practice of homosexual sex is "against nature" in that it contradicts the will of God for sex as made known in creation itself. This will of God, writ large in nature in the physical characteristics that distinguish male and female by virtue of God's creation of the human race, is sexual relations between a man and a woman in marriage.

One who is uncertain about these basic things of divine revelation and the Christian religion is disqualified to be a teacher of the church on sexual and marital ethics.

Comment on the plea for approval of homosexual relations would call attention to significant verbal slips, when Smedes is lamenting his church's current prohibition of "monogamous partnership(s)." "To all homosexuals it says: *You have no choice*; you may not marry and you must be celibate" (the emphasis is Smedes'). The noteworthy words are "marry" and "may." The use of "marry" shows that the "partnerships" which Smedes asks the CRC to approve are, in his thinking, marriages: homosexual *marriages* (the emphasis is mine). If Smedes has his way, there will be two kinds of marriages in the CRC, heterosexual and homosexual.

Closely related is his use of "may" in his wording of his church's present forbidding of homosexual unions: "You *may* not marry." But this is a mistake. What the church says is, "You *cannot* marry (each other)." The thing is impossible, as impossible as it is for homosexual sex to be fruitful in children. By definition, definition grounded in the ordinance of God at creation, marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman, a male and a female. Men can do many things with men, and women can do many things, apparently, with women. One thing that

they cannot do is marry.

Analysis of Smedes' plea for homosexual "marriages" in the CRC would also predict that this abomination is sure to come in that church. If ministers are permitted publicly to advocate homosexual "marriage," it will come. If theologians of the stature of a Lewis Smedes are already bold to plead for homosexual "marriage," it will come sooner rather than later.

### **The Argument for Homosexual "Marriage"**

But my interest in Smedes' article lies elsewhere. The interest of the readers of the *Standard Bearer* ought to lie elsewhere. Our interest is not the plea itself for homosexual relations, but the argument raised on behalf of the plea.

Smedes has an argument.

The argument is solid and compelling, indeed, irresistible, as far as the CRC is concerned.

The CRC may yet for a time forbid homosexual partnerships, but they will not do so by refuting Smedes' argument. They will merely ignore it.

This argument is equally compelling for some of the readers of the *Standard Bearer* who are members of churches other than the CRC.

The argument fails completely as regards the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). But then it is important, even urgent, that members of the PRC carefully consider the argument, so that they strengthen their determination that this powerful argument for practicing homosexuals in the church never get a foothold among them.

Smedes' argument is this: Just as the CRC came to approve the remarriage of divorced persons despite Jesus' prohibition, so also the CRC can and should approve homosexual "marriage."

For many years, the CRC forbade remarriage after divorce and excluded remarried persons from membership in the church as those living in adultery. In the 1950s, the CRC radically changed

its stand and accepted remarried persons as members of the church. These are not only "innocent parties," but also "guilty parties" and those who divorced for all kinds of unbiblical reasons.

Smedes readily acknowledges that the reason for the acceptance of remarried persons by his church was not the discovery of new material on divorce and remarriage in the Bible. The reason was not even a new interpretation of the words of

Jesus and the apostles that the CRC had for many years appealed to in support of its condemnation of remarriage. But the reason was that the church found itself confronted by a dramatic increase of divorce and remarriage among its members. And those divorcing and remarrying were the sons and daughters of the members of the church, including the ministers and elders who made the synodical decision.

More sons and daughters of the faithful were getting divorced and were marrying again. Before World War II, the church could exclude such people on the assumption that they would very rarely be their own loved ones. After the war, however, local congregations discovered that persons whom they loved as brothers and sisters in Christ—and, yes, their own children—were doing it. And it was very hard to look their own sons and daughters in the eyes and say to them: "You will go to hell unless you leave your present spouse."

In light of these hard realities, the CRC deliberately revised its understanding of Scripture's teach-

*One who is uncertain about these basic things of divine revelation and the Christian religion is disqualified to be a teacher of the church on sexual and marital ethics.*



ing on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Smedes puts it this way: "It (the CRC—DJE) factored human reality into its reading of the Lord's words."

With this new "reading" of biblical teaching, there was a much wider application of the mercy of God to adulterers. The wide mercy of God was extended to the professing Christian who unjustly divorced his own wife and remarried the wife of his neighbor. Proclaims Smedes, in his explanation and defense of the CRC's change of position regarding remarriage, "The grace of Jesus Christ ... could bless and support remarried people in their second marriage."

This wideness of God's mercy is an important aspect of the CRC's acceptance of remarriage after divorce, as it is an important element in Smedes' argument for the acceptance of homosexual "marriage." It accounts for the title of Smedes' article: "Like the Wideness of the Sea." This is part of a line in a hymn that goes, "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea."

This acceptance of remarried persons at the Lord's Table allows for, if it does not require, the similar acceptance of practicing homosexuals as members of the church.

*Does the church's dramatic move from the exclusion to the embrace of divorced and remarried Christians provide a precedent for an embrace of homosexual Christians who live together in a committed partnership?*

My answer to my own question is, Yes, it does seem to me that our embrace of divorced and remarried Christian people did indeed set a precedent for embracing Christian homosexuals who live together.

If the church, with appeal to the wideness of mercy, can accept remarried persons because members are in fact divorcing and remarrying, including the dear children of the church, even though Scripture clearly teaches marriage

as a lifelong bond, then the church can also accept practicing homosexuals for the same reasons, even though Scripture plainly teaches that God wills sex only in the marriage of a man and a woman.

This is the argument.

It is valid.

The church that accommodates the Word of God to the painful circumstances of its members in the matter of divorce and remarriage should do so also in the matter of homosexual desire. Fact is, as Smedes shrewdly observes, "The biblical ground for excluding them (homosexuals—DJE) from embrace within the church is actually weaker than was its ground for excluding divorced and remarried heterosexuals."

How can ministers and elders say no to homosexual sons and daughters of the congregation, when they have not been able to say no to remarried sons and daughters? Much less, as is more and more the case, when these rulers in the church are themselves remarried.

If the mercy of God, in the thinking of the church, is wide to bless and save one who transgresses the seventh commandment in one gross way—adultery—why should that mercy strangely narrow so as to exclude another who transgresses the same commandment in another gross way—homosexual acts?

If sexual pleasure and the earthly comforts of life override Christ's demand for costly, sacrificial discipleship in the greater matter of marriage, why should they not override His demand in the lesser matter of mere sex?

Approval of remarriage after divorce is not only an argument. As Smedes correctly points out, it is also a "precedent." It has "paved the way" for the acceptance of homosexual "marriage."

The church that has forsaken

the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage cannot consistently prohibit homosexual relations. The church that has caved in to the pressures of the lawlessness of these last days in the matter of remarriage will eventually do so also in the matter of homosexuality.

This is by no means only or even mainly the CRC.

Smedes naturally pitches his plea, with its argument, toward the CRC. For this reason, I must mention the CRC often in this editorial. But I will not have any reader suppose, or charge, that I like to point the finger at the CRC. Not here! Not whatsoever! This editorial is fundamentally uninterested in the CRC. It is interested in an argument.

For the overwhelming majority of Protestant churches approve the remarriage of divorced persons. The overwhelming majority of churches that like to be regarded as conservative—Presbyterian and Reformed churches—approve the remarriage of divorced persons and welcome them to the Lord's Table. Their reasons are the same as those that

moved the CRC to change its stand on remarriage. And their defense of this wickedness, when they are challenged, is also the same: the wideness of God's mercy.

Smedes' argument applies to them all.

When some of them waggle their finger at the CRC concerning an alleged "softness" toward homosexuality, they play the hypocrite.

### **The Argument Refuted**

The argument for approving homosexual relations in the church is effectively answered by a church's faithful, biblical stand on marriage, sex, divorce, and remarriage. The plain teaching of the Bible is the authoritative rule for the thankful life of the believer in

*The church that has forsaken the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage cannot consistently prohibit homosexual relations.*



marriage. The difficult marital circumstances of some are not allowed to compromise, much less negate, the Word of God. The true church refuses to "factor human reality into its reading of the Lord's words."

Members of the congregation, including ministers and elders, look their own children and grandchildren who find themselves in such circumstances in the eyes and call them to a life of self-denial: being a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake. The grace of Christ is sufficient. By the Spirit of Christ, their brief earthly life will be God-

glorifying and rich. And the glory that will be their reward is so great that the present suffering is not worthy to be compared with it. Christ will eternally make up to them their temporal loss.

As for the wideness of God's mercy, who can sufficiently extol it?

Higher than heaven, deeper than hell, wider than the east is from the west!

Wide enough to forgive, bless, and save fornicators, adulterers, unbiblically divorced, remarried, and homosexuals! As it is wide enough to forgive, bless, and save

those who are worse sinners than any of them: the proud!

In the way of our repentance!

Only in the way of our repentance.

The teaching that God's mercy saves impenitent sinners who go on in their sin is a false gospel. It is the heresy of antinomism. It invents a "faire and easie way to heaven," only to send the comfortable sinners to hell.

Wide is God's mercy.

But narrow is the way.

Does anyone remember anymore at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

Narrow is the way. □

— DJE

**When Thou Sittest in Thine House**

**Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma**

## **The Covenant of Marriage**

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

### **The Authority of Parents**

"Who gives this woman to this man in marriage?"

"Her mother and I."

These are words that have been spoken over and over again by fathers who have given their daughters in marriage. But do we really understand the implication of these few words? They refer to the active exercise of parental authority in the marriages of our covenant children. When a father walks his daughter down the aisle to give her hand in marriage to a man, he is placing his stamp of approval on the marriage. He is exercising his

authority and responsibility before God as the head of his home. This authority of father and mother, however, is not exercised only on the day of their children's wedding. It begins long before this. Parents have a biblical right and duty to be closely involved in their children's dating life. Even more, parents — especially fathers — have the right to decide whom their children may date and therefore ultimately marry. All this is implied when father and mother give the hand of their daughter to a man in marriage.

This is a rule of Scripture that is at best forgotten and at worst ignored and rebelled against in our society today. Most foreign cultures, even with their heathen religions, still insist on parental control over whom their children marry. But the "liberated, enlight-

ened" society and church of the United States have long thrown away this "outdated" rule along with the rest of the testimony of Scripture. We live in a lawless society, where rebellion against established authority has become the norm. Because of this, dating has long ago broken outside of the bounds of parental authority and supervision.

Though such rebellion has occurred repeatedly throughout history, it became a part of our society during the social revolution of the 1960s. On every front young people rebelled against authority. They marched against the government, dodged the draft, and rioted on college campuses. They rebelled against the church and the authority of Scripture. In promoting their new philosophy of love, they spit in the face of God by

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trampling in the dirt the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "Free love" was the phrase coined by the hippie movement. "If you can't be with the one you love, baby, love the one you're with" was the slogan sung in many songs. Love-ins became popular in cities such as San Francisco and on college campuses. Dating became casual and recreational. Though fornication has always been around, it became a norm for dating during this era. It was expected on a date.

With this rebellion against the church came also rebellion against parents. Parents were viewed as part of the "establishment," which did not understand the cares and needs of the teenager. Teens ran away from home, lived in communes, went away to college — anything to escape the authority of father and mother. The generation gap was created. It was during this era of rebellion that a new system of values emerged. Teenagers now had the right to choose for themselves whom they wanted to date, live with, and perhaps marry. Parents fought to maintain their control but lost out to the spirit of rebellion that ate away at society. The 1960s and 1970s are not an age to boast about. It was a time of horrible rebellion!

This rebellion has become a part of our society now. Living together outside of wedlock, divorce and remarriage, homosexual relationship, having children before and even outside of marriage are the accepted norm of society today. In the eyes of the unbelieving world these are just as normal, if not more normal, than a family consisting of one husband and wife with their children. Due to all of this, many young people do not even *know* their parents, let alone bow to their authority. In those families where there still are parents, father and mother relinquish their authority when their children turn a certain age for fear their son or daughter will turn on them and

forsake them.

All this has had a devastating effect on dating within the sphere of the church and covenant. So influenced are young people in the church today by the trends that have developed in this world of unbelief that they have convinced themselves that they need not bow before the rule of father and mother. They believe that God has given them the right to decide matters of their life independent of their parents' authority. This extends to dating. Oftentimes young people date whom they choose without even seeking father's and mother's approval. And if young people know that father and mother would not approve, they "sneak out" on a date, fully confident that their parents will never find out!

Sad to say, in a real way parents have allowed this to happen! They have allowed their children to read the romance novels and magazines that line the shelves of bookstores. These books portray a love that is entirely earthly and sensual — even sexual. Parents have allowed their children, from smallest childhood on, to watch the TV shows and movies which actively promote the immorality and rebellion of the 1960s! The modern media mock parents. Parents are made out to be bumbling idiots who have no lick of common sense or knowledge of the modern scene. Parents only botch things up, and the teenager is made to look as if he is the only one who has any sense. Do we realize how much our children have been influenced by this kind of thinking?

But that is not all. Far too often mother and father do not take an active interest and role in their children's dating life. For some strange reason they choose to relinquish their hold on this all-important part of their child's life. Their children are gone from home

every night of the week, and where they are or what they are doing or whom they are with is left up to their children's discretion. For some strange reason parents are made to feel that to control this part of their child's life would be an intrusion and not trusting their children as they should. So parents — covenant parents — close their eyes and hope for the best. The most they dare to do is pray for their children. As for the rest, they take only a passive role in the dating life of their children. They feel that all they can do is advise, but nothing more.

In opposition to this attitude stands the Word of God! Parents are called by God to exercise oversight and rule in the whole area of dating. This is especially true of the father, who is called by God to be the head of his family. Likewise, children are called to be obedient to parents in this whole area of life.

When we say that father and mother have a position of oversight in the dating life of their children, we mean that they are called to determine when their children may date, whom they may date, where they may go on a date, etc. This is not a matter of a lack of trust. It is a simple matter of exercising their authority in an all-important area of their children's lives. It is meant by God as protection, as a safeguard, to keep covenant children in the foolishness of their youth (Prove. 22:15; Ps. 25:7) from ways of sin and error which might ruin their future life.

Young people, can you begin to imagine how far-reaching is the decision to marry someone? Only someone who has been married for twenty-five years or more can begin to tell you how far-reaching it is! Marriage is for life! Do you really trust your inexperienced youth to make a decision on your own that will have to do with the

*Parents are called by God to exercise oversight and rule in the whole area of dating.*



rest of your life? Do you really trust other young people, who know nothing more than you about marriage, to help you make the right decision? Do you trust *anyone* more than your own parents, who love you and are deeply concerned about your future, to lead you in this area of your life? God places our parents in authority over us for our sakes. We *need* that authority and rule over us.

This does not mean that father may act as a tyrant, with no regard to the desires or needs of his children. Parents must understand that their teenage children have reached the age of discretion and are beginning to make decisions for themselves. This is good. This is the way God intended it to be. Young men and women must learn to make sanctified decisions in every area of their lives, including that of dating and marrying. Arranged marriages are out of the question! We know that! Neither may parents choose the persons they want their son or daughter to date and *force* them to go out with them. Wise parents allow freedom to their children to choose within the sphere of the church and covenant the one whom they would like to date. Yet, the permission of father and mother must be obtained before our children may go out on that date.

Young people are called to submit to the rule of parents in this regard. I cannot help but think that Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right," was written not first of all for the sake of younger children. Little children have little choice but to obey the will of their parents. They are little! But it is the young person who can so easily rebel against parents. He is beginning to think and reason on his own. Oftentimes, he thinks he is so much wiser and more informed than his parents. But the rule of Scripture in dating, as in all of life, is to obey father and mother in the Lord: for this is, very simply, right! It is

right, good, lawful!

Neither is it difficult to make a scriptural case for parental rule over the dating of our children. This is evident in those passages where Scripture speaks of daughters being "given" in marriage (Ps. 78:63; Luke 20:34; Matt. 24:38). The idea expressed by this is that under *normal* circumstances a young woman remains under her father's authority and rule until that time when her father gives her to another. She then would come under the authority of her husband. (See Numbers 30:3-16.)

Several laws in the Old Testament applied directly to this same issue. In Exodus 22:16, 17 we find an instance of fornication between a young man and woman of the covenant. We are told specifically in verse 17: "If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." Obviously, a father can and may "utterly refuse to give" his daughter away in marriage.

Another law is given in Deuteronomy 22:13-21 which deals with a dispute between a father and a husband of a young girl whom the husband claims is not a virgin. In this passage the father of the woman is required to give evidence of her virginity. Certainly this means that the father regulated closely whom his daughter courted prior to the time of her marriage. He even made sure his daughter remained a virgin until that time!

There is a passage also in the New Testament that teaches even more strongly the rule of the father in the dating life of his daughter. In fact, it may even seem a bit harsh, but if understood correctly it gives solid instruction. The passage is I Corinthians 7:36-38. The

"man" in these verses refers to the father of a young woman. The "virgin" refers to his unmarried daughter. We learn there that a father has the right to keep his daughter home with him or to give her in marriage as he so chooses. It is his right! The father that gives his daughter in marriage does well,

but he that gives her not in marriage does better, Paul tells us in the last of these verses. The context of I

Corinthians 7:36-38 makes clear under what circumstances the father "does better" by not giving his daughter in marriage. Suffice it to say that the choice is not an arbitrary imposition of will on the part of the father but is one which comes out of serious consideration of all the factors involved. Our point here is only to emphasize that not only the Old but also the New Testament

Scriptures give to the father authority with respect to the marriage of his children.

In order to protect our children in the marriages they enter, in order to assist them in forming a lasting relationship that will give them great happiness, covenant parents are in duty bound to exercise oversight of their children's dating life. And wise children, when they reach the years of dating, will bow before that rule and authority of parents because they know that it will stand them in good stead in the future. Solid marriages in the church will prevail when both parents and youth understand the necessity of parental authority in this important phase of life.

Next article we will address the question: when may a young person date? □

*Wise  
parents  
allow freedom  
to their  
children  
to choose  
within  
the sphere  
of the church  
and covenant  
the one  
whom they  
would like  
to date.  
Yet, the  
permission  
of father  
and mother  
must be  
obtained....*



# "Unbookable"

(John 21)

John 20:31 tells us the purpose for things being written by God in the gospel according to John. Listen: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

The *things* of God written down by John to accomplish such a wonderful purpose probably refer first of all to the accounts of the various appearances of Jesus after His resurrection, and to the miracles Jesus performed then in the presence of His disciples. All these are written that we might believe the Truth Jesus, and get a Life unlike any other life.

But, really, *every thing* in John has been written for the same purpose. There's no word wasted on a lesser thing. From "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1) to "Amen" (John 21:25). All written as revelation of the identity of the person and office and work of Jesus of Nazareth. All written for light and faith and life for God's elect.

\*\*\*\*\*

Well, fellow Bible students, as we enter a last Bible Study of John together we do well to ask ourselves this question: *How is our*

*light, and faith, and life? Which is to say, How has our Bible study been?*

Have we *believed* this Jesus in and through our Bible Study of the inspired apostle John?

How noble—with Christian, Berean, Bible-searching nobility and humility and diligence and expectancy—have we been?

In this age ...

where things are *Mc* and we are all on the move and wanting things fast;

where things are *Man* and man believing *Man*;

where things are *Mush* and feelings and experiences and thrills....

Among these antichristian spirits ...

whose purposes are exactly that we *not* believe Just Jesus;

who posit many revelations of many saviors all equally valid;

who preach the god Tolerance, and death to dogma and dogmatists.

And then, *what has our Bible study done*, to bear fruit in our lives? What really has revelation done for and in our *life*? To our waistlines? Our dating? Our marriages? Our work? Our play? Our attitudes? Our chit-chat? Our humility? Our pride? Our prejudices? Our prayers? *And our purposes?*

\*\*\*\*\*

It's not too late. If belief has been weak, and good fruit meager, there is still *now*. And this study. In fact it is just for you. In this last chapter of John we see our resur-

rected Lord appearing to His disciples again. He powerfully recalls the disciples from their fishing to be fishers of men. He tenderly reinstates the fallen Peter. In every way Jesus continues to reveal Himself as the Christ, the Son of God.

For us. You see? *You and I* are being re-called, reinstated, rebuked, reminded, reconfirmed, here in the last chapter of John, and now in this next chapter of our life. The Savior God *with us* is appearing to us now.

We've gone fishing. We've been playing golf. We've been amusing ourselves to death. Or we've been building one barn after the other in which to store this world's goods. We've been, of course, having a little religion. But the things which are seen have seized us. Good things. Bad stuff. All kinds of doing and being done unto. So real! Yet they have taken over. Stocks, Handicaps, Work, Internet, School, Ministry.... All these have become our preoccupation and our lords. We've left off believing the written things of God and the God of the written things. We've been living and doing. We've not been living and doing the Word.

Shame. There has been this *sense* of our hypocrisy, our double-lives, our little faith. We do not like it. But we wonder how life could be different, better, the way Christian lives are supposed to be. We hang our heads, cowering in fear, perhaps, as we enter another round of our feeble "good fight,"

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



and we are, we know, supposed to be winning, and yet have been so knocked around and bloodied. What good can Faith be for *this* fight *this* day against *this* Foe?

Look! Now He is coming, this Jesus. He stands on the shore. We cannot quite see Him yet, perhaps. But He's there. You are fighting in your life. Fighting to *make* a living. But there is nothing in all your punching, in all your night and day.

Jesus comes and says just one word: *Why?*

And then another: *I have won!* I have fought and died in your place and to cleanse you of your archenemy sins, make you fearless before sucker-punching devils. I am risen. I am crowned. For your justification. For your right to life. *Champion! Yours!*

And another: *Believe! Trust Me!* Out of the faith I have given, and in the power of the Spirit breathing life in you: *Believe!* Look to and be ruled and liberated by my Word, and wield it for victories over worlds in my name....

And this: *Live!* In the world, yet not of it. Fishing. Yet fishing for men. Single, yet with God. Married, yet married to Me. Getting. Yet getting understanding. Rejoicing here, yet joy in the Holy Ghost. Dying. Yet never dying....

And: *I am with you always. I love you! And still, though you be weak. My strength is made perfect in your weakness! My love in your lovelessness! My faithfulness in your faithlessness!*

\*\*\*\*\*

One more thing in this chapter of John, and for this next chapter of our faith-life, and for when the brief story of ours on earth is done. There's the Word that the half and much more has not been told us. Certain things are written of Jesus and what He did. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be

written" (John 21:25).

This simply means that Jesus is *Wonderful!* He is the God *Wonderful*, and Messiah of God *Wonderful!* Revealed, yes. So we've a true knowledge of God, yes. *But He is so much more!* We have a drop. He is an ocean. We have

## For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

### 1. Jesus visits His fishermen (vv. 1-14).

Jesus now appears to His disciples the third time since His resurrection. They are fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (the same as the Sea of Galilee [cf. John 6:1]). They had caught nothing all night. Now a man appears standing on the shore. The disciples see the man. It is Jesus. But the disciples do not recognize Him. Not until He performs a miracle will they know.

Some commentators blame the disciples for going fishing. One even describes the scene as one of "complete apostasy." Is there any evidence in the passage, and in Jesus' reinstatement of Peter, that the disciples, by their fishing, had about given up on their calling to be fishers of men (Confer Matt. 4:18-20; Luke 5:1-11; and John 15:5)?

While you and I are thinking on this—is it possible that ministers are called to the ministry only for a short time, but then one day are not? Also this: are ministers, *while they are ministers*, ever to be involved in any occupation besides the ministry of the Word and sacraments (Think of Paul and his tent-making. See also Acts 6:4; I Tim. 5:17)?

List at least five incidents in this narrative which are miraculous.

Him with us. He is most High.

Revelation written. That we might believe....

*So much unbookable!* That we might live each day falling on knees in wonder. That in grateful hearts there might be the small but sure beginning of endless praise.

153 fish caught! A great deal is made by some of the exact number—153. Is there any symbolism here? What are some important things to remember when interpreting the numbers in Scripture symbolically? Not considering now the exact number of fish—is there any significance in the *large amount* of fish? In the fact that the net did not break (cf. Luke 5:1-11 where the nets *did* break)?

### 2. Our Lord's reinstatement of Peter (vv. 15-17)

Why did Peter, once he realized that it was the Lord who was appearing to them and who had provided a miraculous catch of fish, jump into the sea and swim toward the Master Fisherman?

From other narratives we learn that Jesus had appeared to Peter already in private (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5). Why?

At this time Jesus reinstates Peter into his office of apostle. Why was it necessary for Jesus *here publicly* to reinstate and reconfirm Peter? How does this bear on the church's dealings with ministers who may, sometimes, fall into grievous and public sin?

Jesus asks Peter if he loves Jesus more than *these* (v. 15). Is Jesus by this asking if Peter loves Him more than he loves the other disciples, or more than he loves his fishing gear? Or is Jesus asking if



Peter loves Him more than the other disciples love Him? (Hint: what was Peter's fault that Jesus is seeking to have Peter acknowledge, repent of, and confess?) Or is there some other explanation?

Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. Why three times? Each time, all Peter can do is to acknowledge that the Savior knows he loves Him. What is the evidence that Peter at this time is truly sorry for his sin of denying Jesus? Is there any significance to Peter's using the Greek word *phileo* for "love," rather than *agapao*? (A Strong's Concordance and/or a good commentary will be helpful here.)

The Lord Jesus calls Peter to feed His lambs, and His sheep. This certainly is proof that Jesus is re-authorizing and re-calling Peter to the work of apostle! How do ministers and elders today feed the flock of God (cf. I Peter 5:1-3; II Timothy 4:2)?

Roman Catholic scholars think to find proof here, as they think to find elsewhere (e.g., Matt. 16: 16-19; II Sam. 5:2), for their contention that Peter was the most important apostle, and that therefore all Peter's successors, that is, in their view, all the popes of Rome, are the prime ministers of the church. What do we say? Is there anything in the text itself which speaks of Peter as the first and most important (prime) minister of the church? What do passages such as Matthew 18:18; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4, and others have to say on this matter of the authority of leaders in the church? What is the Reformed and Presbyterian rule of church government which guards against hierarchy?

### 3. Peter and John and Jesus (vv. 18-24)

Verses 18 and 19 are a prediction of Peter's death. Many think that the reference to Peter's

"stretching forth the hands" when he is old is a prediction of death by crucifixion. This might explain why John says in verse 19 that Peter would glorify God in his death. Assuming that Peter did die a martyr's death, even by crucifixion, just how would Peter glorify God in this way (cf. I Pet. 4:14-16)?

"Follow me," Jesus says to Peter. Any particular reason Jesus would say that to Peter at this point? Look up in a concordance all the times the word "follow" is used in reference to "disciples following Jesus." List five things involved in our following Jesus.

For whatever reason, Peter inquires as to what the beloved disciple John would do (perhaps asking by this if John also would die a martyr's death), verse 21. Jesus tells Peter it is none of his business (v. 22)! It need not concern Peter whether John dies on behalf of Christ like Peter will or whether John is living when Christ comes again. John, writing long after these words were spoken by Jesus, then reflects that the rumor was spread, due to misinterpretation of Jesus' words, that John would never die. He then sets the record straight, saying that "Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" What do John's careful interpretation of Jesus' exact words in verse 23 and his own attestation of the truth of his testimony (v. 24) say of the authority of Scripture? Do you believe in *verbal inspiration*? What are some classic passages which teach the unique, divine character of the whole Bible, John included? How does this *doctrine* of Scripture affect your *doing*?

### 4. Perspective (John 20:31)

This third appearance of Jesus to His disciples (the last recorded in John) is so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might

have life through His name.

What do we learn here of Jesus as Savior? Sovereign? Servant? Sympathetic High Priest?

Have you ever had to be "reinstated"? What virtue of the Lord Jesus have you found most comforting and reassuring when you have backslidden, even denied the Lord, but then are brought back? What are some passages of the Bible you might share with a backslidden friend (e.g., Is. 55:1ff.)?

Jesus, in asking Peter about his love for Him (vv. 15-17), is asking us too. He comes to us today in His Word. We have our work, our toys, our dates, our spouses, our children, our investments, our hopes. He confronts us while pointing to those things: *Lovest thou me more than these?* He confronts us too when we boast in religious pride that we love Jesus more than others in the church do. How does your *faith* in the Lord Jesus and your *humility* show itself in deeds of love and thanks to God for His wonderful salvation?

### 5. Unbookable (John 21:25)

The inspired John pays Jesus the greatest honor when he writes that he supposes (read: he is firmly convinced!) that *even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written* if all the deeds of Jesus were to be recorded.

Amen. □

#### NOTICE!!

The issue of September 15 is the last in Volume 75. Bound volumes will be made available for \$20.00 (+ postage) each. Or, if you bring or send to the SB business office soon your own loose issues for binding, you can obtain the bound volume for just \$12.00. *(The latter service can be provided if we have your copies by October 15.)*



# Former Christian Political Activists Plot New Strategy

*We confess some of our own "sins" for once believing that we could make things right through manipulation of the political system.... The Moral Majority folded in the late eighties, giving way to the Christian Coalition and other organizations that have taken up its agenda, using, with minor variations, the same strategies to achieve the same ends we failed to achieve. Two decades after conservative Christians charged into the political arena, bringing new voters and millions of dollars with them in hopes of transforming the culture through political power, it must now be acknowledged that we have failed. We failed because we were unable to redirect a nation from the top down. Real change must come from the bottom up or, better yet, from the inside out.*

Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded By Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999)

## The Enduring Problem

What is the evangelical Christian's calling toward the increasing decadence and immorality of contemporary culture, particularly when the state refuses to forbid such evils as abortion, pornography, and same-sex marriages? Should church leaders engage in political activism by supporting conservative political candidates and promoting Christian political organizations who prevail upon legislatures to adopt laws that reinforce traditional Christian morality? Or should evangelical Christians separate themselves from power politics and contemporary culture, focusing rather on spreading the gospel, living exemplary lives, and establishing their own Christian cultural institutions?

Almost fifty years ago, H. Ri-

chard Niebuhr, in his classic treatise *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), called this debate "the enduring problem" for Christians. Conservative columnist Cal Thomas and Rev. Ed Dobson, two former luminaries in the now defunct Moral Majority, have revived this debate by the recent publication of their controversial book *Blinded By Might*. Admitting that their former vision of political activism for conservative Christians was fundamentally mistaken, these two influential men are not imploring churches and evangelical leaders to cultivate an "aversion to any kind of political involvement."

## Seduced by Power

The problem with churches and church leaders becoming politically active, they insist, is that it is then impossible to avoid the seduction of power, the "oldest temptation known to man," the "ultimate aphrodisiac." The authors confess that the early days of the Moral Major-

ity were exhilarating and intoxicating. Even the secular press grudgingly admitted that the Reagan-Bush landslide victory in 1980 was in no small part attributable to the political activism of the Religious Right. Following Reagan's inauguration, Rev. Jerry Falwell, the founder of Moral Majority, and other evangelical leaders were regular guests at the White House. President Reagan became the hero of many conservative Christians who contributed millions of dollars to the Republican Party in the 1980s. Both Thomas and Dobson were charter members of the Board of Directors of the Moral Majority and shared the spotlight and notoriety with Falwell as the proud leaders of the Religious Right.

But the authors now admit that they were all blinded by the attraction of political power they thought could be exploited to establish their conservative political agenda. Writes Thomas: "In the early days of the Moral Majority we were taken up to the mountain, and we

*Mr. Lanting, a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, is a practicing attorney.*



saw how we could win the battle for Jesus' sake. Unfortunately, the voice we were listening to was not that of Jesus."

The authors of *Blinded By Might* are now convinced that politics is by necessity evil because it is inescapably obsessed with gaining and retaining power. With few exceptions, it was their experience that politicians were always far more concerned about acquiring and maintaining power than they were about moral issues. The last two decades, claim Thomas and Dobson, are conclusive evidence that the Religious Right was shamelessly exploited by Reagan, Bush, and others because none of their political promises to the Religious Right were ever realized in any meaningful way.

### **The Failure of Christian Political Activism**

Dobson and Thomas are remarkably cynical about the negligible outcome of twenty years of high-powered and well-financed Christian political activism:

The impotence and near-irrelevance of the Religious Right were demonstrated on the day William Jefferson Clinton was inaugurated. Clinton's first two acts as president were to sign executive orders liberalizing rules against homosexuals in the military and repealing the few abortion restrictions applied under presidents Reagan and Bush. With a few pen strokes, Bill Clinton erased the little that the Moral Majority had been able to achieve during its brief existence. The tragedy was not the failure to succeed, but the waste of spiritual energy that would have been better spent on strategies and methods more likely to succeed than the quest for political power.

The authors are convinced that the Religious Right miserably failed in its political mission to curtail abortion, outlaw pornography, and restore family values. Very little, if any, of the contemplated legisla-

tion promised by conservative politicians ever materialized.

### **A New Strategy**

But if political activism by the religious Right was a futile waste of energy and resources, what should be the "new" strategy for Christians to be the "salt of the earth" in the next century? The authors suggest that the Religious Right has confused "political authority" with "spiritual authority," the former being the authority of the state, and the latter the authority of the church. The most potent influence in transforming our culture is not the ballot booth, they write, but the spiritual authority of the church proclaiming the gospel which has the power to transform the hearts and lives of men, women, and children. These changed people "then become the agents of change in their families and communities." In contrast, the political process of government has no power whatsoever to change the hearts of evildoers; it can only incarcerate or execute them.

Rev. Dobson is adamant that a church and its pastor should have no political involvement whatsoever. When a church engages in the political process, "it becomes another lobbying group and ceases to be the church." Although Thomas and Dobson claim they are not suggesting that *individual* believers withdraw from politics, they are insistent that pastors and churches should never be involved in political action, including the distribution of voter guides and petitions or political fund-raising. Moreover, pastors should steer clear of partisan issues and never speak out for or against political candidates or elected officials.

Individual believers, they advise, should stop sending money to "high-profile national ministries that promise to change America." Instead, Christians should focus on local ministries where they can personally be involved and evaluate whether contributions are being

spent prudently. Finally, individual Christians can fulfill their responsibilities as citizens simply by voting intelligently, praying for those in authority, and writing letters to their elected officials and local newspapers.

### **Evangelical Backlash**

But within weeks of the release of *Blinded By Might* in Christian bookstores across the nation, Gary Bauer of the Christian Coalition announced his candidacy for the presidential election. Other evangelical leaders, including Dr. James Dobson, Rev. D. James Kennedy, and Pat Robertson (all of whom are targeted in the book), issued strongly worded criticisms of *Blinded By Might*. D. James Kennedy, for example, stated recently in *World* magazine that "to sound retreat now when Christians are making their presence felt everywhere is the height of folly." Randy Tate, the executive director of the Christian Coalition, likewise disagrees with the authors' pessimistic appraisal of the last two decades and insists that Christians recently "have earned and exerted tremendous influence over this nation's political process."

### **The Continuing Debate**

Reformed Christians should be intrigued by this ongoing controversy for several reasons. First, *Blinded By Might* is forcing evangelical Christians to think about several substantive issues: the legitimate but limited biblical role of government; the calling of the church toward the society and culture in which it finds itself; the proper relationship between the church and state; and the Christian's respective callings as citizens of two different kingdoms.

Although *Blinded By Might* does not always give satisfactory answers to these issues for the Reformed believer, some of the doctrinal and practical errors of Religious Right activists are courageously addressed, if somewhat in



a superficial and anecdotal manner.

Of particular interest to Protestant Reformed readers is Cal Thomas' insistence that our nation's problems stem from three fundamental causes: divorce ("We need to hear more preaching that marriage is a one-time thing"); lack of support for parental Christian schools; and worldly video entertainment allowed in the home ("We are challenging parents to make

sure their homes are not infiltrated with material that pollutes the minds and souls of children").

But if *Blinded By Might* is strong on practical advice for evangelical Christians concerned about the increasing immorality of our culture, it offers little toward a sound and consistent biblical eschatology. Michael Horton, a Reformed theologian at Westminster Seminary,

recently wrote that Christian political activism over the past few decades "has been shallow, confused, reactionary and narrowly focused on behavior" to the exclusion of a meaningful "theological framework." Regrettably, *Blinded By Might* likewise suffers from the lack of such a framework for the widening controversy which will undoubtedly escalate in the upcoming election year. □

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

Early this summer, the Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada sought help from their congregation to help distribute "Welcome" brochures, plus magnets, in the mailboxes of the surrounding neighborhood. Plans called for the volunteers to meet in church, divide into approximately ten groups, each with an adult and a car, and go to work. We are happy and thankful to report that through these efforts nearly 1,000 homes were reached, and perhaps, if it is the Lord's will, this project could be a tool to draw some unto the pure preaching of the gospel.

Somewhat along these same lines, the Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI recently thanked their congregation for their support for their recently concluded summer seminar on the subject of eschatology. There was a very good turnout at each of the four sessions. Among those attending, there were a good number of visitors from outside our churches. We thank the Lord for this opportunity to give a witness concerning our faith.

---

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

### Congregation Activities

Thanks to a recently received bequest, together with some previously accumulated cash in an Organ-Piano Fund and a Baptismal Font-Communion Table Fund, the Council of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada was able to appoint a committee to find a suitable piano, and to arrange for a baptismal font and communion table to be made, interestingly, by a member of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Last month, the congregation of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ spent a day at Island Beach State Park, enjoying each other's company and all the things we usually associate with a day at the beach.

At a recent congregational meeting, the membership of the South Holland, IL PRC approved giving a gift of \$125,000 to our newly organized Cornerstone PRC, from their Building Fund. You may remember that Cornerstone is a daughter church of South Holland, with all its members coming from there as well.

### Mission Activities

Rev. Jai Mahtani, our eastern US home missionary, was in Fayetteville, North Carolina July 28-August 2, visiting with the families of the Fayetteville Reformed Fellowship. He hoped to spend much of that weekend establishing new contacts, holding Bible stud-

ies, and preaching twice on the Lord's Day.

You might also be interested to know that the FRF has arranged for the Reformed Witness Hour to be heard each Sunday at 9:30 AM on WFNC 640 AM. They are also planning some RWH announcements for WFNC, using interviews with Rev. Mahtani. They have been able to place literature announcements in their public libraries for "The Family: Foundations are Shaking," and they also have 10 copies of the tapes of the recent conference held at First PRC in Holland, MI on "Biblical Sanity Amid Millennial Madness," to be distributed as the Lord directs. If you would like more information, please visit their web site at [www.rsglh.org](http://www.rsglh.org).

In news from Ghana, we find that the Foreign Mission Committee and the council of the Hull, IA PRC, the calling church, have given their approval to Rev. R. Moore to begin a radio program over the University of Ghana's FM station. Rev. Moore writes that this program has proved to be of benefit already, in that several new visitors have attended their worship or Bible Study because of it. Rev. Moore also had an opportunity to meet with about 40 students, members of the Christian Fellowship at Accra Poly Technic. Rev. Moore spoke on the theme, "Becoming Vessels Unto Honor."



## Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB Canada hosted an evening of fellowship with softball and a bonfire with the young people of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada on July 23.

On August 12, the young people of the Randolph, WI PRC

hosted a Volleyball Tournament for all the members of their congregation.

## Minister Activities

Out of a trio of Revs. A. denHartog, C. Haak, and Candidate Garry Eriks, the Loveland, CO PRC extended a call to Candi-

date Eriks, who has accepted the call.

## Food For Thought

"Those whose hearts are not pierced by the sword of God's justice shall certainly be cut down and destroyed by the ax of His judgments."

—F. Burkitt □

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The 75th Anniversary Celebration is less than one year away. The dates are, D.V., June 19-23, 2000. Plans are already being finalized for this historic time in our churches. God has truly given us a heritage to be thankful for.

The Celebration has been organized to include many worthwhile spiritual activities as well as recreational activities. There will also be an international flavor, with

fellow believers attending, the Lord willing, from Singapore, Australia, and possibly other countries. We encourage you to bring your entire family to stay on campus. If you cannot stay on campus, we would welcome you to come for as many days as possible.

The daily schedule and activities being planned are as follows:

#### MONDAY

Noon to 4 P.M. Registration, check-in, and free time to enjoy fellowship

5:00-6:00 P.M. Dinner

7:30-9:00 P.M. Evening Program

- \* Singing
- \* Announcements
- \* Church History Video Commemorating Our 75-Year History
- \* Keynote Address presented by Cal Kalsbeek

9:00-11:00 p.m. Cookies/Coffee and Time for Fellowship

#### TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY

7:30-8:30 A.M. Breakfast

9:30-11:00 A.M. Children's Bible School and Adult Sectionals

- \* Children ages 3-14 will separate into sectionals to discuss Christian Armor, work on crafts, sing, and make new friends.
- \* Adults will separate into several different sectionals, including topics on: Singapore, Pittsburgh, Spokane, Missions Overview, Singing, Devotions, Evangelism, Scriptorium (Old Manuscripts), Organist/Pianist Recital (share music and play), and Historical Overview of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

These sectionals are an opportunity to learn, discuss, and share ideas about the above areas. Each sectional will have a moderator that will start with a short overview of the sectional. The moderator will then lead a discussion or a question/answer session on the subject. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fellowship with other members of the same faith. You will meet new individuals and share your thoughts and opinions on the subject of the sectional. The sectionals will be repeated the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday which will allow all attendees an opportunity to participate in several of the sectionals throughout the Celebration.

11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Lunch

1:00-4:30 P.M. Field Day or Leisure Activities

- \* For the children and adults we have the following planned
  - \* Competition softball for the children
  - \* Competition soccer for the children
  - \* Competition volleyball for the adults
- \* Leisure Activities include:
  - \* Volleyball — unstructured
  - \* Pool/Gym

\* Church Tour. Visit old First Church in Grand Rapids and the Seminary.

\* Horseshoes

\* Boccee Ball

\* Photo/Nature Trail

\* Care Packages for Myanmar. We are looking for volunteers to put together small first aid and health kits to be shipped to Myanmar. We would ask all Celebration attendees to bring a small item for donation. Volunteers will sort, package, and box up small kits for shipping. We are also looking for donations to cover shipping costs.

\* Organ Recitals

\* Auto Harp

\* Animal Kingdom Videos (rainy-day activity)

\* Closest to the Pin Contest

\* Off campus, unstructured opportunities include: shopping, golf, Frederick Meijer Gardens, VanAndel Museum, Grand Rapids Children Museum, Gerald R. Ford Museum, and much more.

5:00-6:00 p.m. Dinner

7:30-8:30 p.m. Evening Program

\* Singing

\* Announcements

\* **Tuesday's Speech:** Based on the Celebration Theme, *Living Out of Our Heritage*, on the topic of *A Beautiful Heritage*, by Rev. Jason Korterger

\* **Wednesday's Speech:** Based on the Celebration Theme, *Living Out of Our Heritage*, on the topic of *A Present Necessity*, by Professor David Engelsma

9:00-11:00 P.M. Free Time

#### THURSDAY

7:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Breakfast, Children's Bible School, Adult Sectionals and Lunch are the same as Tuesday and Wednesday.

1:00-4:30 P.M. Family Fun Day or Leisure Activities

\* Moonwalk

\* Rock Climbing Wall

\* Powerball

\* Giant Slide

\* Velcro Wall

\* Pony Rides

\* Kids Caterpillar

\* Face Painting

\* Bungee Run

\* Caricature Drawings

5:00-6:00 P.M. Dinner

8:00-9:00 P.M. Evening Program (later time to accommodate Young People's Banquet)

\* Announcements

\* **Speech:** Based on the Celebration Theme, *Living Out of Our Heritage*, on the topic of *A Sure Light for the Future*, by Rev. Carl Haak

9:30-11:00 P.M. Free Time

#### FRIDAY

7:30-8:30 A.M. Breakfast

9:00-11:00 A.M. Pack up and say good-bye to old and new friends.

The Celebration week is full of many spiritual and recreational activities for the whole family to enjoy. That is why we recommend staying on campus. It is a wonderful way to make new relationships with other believers from throughout God's world. In conjunction with the Celebration, the Young People's Convention will be held the same time and place, but they will have designated dorms for their lodging and many separate activities. The young people will already be there, so make this a family week.

We believe that this 75th Anniversary Celebration will be something that your family will enjoy reminiscing about for many years. We also pray that God will use this to strengthen each of us in our faith and encourage us for His work in the future.

The 75th Anniversary Committee



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**NOTICE of CONGRATULATIONS**

Rev. C. Hanko, by God's grace, will have completed seventy years in the ministry of the gospel on September 24, 1999. The congregation of Hudsonville PRC extends congratulations to him in observing this milestone and, in particular, gives thanks to God for the many years of that ministry that he was given to us.

"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15).

Our prayer is that Rev. Hanko may continue to experience the abiding love of our heavenly Father as he continues along life's journey and that he may experience His promise as expressed in I Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom we were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Congregation of the  
Hudsonville PRC

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland PRC extends its sympathy to Mrs. Vicki Griess and her family in the death of her sister,

**MRS. CAROLYN COULSON.**

May God strengthen and encourage by His promise that He will provide and direct in all of our sorrows.

Mr. Larry Nelson, Clerk

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The council and congregation of the Byron Center PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Donna Miedema and her family in the recent death of her husband,

**SID MIEDEMA, SR.**

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

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, President  
Leroy DeVries, Clerk

**ADDRESS CHANGES**

Prof. Decker  
8760 Cedar Lake Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49426  
phone: (616) 457-6618

And the new address of Georgetown PRC clerk is:

Mr. David Ondersma  
3521 North Lake Shore Dr.  
Holland, MI 49424  
phone: (616) 994-0263

**TAPES AVAILABLE**

Southwest PRC made tapes (audio and video) of its summer seminar on "The Biblical Way Through the Millennial Maze." Copies of the four-tape sets may be obtained (at \$12.00 for audio and \$24.00 for video) from:

Evangelism Committee  
Southwest PRC  
4875 Ivanrest Ave.  
Grandville, MI 49418

**REMINDER**

The annual meeting of the RFPA will be held in Hope PRC on September 30 at 8 P.M. Rev. Bruinsma will speak on the topic: "The Standard for the New Millennium." Hope to see our subscribers from the west Michigan area in attendance.

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On October 4, 1999 our beloved parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

**GERRIT and MINNIE  
VAN BAREN,**

will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us godly parents, who brought us up in the fear of His holy name. We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years ahead.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psalm 90:1).

❖ **Garry and Walita VanBaren**

Garry and Jennifer  
Christopher, Jason, Jessica  
Dale and Gina  
Gordon Dale

❖ **Robert and Gerri**

Rich and Amy Veldboom  
Robert and Kristine (fiancé)

❖ **Gordon Dale VanBaren,**

in glory (5/25/87)

Lansing, Illinois

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The council and congregation of the Byron Center PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Walter DeLange, Sr. in the recent death of his wife,

**HARRIET DELANGE.**

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, President  
Leroy DeVries, Clerk