

THE *August 2001* STANDARD BEARER

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That Little Member

"For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

James 3:2

James speaks of that little member of our bodies that boasts of great things. The tongue is but a minor part of all the members of the body, hardly noticeable, yet extremely important and powerful.

How eagerly parents watch for the first word uttered by a small child. How soothing mother's voice can sound in the ears of the crying infant. It is the loving, yet firm word of the parents that instructs the child from early infancy in the way that it shall go, and from that way the child often does not depart. We are always under the influence of the speech of others, conversant with others, and as children of God we are always under the influence of His Word.

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

We possess the remarkable faculty of giving expression to what is in our minds. We can both speak and sing. That plays a most significant role in our lives, making communication and fellowship possible. It is that amazing gift of God that particularly distinguishes man from the lower animals. Man is created in the image of God to know God, to love and serve Him, and to give expression to that knowledge, love, and service in speech and in songs of praise.

What a wonderful means of communication our speech proves to be between God and us and with each other as fellow saints. What a blessing that we may and can hear the preaching of the Word, which is the power of Christ speaking to our souls! What a blessed fellowship we have with the living God by the gift of prayer, which is as close to heaven as we can attain in this life! And how important is the gift of communication by word of mouth with one another. How influential, how comforting, how reassuring, how spiritually edifying that word of others proves to be in our lives!



A small yet versatile member.

With the tongue we can travel from paradise to Paradise, discussing all of history in all its detail, in as far as we have knowledge of it. With the tongue we can speak of all the arts and sciences, philosophies and doctrines, all social and family affairs. In fact, every thought that enters the human mind can be put into words. The tongue is an essential, all-important means of communication. Only an aphasic knows what it means not to be able to talk.

But God's main purpose in giving us this important means of communication is that we may enjoy and glorify our Creator and our Redeemer in the fellowship of the saints. All creation bears God's autograph. Every creature declares and sings the praises of our God. Sun, moon, and stars; fish and fowl; the wild and the domestic animals; summer and winter, spring time and harvest — all join in declaring the mighty power, majesty, and wisdom of our God. And we were

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created as God's highest creatures, to raise our voices and say: "And thou, my soul, praise thou Him above all!"



A world of iniquity.

But man's fall into sin changed all that. Satan, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, enticed our first parents with outright lies. God's image in us was completely turned about. Instead of knowing God, we became fools who turned the truth into all sorts of deceptive lies. Our love for God we changed into hatred against Him, and our service became rebellion, opposition in bitter hatred.

That little member that God gave to us to glorify Him is turned into a power for evil in every sphere of life. In our minds we corrupt the truth and suppress it in unrighteousness. We seek the glory of the creature, of man and of ourselves, rather than of God. In our hearts we conceive of lies and deceit. Scripture says of us: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:12-14).

Our Heidelberg Catechism warns against all sorts of lies and deceit as the very work of the devil, against all false witnessing against another, falsifying man's words, backbiting, slandering, rashly and falsely judging others. How readily a telephone conversation can turn into judging, condemning, slandering the neighbor. A friendly visit often becomes a session of backbiting, whispering, speaking all manner of evil falsely against others. So much is said that should have remained unsaid. So many times, words that were spoken in strict confidence nevertheless reach the ears of others. Peter

speaks of malice, guile, and hypocrisies, of envies and evil speaking. In fact, there is no sin against any of the commandments that is not committed by the tongue. For example, how can we say that we love God when we hate our neighbor?



The tongue is a fire.

James goes on to warn us that the tongue is like a small spark that bursts into a flame, spreads rapidly like a fire driven by the wind, and becomes a great conflagration, carrying destruction in its wake. That first lie of paradise sweeps like a wildfire through the human race throughout history, leaving destruction, havoc, and misery in its path. The lie takes mastery in the individual. A small deception that may at first plague the conscience grows into a larger deception which passes almost unnoticed, so that lying and deceit become a common practice. Sin also develops in the community. As the untruth is repeated, it often grows to immense proportions and breaks entirely out of bounds. One evil tongue influences another, the truth is suppressed, he who loves and defends the truth is scorned, every sin is condoned as iniquity abounds, until the measure of sin is full in the Man of Sin, the representative of Satan who knows nothing but the lie.



What an untold destruction lies in the wake of the falsehoods that have been told. Churches filled with dissension and trouble are torn asunder, communities are brought into upheavals, nations have been destroyed, families ruined. Family members and friends are so filled with hatred that for years they refuse to speak to each other. And it is all caused by that little member, the evil tongue.

In the church, this is brought on first of all by heresy. The truth

is suppressed in unrighteousness, God as sovereign Lord over all is dethroned, and man is exalted before Him. A salvation by works has been maintained and taught ever since Cain brought his first sacrifice to God. God is made dependent upon man in some form or manner, so that God is brought into dishonor and man is exalted and honored, even finally, according to his vain dream, in eternity. The result is that God is no longer served but is made into an idol of man's invention, sitting in the heavens to wait upon and serve mankind.

This is evident also among the nations of the world. History records a constant striving for power as one nation with cunning devices and treachery destroys another. The lie and deception have become such a common practice in our day that the truth is subverted in every area. This becomes evident in advertising, in business transactions, in politics, government affairs, court cases, advertising, and in every possible sphere of life. A little flame becomes a conflagration which sweeps through the world, preparing the world for the judgment to come.



An unruly member.

James reminds us that a ship at sea is controlled by a very small rudder. An ocean liner carrying tons of freight besides a number of passengers maintains a straight course in spite of raging winds and wildly billowing seas, even as the pilot directs it. So also does a tongue, well controlled, serve a most useful purpose.

James also points out to us that animals of all sorts are trained to obey the trainer's commands. Sea animals, such as whales, seals, and otters can be trained to perform for the entertainment of the public. Obviously, the tongue should be so controlled and trained that it directs our lives in the proper way,

and for the welfare of others.

But this only shows how uncontrollable the tongue is, which no man can tame, as it gives expression to every sin conceivable. We all know by experience how glib the tongue can be, how readily we say things that should be left unsaid. Undue criticism, envyings, gossip, backbiting, remarks that we would not make to the person himself nor want repeated — all these slip out at most inopportune times. After an evening of fellowship, we look back at what was said, and shame floods our souls. So many things far more edifying could

have been said. We hang our heads in shame, disgusted with ourselves, humbly seeking forgiveness before we can go to rest.


No, no man and nothing can tame that unruly member. No one but God, and by His grace alone!



What makes it all the more shameful is that this sin is still also prevalent among us who profess our faith in God. Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing, praise and evil speaking. We praise God and we speak evil of the neighbor. Those certainly can-

not arise out of the same source. A pure spring does not produce filthy water. Evil speaking can arise only out of our old, sinful nature. This ought not to be! The more reason why that old man of sin must be crucified every day anew!

Well may we pray:

Guard Thou my thoughts, I
Thee implore,
And of my lips keep Thou
the door;
Nor leave my sinful heart to
stray
Where evil footsteps lead
the way. 

Editorial

The Kingdom of God (5)

"Who ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Colossians 1:13

The spirituality of the kingdom of God is offensive to multitudes today. That many stumble over the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God grieves us. But it does not surprise us. Exactly this was the offense of the kingship and kingdom of the Messiah to the Jews of Jesus' own day.

According to John 6, the Jews had their hearts set on a carnal, political kingdom with earthly power, prosperity, and peace. This was how they understood the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messianic kingdom, e.g., Psalm 2, Psalm 72, Isaiah 2, Isaiah 11, and Isaiah 65. The Jews stumbled over the spirituality of the kingdom of God in the Messiah. This was the rock of offense that dashed them

to pieces both nationally and personally. Nationally, they repudiated the king who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, dies on a cross, and exercises sovereign power by the preaching of Christ crucified. And nationally they perish in the judgment of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The kingdom is taken from them and given to the believing, largely Gentile church (Matt. 21:43). Personally, the Jews who want to place an earthly crown on Jesus' head "went back and walked no more with him" (John 6:66).

To His closest disciples, Jesus then put a question that concerned the kind of king and kingdom they desired: "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67) He puts the same question to us today.

To Reformed and Presbyterian Christians today, the warning is necessary: Beware, lest at this late hour in history you also stumble

over the spiritual kingdom of Christ Jesus!

Where now, we must ask, is this spiritual kingdom of God? Where does God rule by the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ? Where are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? Where is truth? Where are the people who bow willingly to God in Christ by believing the gospel and obeying the law—obeying the law *truly*, with love in their hearts? Where on earth is there at least the small beginning of God's being all in all?

Where in the past 2000 years or so of New Testament history, since Jesus was exalted as king at God's right hand in the ascension, have there *always* been these realities? Where *alone* have these things been found?

The answer to these questions will be the identification of the kingdom of God.

The answer is: the church.

The church is the kingdom of God.

This is the confession of the Reformed faith both among the Reformed churches and among the Presbyterians. The Heidelberg Catechism identifies the keys of the kingdom of heaven as the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline by which believers are accepted of God in the fellowship of the congregation and by which unbelievers are excluded from the fellowship of God and excommunicated from the church. Thus this creed identifies the church as the kingdom. Thus also, the Catechism teaches that the kingdom is spiritual (L.D. 31). The same Reformed confession explains the second petition of the model prayer, about the coming of the kingdom, this way: "preserve and increase Thy church" (L.D. 48).

The Belgic Confession establishes the identification of the church as the kingdom as Reformed orthodoxy when it declares Christ to be the king of the church: "This church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects, cannot be" (Art. 32).

The Westminster Confession of Faith is explicit: "The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel ... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ" (25.2). Significantly, the Confession immediately adds, "the house and family of God." The phrase that is added is significant because it shows that the Confession has its eye on I Timothy 3, where the phrase is found. And I Timothy 3 is describing and prescribing the life of the *instituted church*, the church with bishops and deacons. Westminster teaches that the local congregation that displays the marks of the true church is the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the world.

Recent hesitation on the part of Reformed and Presbyterian people bluntly to confess, "The church is

the kingdom of God," is strange and ominous departure from the Reformed confessions. Much more reprehensible is the open criticism of this confession by Reformed and Presbyterian officebearers, who have vowed to uphold the confessions.

This recent hesitancy and opposition are also notable departure from the doctrine of Luther and Calvin. Calvin's commentary on Amos 9:13 expressed the Reformer's position on the matter of the church and the kingdom.

The Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that the kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the Church of God, *which means the same thing*, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign (emphasis added).

His commentary on Amos 9 is especially telling because the passage prophesies the coming kingdom of the Messiah and describes this kingdom in the typical language of earthly power, prosperity, and peace that both kinds of millennialists love to take literally.

Louis Berkhof accurately described the view of the Reformers:

The Reformers did not formulate a doctrine of the Kingdom as clear-cut and elaborate as that of the Middle Ages, nor could they point to such a concrete embodiment of the earthly reign of Christ as the Church of Rome. They agreed in identifying it with the invisible Church, the community of the elect, or of the saints of God. For them it was first of all a religious concept, the reign of God in the hearts of believers, the *regnum Christi spirituale* or *internum*. At the same time they did not overlook its ethical implications, as Ritschl often contends. One and all they opposed the fanatical attempts of the Anabaptists and their kin, to set up in the world an external Kingdom of God; and recognized the legitimacy of the authority of civil governments, though their relation to the

Church was a matter of dispute among them. They did not expect the external visible form of the Kingdom of God until the glorious appearance of Jesus Christ (*The Kingdom of God*, Eerdmans, 1951, p. 24).

In identifying the church as the kingdom, the Reformed confessions are biblical. The issue is virtually decided by Scripture's teaching that the kingdom is not earthly, or carnal, but heavenly and spiritual. Some of these passages, I have brought up and explained in previous editorials.

One outstanding text is that which appears as the heading of each of the articles in this series: "Who ... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). When Paul wrote the Colossians that they and all believers had been translated by the gospel into the kingdom of God's dear Son, what did those Colossians understand by "the kingdom of God's dear Son"? What did they understand this kingdom to be when the apostle declared that the main blessing to be enjoyed in this kingdom is "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (v. 14)? Does anyone suppose that the Colossians understood the kingdom to be some earthly rule that dominated culture and "Christianized" society? Does anyone question that the Colossians understood the kingdom to be Christ's church?

In addition to the texts that teach that God's kingdom is spiritual, the following passages of Scripture are among those that plainly teach that the church is the kingdom of God. There is the well-known word of Jesus Christ to Peter after the disciple confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto

thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18, 19).

The passage explicitly mentions the church: "I will build my church." To the church is given "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." These keys are the spiritual power to bind in sin or loose from sin and thus admit into or exclude from the kingdom of heaven. Only the kingdom itself exercises its keys. The church, therefore, is the kingdom of heaven. This is confirmed by the Lord's teaching that the church fights the gates of hell. The church fights the gates of hell inasmuch as she is the kingdom of heaven fighting the kingdom of the devil, sin, and death.

The beatitudes in Matthew 5

and indeed the entire "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7 identify the church as the kingdom. This sermon by the king of the kingdom Himself describes the law and life of the kingdom of heaven. And this law and life are the law and life of the church.

Likewise, all the parables of Jesus prove that the church is the kingdom. The parables teach various aspects of the kingdom of heaven: "The kingdom is like unto" And the realm thus described, the realm where these aspects of the kingdom are reality, is the church. To take one example, where is it that the king forgives his servants ten thousand talents so that the servants are called to forgive each other, as is taught in the parable in Matthew 18:21-35? Christ Himself gives the answer in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my

name" and where Christ is "in the midst of them." This realm—the kingdom of heaven—is emphatically not a legendary godly Scotland, or a mythical Christian America, or a "Christianized" world, or a fantastic Jewish state in Palestine. It is the church. It was the church in Jesus' day, no matter how numerically small, physically powerless, and culturally insignificant by the standards of man. It is the church today. And it will be the church until the day that Christ returns.

Once more, by the church is meant the universal body of Jesus Christ made up of all the elect who believe the gospel and obey the law as this body manifests herself in the local congregation of believers and their children.

The church is the kingdom of God.

— DJE 

Letters

■ Good Gifts to the Wicked, and the Love of Jesus

I am a British subscriber to the *Standard Bearer*. After finding the magazine difficult going at first and nearly canceling the subscription at one point, I now find it a real source of blessing and look forward to receiving it.

My query is this. I can follow the theology of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) for 95% of the way. In particular, your doctrine of the covenant is the only one I can find scripturally satisfying. I also agree with your emphasis on the antithesis. What I find very difficult to go along with is the idea that God does not display at least His basic good/kind/loving naturedness in His dealings with the wicked. I agree that He is angry with them every day. But it

seems to me that it makes God vindictive to teach that He gives good things to the wicked in His hatred and only to make matters worse for them in the day of judgment. The closest analogy that I can think of is our treatment of a condemned criminal. We would hate him and want rid of him insofar as he is unrepentant. But we would not withdraw the common civilities from him and would treat him kindly while he is on death row. Can we not say the same of God in His treatment of the wicked? The good things that He gives are a testimony of His goodness, but the evil use made of these things by the wicked will conduce to their greater condemnation and to the justification of His dealings with them.

My second difficulty is this. If Jesus did not love the wicked, but hated them, how could He have kept the law, which He emphasizes

consists of love to all, including our enemies and those who persecute us? He taught us that by loving our enemies we are imitators of the Father.

Presumably, the PRC must have thought through these issues, but I have not come across a precise answer to my problems in the *SB*. Your response to my questions will be greatly appreciated.

Stuart R. Clegg
Durham, Great Britain

Response:

The many natural and material gifts that God gives to the reprobate wicked, who hate Him and change the truth of Him into a lie, are good gifts. I refer to such gifts as life and health, capability of mind and strength of body, rain and sunshine, family and friends. They are also so many evidences to the ungodly of the goodness of

the Creator. For their abuse of these gifts and unthankfulness for them, the wicked make themselves guilty of greater punishment both in this life and in everlasting hell. This is the teaching of Acts 14:17 and other passages.

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) recognize that God gives good earthly things to the ungodly and regard these things as good gifts of God's providence.

What we object to is the teaching that these gifts come to the reprobate ungodly, who hate God and worship and serve the creature rather than the ever-blessed Creator (whom they know), as blessings to them in the love of God for them. This is the doctrine of common grace that the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) adopted in 1924 and that almost all Reformed and Presbyterian churches now enthusiastically embrace. For rejecting this theory, the PRC were expelled from the CRC.

We deny that the blessing of God is to be identified with the possession and enjoyment of good, material gifts. Blessing is not in things. Blessing is the living Word of God with and in and through things, or the lack of things, that expresses God's attitude of love toward the person who receives, or lacks, material gifts and that makes the material gifts, or the lack of material gifts, *work his spiritual good in time and in eternity*. Blessing is the forgiveness of sins by the gospel of Jesus Christ and, on the basis of this righteousness, God's subsequent activity of making everything, good and bad, work together for the good of the forgiven sinner. Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered (Psalm 32:1, 2; Rom. 4:6-8). Blessed is this man and this man only. Blessed is this man in his spiritual life and in his earthly life, in things heavenly and in things material. Cursed are all others.

If the earthly life, physical health, and material riches of the

reprobate ungodly (who hate God, reject His Christ, and trample His law underfoot) are blessings, the death, sickness, and poverty of the elect saint must be so many divine cursings. But the Bible teaches that all things come to the believer in and with the blessing of God, out of the love that God has for him in Christ Jesus. God blesses the believer with poverty as well as with riches, with sickness as well as with health, with death as well as with life. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). All things are ours, who are in Christ, including the worst physical evil, death (I Cor. 3:21-23). All things are for our sakes, that is, all things come to us as blessing from God, specifically including the affliction that every child of God experiences (II Cor. 4:15-18).

The good, clear, and necessary implication of these passages is that *nothing* comes to the reprobate ungodly, who is outside of Christ, as a blessing. All things, the good as well as the evil, come to him in the divine wrath. All things work together for ill to him. Certainly, this takes place according to God's purpose and by God's just judgment. Proverbs 3:33 declares that the curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked. The curse is in their *house*. It is in their everyday earthly life—their family, their eating and drinking, their riches and comforts, their work and play. The theory of common grace puts the blessing of God in the house of the wicked. Scripture puts His curse there.

Psalm 73 sheds light on one of the most powerful and dangerous temptations that ever threatens to undo the God-fearing man or woman. And what is this temptation? Exactly the notion that the prosperity of the ungodly and the adversity of the clean of heart mean that God is good to the ungodly and not good to Israel, *here and now, in this life*. That is, the

temptation that well nigh causes the believer's complete spiritual collapse is the notion that God blesses the ungodly in this life and, if He does not quite curse the godly, does not bless the godly in this life, or, at least, does not bless the godly as much as He blesses the ungodly. The notion is sheer foolishness and ignorance, bordering on bestial stupidity (v. 22). For a man's earthly life, circumstances, possessions, and conditions must be evaluated in the light of the "end" of his life (v. 17). In all His chastising and plaguing of His elect Israel in this life with circumstances of poverty, troubles, lack, and sickness, "truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart" (v. 1). For He is guiding the God-fearer to glory (v. 24). In contrast, in all His loading of the ungodly with prosperity—the good things of earthly life—God is not good to the ungodly in the sense that He is blessing them. For He is setting them in slippery places; He is casting them down into destruction (v. 18).

No more deadly mistake can a man make than to assume that God loves and blesses him because he has it good in this life, because his eyes stand out with fatness. No more demonic and dangerous temptation lurks in the soul of the Christian than to determine blessing and cursing from his earthly lot. The heresy of common grace teaches this mistake and promotes this temptation. It is a pernicious error. The psalmist of Psalm 73, for all his troubles, could be thankful that no common grace preacher or theologian was around to explain the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the godly to him. Then his feet would have been entirely gone; his steps would have slipped.

The doctrine of common grace has less sense about earthly prosperity than does popular wisdom. Popular wisdom indicts the vanity of earthly riches in the saying, "The man with the most toys at death

wins." Common grace says, "The man with the most toys is the one most blessed of God."

As for Jesus' hatred of some persons, which you fear might imply His disobedience to the law of God, the explanation is, first, that He is God. As God, the lawgiver, He is not subject to the law. Specifically, He is not Himself subject to the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself." God has no neighbors. He has creatures. As God, Jesus is the one who, in hatred, has eternally reprobated some humans (Rom. 9:6-24). He is the one who, in hatred, will one day punish the reprobate wicked with everlasting hell (Rev. 20:11-15).

Second, as a man He is not an ordinary man but the Messiah, the servant of Jehovah, who has come to carry out the will of God with regard to mankind (John 6:38-40; Heb. 10:7). Neither during His earthly ministry nor now as exalted in heaven does He love all humans. He behaves unjustly toward none, but He hates some. Matthew 23 is evidence of His hatred toward some during His earthly ministry.


The "woe" in this chapter is expressive of damning hatred: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell? ... I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes ... [so] that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" (vv. 33-35). Incidentally, the passage denies that good gifts to the ungodly are blessings. "Prophets, and wise men, and scribes" are greater goods, surely, than rain and sunshine. Jesus sent these good gifts to those upon whom He pronounced woe in Matthew 23. But He did not send them as blessings to the "generation of vipers," in love for them, and with the desire that they be saved by the prophets. Rather, He sent these preachers of the gospel "*so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth.*" That Jesus' love for people is particular ought to be self-evident for everyone who confesses the Reformed faith. According to the Reformed faith, Christ died only for some. Those for whom He did not die, He does not love.

The argument that Jesus, as a man, must obey the law in exactly

the same way as we mere mortals are called to obey, proves too much. It proves that Jesus must pray for every human, that God will save every human without exception. But this conflicts with Scripture. According to Matthew 5:44, we must love our neighbors by praying for them, that is, praying for their repentance and salvation. But Jesus Himself tells us in John 17:9 that He does not pray for the world. In light of the context, He prays only for those given Him by the Father out of the world, that is, the elect. He does not pray for the reprobate ungodly.

Thanks for your encouraging words about the *Standard Bearer*.

Your questions are good, important questions. They are understandable questions in one who is just beginning to struggle with teachings current in the sphere of Calvinism, but which compromise and corrupt the truth of particular, sovereign grace and, thus, the whole of the Christian religion. Perhaps others will also profit from this discussion.

— Ed. 

The Calling (1)

The second aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in our salvation is that of the calling. The calling is that work of God bringing the regenerated sin-

ner into the consciousness of his salvation in Christ Jesus. Through the Spirit of Christ the triune God addresses the elect, regenerated sinner by the Word of the gospel, enlightening the understanding and drawing him out of darkness into the light of life.

When we continue the figure of the seed (of regeneration), as we considered from I Peter 1:23-25, the calling can be compared to the rain

and sunshine which fall upon that seed and "call" it to life and growth. The effect of the saving calling of God is also to bring the elect sinner into the fellowship of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:9), and thus into the consciousness of his salvation, including all that has to do with life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3). It is important to understand that we are speaking now of the effectual and saving calling, one aspect

in what is sometimes called the golden chain of salvation.

There is also an external aspect of that call which we must consider.

But we are speaking specifically of the Holy Spirit's work in our salvation, a work in our hearts, a work in our minds, a work that gives us the conscious participation of Christ's fellowship in God's covenant of grace.

That call has several beautiful characteristics, reflecting the amazing and beautiful nature of God's work in our salvation.

Irresistibly Powerful

The saving call is irresistibly powerful. It is the same powerful word by which God called the universe into existence. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). The same God who "calleth those things which be not as though they were" is the one who quickens the dead (Rom. 4:17).

By the power of His Word God calls *irresistibly*. Apart from that Word, no man will come. Of that we are reminded in John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." But the one whom God draws is drawn irresistibly. It isn't a matter of God casting out His Word and waiting to see if man might accept it. By the saving call He draws. He draws irresistibly. Christ said it. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

But let us not be mistaken. That irresistible call, that powerful drawing unto Himself, is not a matter of God drawing us like we might draw water through a straw. We aren't sucked into the life of heaven as helpless molecules. Nor are we dragged into heaven kicking and screaming in rebellion. God works His call in us whom He created rational, thinking creatures.

God draws us by making us willing. We are made willing by His call, so that we *come*. He calls His sheep irresistibly, so that they hear His voice and *follow* Him.

Gracious

That points us to a second characteristic of this saving calling. The calling is gracious. It comes to those who belong to the chief Shepherd, who is Christ.

Again, bear in mind, we are speaking not merely of the external call, not merely of the *means* by which God calls His people. We are speaking of the saving calling.

The gracious character of the saving calling is clearly taught in II Timothy 1:9. There the inspired apostle points us to the power of God "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The very origin of the calling is grace — "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Notice, that grace is *in Christ Jesus*. That is always the case! There is no grace apart from Christ!

God looked upon us in Christ with a view to calling us into His fellowship. The call is gracious in giving us to see that Savior. The call in itself — again, the saving calling — is a mighty, saving power, bestowing upon us all good in Christ. The end of that calling is eternal life (I Tim. 6:12) and the kingdom and glory of our blessed God and Savior (I Thess. 2:12). It is by His gracious work in calling us, that God by His Holy Spirit gives us peace (Col. 3:15) and the blessedness of true spiritual freedom (Gal. 5:13).

Particular

All these things remind us that the saving calling is also particular. No, no, we don't preach only to the elect. Don't confuse now the external call of the gospel with that subject that we are now consider-

ing — the saving call. The external call of the gospel, the preaching of God's Word, is proclaimed promiscuously, wherever God in His good pleasure sends it. There are many who come under the external call to repentance and faith who do not come under the power of the saving calling.

The saving calling is particular. It works salvation in God's elect and regenerated people. Romans 8:28 tells us that "whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." It draws them to the consciousness of their blessed redemption.

That truth is further expounded by the apostle in Romans 9, where in verses 22 and following Paul points to the sharp distinction between "the vessels of wrath" whom God has "fitted to destruction," and "the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Those vessels of mercy, writes the inspired apostle, are we whom God has called.

The same distinction is made in I Peter 2:9, where the calling is spoken of in terms of being brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Those who are called, those who are given to see the light of Christ, are those who belong to that "chosen generation," that "royal priesthood," that "holy nation," that "peculiar people." They are, in other words, the elect in Christ Jesus. And they stand in sharp distinction from those who do not receive that saving calling, but who rather, according to verse 8, "stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

Immutable

The saving calling is also immutable, unchangeable. God never goes back on His Word. We read in Romans 11:29 that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That confirms Romans 8:29. Whom He calls, God most

certainly justifies, and whom He justifies, He unquestionably also glorifies.

This is true because God's Word is sure.

His Word, after all, is God's living voice in and through Jesus Christ.

That ties the surety of the saving calling back to its irresistible power. The Spirit works *by the Word*. But that Word is not merely the speech of men. It is not even the written Word of the Scriptures. But it is the personal Word of the living God.

Christ is the one who calls. There is a reason why the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is named "the


Word." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:3,4). He is the one who calls powerfully and irresistibly out of darkness. His is the light which dispels the darkness in our hearts and minds.

Christ speaks the saving calling, with His Spirit working that Word in our hearts.

Christ is the one who says (John 10:27), "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." His sheep don't merely hear *about* Him. They hear *Him*. They hear Him by means of the preaching of the gospel.

So we are brought to the consideration of the external aspect of the calling that we must continue in our next article, God willing.

How does God call His people? He calls them externally through the preaching of the gospel and internally through the operation of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

By means of the physical preaching of the gospel to our physical hearing, Christ speaks His Word. With His Holy Spirit working in our hearts, He speaks powerfully, efficaciously. He calls savingly. So He brings us to a consciousness of our blessed relationship with Him. 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Zero Tolerance

We've all heard of "zero tolerance" in the public schools. There is zero tolerance for any kind of guns or other weapons in school. In fact, there is a "zero tolerance" even for discussing of guns by the pupils in the schools.

Some of the instances of carrying out of this policy seem absurd to the extreme. One young lad was suspended from school for several days for taking a gun to school—a toy gun about an inch long of the Cracker Jack toy variety. Another young lady was suspended when someone saw that she had a small knife in her lunch box to cut up an orange. Yet another, a top student in class, was not permitted to attend her graduation exercises after it was observed that there was a small kitchen knife on the floor of

her car—presumably forgotten there when she came to school that day.

Is this the answer for school violence? Some horrific crimes have been committed in some of the schools of the land. But is "zero tolerance" the solution—or just a bandaid covering up deeper problems?

Charles Colson, in an article titled, "Merchants of Cool," (*Christianity Today*, June 11, 2001) presents some interesting observations.

This spring's school shootings have again left Americans asking painful questions: What's driving kids from good homes to kill their classmates?

There was the predictable cry for gun control from some politicians. Most Americans no longer buy this; they know gun control isn't the solution, but many citizens haven't a clue what is. And we'll continue to be both perplexed and fearful until we face an uncomfortable fact: We share the blame for schoolyard slaughters by allowing our kids to form

a parallel culture almost completely free of adult supervision.

Leon Botstein, president of Baird College, characterizes American schools as "a gang in which individuals of the same age group define each other's world." Within this alternate universe, kids are free to determine not only hair and clothing styles, but also moral fashions: They decide the rules governing sexual behavior and drug and alcohol use. And if those rules sometimes produce bloodshed as at Santana—well, we shouldn't be surprised....

For contemporary teens, the highest value is simply being "cool." How do kids define *cool*? It's an amalgam of ideas fed to them by corporations that covet the \$150 billion-a-year teen market. As the PBS documentary *The Merchants of Cool* reports, these are the clothing manufacturers, media empires and soft-drink companies that make it their business to know what teenagers want....

These versions (teenage models on television and movie screens—GVB) are the templates for two TV stereotypes: "mooks" and "mid-riffs." The mook is a character created to appeal to adolescent

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males, characterized by "infantile, boorish behavior" and trapped in a state of "perpetual adolescence." Mooks are a staple on MTV. The midriff is, as Rushkoff describes her, a "highly sexualized, world-weary sophisticate" who manages to retain a bit of the little girl. Shows like *Boston Public* and singers like Britney Spears provide America's midribs-in-training with role models to emulate.

Even more menacing are the McMorals taught by electronic game companies. Col. Dave Grossman, a former Army Ranger who researched the psychology of killing in combat, says violent video and computer games are conditioning teenagers to be violent. And then along comes Hollywood, telling kids through movies like *Teaching Mrs. Tingle*, *Urban Legend*, and *Scream II* that violence and killing are cool.

What is the answer according to Colson?

Christians ought to be the first to see the dire consequences of this parallel teen culture. Shootings like those at Santana and El Cajon are merely the most visible expressions of what happens to kids who live in their own dangerous universe.

What can we do? Start by monitoring what your kids watch on TV; you may end up tossing the TV into the trash. Extreme, yes, but better than giving the merchants of cool a free run at our kids. Second, insist on family time. I know one family, devout Christians, who have meals together no matter what teenage activity is sacrificed. Third, keep hammering away at those who market tawdry values to our kids. Remember what happened after Columbine? The WB TV network immediately yanked—temporarily, at least—an episode of a show that involved school violence.

There's nothing inevitable about our parallel teen culture. If merchants shape our kids' beliefs and values, it is because we let them. Unless we do more to keep them in our universe, the merchants of cool will sell our kids more than just hip clothing and hairstyles.

They'll be marketing a vision that leads to savagery, promiscuity, and death.

Beyond those useful conclusions, one can add some more.

The "zero tolerance" for weapons in the schools was preceded by a "zero tolerance" for the ten commandments—under the guise of "separation between church and state." That's no coincidence. When the obvious and clear morality of the commands is rejected because of its tie to that which is religious, is it any wonder that a generation arises which devises its own morality?

It is also more than passing strange that there is "zero tolerance" for weapons and mention of weapons in the schools—but no "zero tolerance" for these same things on TV, in the movies, and in video games? The most horrible things are portrayed under the guise of using one's "freedom of speech." The mass media entices the youth into all kinds of corruptions—and then society wrings its collective hands at the corruptions seen in today's youth.

Colson correctly emphasizes that there must be a "zero tolerance" for such immoral and violent presentations *within the homes*. Parents must also recognize how the "merchants of cool" are affecting our youth as well. One cannot help but notice that the dress, jewelry, attitudes, and morality promoted by the "merchants of cool" are obvious in our own churches and with some of our youth.

Nor is it enough to have "zero tolerance" of these evils within the homes. There must be positively an emphasis on family devotions, faithfulness in church attendance, and participation in the society life of the church. Where this is seen in our homes, we will also rejoice in beholding covenant youth walking a life of separation from those things worldly and a seeking of the heavenly.

■ The Right to Practice Religion

There is so much emphasis to day upon people's "rights." One has, presumably, the "right" to do as he/she will with one's body (as: the "right of abortion" and "freedom of choice"). One has the "right" to take God's name in vain ("freedom of speech"). One has the "right" to portray vividly all sorts of immoral sexuality and all sorts of terrible violence (again: "freedom of speech"). But increasingly there is opposition to the "freedom" of being religious. The press has made much about the practice of religion of the attorney general, John Ashcroft. In the *Denver Post*, May 16, 2001, there is a commentary by Linda Chavez about the criticism which has been given.

John Ashcroft's Pentecostal Christian faith makes some people uncomfortable. You could feel it in the way some senators gingerly danced around the issue when Ashcroft was nominated to be attorney general.

Although they didn't always say so directly, some of Ashcroft's critics implied that because of his deep faith, he might not be fit to serve in the Cabinet. "He would be charged with upholding and fully enforcing the constitutional rights and liberties of faith groups that he clearly judges to be wrong and in need of correction," worried one liberal critic during Ashcroft's difficult confirmation battle. And the criticism hasn't abated since.

Now, Ashcroft's faith has sparked the attention of the *Washington Post*, which recently devoted a front-page article to the attorney general's daily Bible study group. "Bible sessions with staffers draw questions and criticism," warned *The Post*.

It seems Ashcroft holds an informal session in his office or a nearby conference room each morning, before work, where participants discuss Scripture. The meetings are open to whoever wants to attend. While most at-

tendees are evangelical Christians, like Ashcroft, at least one is an Orthodox Jew, who says "growing up in the circle I did, I didn't have a chance to study other religions, so it's very educational to me."

So why is this informal Bible study group front-page news? Apparently some Justice Department employees aren't happy their boss is exercising his faith at work. One anonymous critic told *The Post*, "It strikes me and a lot of others as offensive, disrespectful and unconstitutional. ...It at least blurs the line, and probably crosses it."

Now, mind you, the attorney general hasn't mandated attendance at these sessions, and most of his top aides have never attended. Nor has he sent out an agency notice on the meetings, which might be viewed by some as applying official pressure to attend. But just as some folks get to work a little early to sit around the cafeteria over coffee while they


discuss the previous night's basketball game..., Ashcroft and his fellow Bible students meet to "read, argue, memorize and pray."

Surely Ashcroft's activities are protected by the First Amendment. Do his critics really mean to forbid Cabinet officials — or any government employee — from praying on the job if they choose, or doing so in the presence of others, so long as it is voluntary? Or is prayer permissible only if it's silent? Or done when no one else is in the room?

I'm sure none of the people criticizing Ashcroft would like to think that their attitude toward the attorney general is in any way motivated by religious bigotry. But I'm not so sure. It's hard to imagine that anyone would be exercised if the attorney general were running a little transcendental meditation group before work each morning, but somehow the thought that he might be discuss-

ing Mosaic law or Christ's dictum to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," sends shivers down the spines of some.

It does shock one to observe the intense hatred for things religious—especially when Christianity is involved. All of this should be to us an indication of things to come for the Christian. People are "free" to do whatever they please — except have a public display of one's religious convictions. Perhaps it will exclude one from governmental office. And the time may come when it will be the cause for imprisonment for those who openly acknowledge their union to Christ.

Chavez rightly concludes, "It's no less wrong to forbid pious persons from attending devotional meetings on their own time than it would be to require the non-religious to attend such services." 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

"Kings and princes, bow before Him..."

(Psalter number 405)

Growing up in the 1950s, I thought the King James Version of the Bible was delivered directly from the hand of God. I was more than a little disappointed when the minister would exegete Scripture, instructing how a certain word or verse in the KJV could better be translated

such and such. To find out that the KJV was a translation from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts and other earlier translations cast an aura of suspicion around an otherwise perfectly elegant book. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls by a couple of shepherd urchins did little to allay my fears that sooner or later something was going to crop up to destroy the credibility of the KJV.

Books about the history of the KJV or earlier translations were not

readily available fifty years ago. It was not until the early 1970s that popular accounts about men who were important to the development of the English Bible appeared on the publishing horizon: *Devil in Print*, *Ink on His Fingers*, *The Bible Smuggler*, and *The Beggars' Bible*. These, however, were fictionalized accounts and necessarily lacked the authenticity and weight of careful research. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* took up an important place on our shelf at home, but it was used

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mostly for research. Although books about Martin Luther and John Calvin were more accessible (Bainton's *Here I Stand* comes to mind), most of the books featured their lives rather than the specific work that went into translating the Bible. Anything published about the contribution of Johann Gutenberg and the companion art of printing to the spread of the Bible was almost non-existent. Men like William Tyndale, who put their lives on the line for the cause of reaching the "plowboy in the field," occupied but a paragraph or two in a tattered Church History textbook. Yet, it is important for us as Reformed people to remember how God preserved His inerrant Word through the passing years by means of devoted and brilliant men. And the history, well told, is thrilling.

With the publication of his new book, *Wide as the Waters*, author Benson Bobrick has done just that. In a very readable volume, liberally seasoned with interesting and carefully researched anecdotes, Bobrick takes a fresh approach to relating the history of the English Bible. *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (Simon & Schuster, 379 pages, \$26.00) is a titan of a work, complete with appendices, notes, comparative translations (riveting reading for Bible lovers all by itself), and a hefty bibliography.

The text itself, a mere five chapters comprising fewer than 300 pages, reads as smoothly and easily as a novel. Beginning with Wycliffe's translation from St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate in the late fourteenth century, Bobrick traces the development of the English Bible through the work of Tyndale, Coverdale, the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, and lesser known translations, culminating in the outstanding work of the KJV in 1611. In delightful prose, Bobrick shows how the KJV deliberately stood on the shoulders of these ear-

lier translations. Bobrick, quoting one Samuel Ward at the Synod of Dordt, writes: "Caution was given that an entirely new version was not to be furnished, but an old version, long received by the Church, to be purged from all blemishes and faults" (p. 237).

The source of the title for Bobrick's book, *Wide as the Waters*, is touching. Thirty years after Wycliffe's death, the Roman Catholic Council of Constance ordered his bones to be exhumed and burned on a little bridge over a tributary of the Avon River. From that vindictive incident came the prophecy (p. 73):

The Avon to the Severn runs
The Severn to the sea,
And Wycliffe's dust shall
spread abroad
Wide as the waters be.

Little did his enemies know how his work and influence would spread throughout the entire world—wide as the waters be.

The work of Wycliffe furthered by William Tyndale is a fascinating chapter in Bobrick's book. Here is a brilliant and fearless man defying the authority of the then-known church and advancing the cause of the gospel against all foes and detractors. Tyndale's translation of the Bible in tandem with the invention of printing—what Bobrick fetchingly calls "the handmaid of the Reformation" (p. 86)—drove him out of England and sent the forces of Henry VIII hunting him throughout Europe like a wild beast. How Tyndale, in God's divine plan, duped his enemies and smuggled into England copy after copy of the Bible in the English vernacular (with scathing notes against the pope penned in the margins) is the stuff blockbusters are made of. From Bobrick we learn that Tyndale was a gifted debater in defense of the truth, and that it is from Tyndale's translations that we have received many familiar phrases: "a man after his

own heart," "apple of his eye," "flowing with milk and honey," "to fall by the sword," and the adjective "beautiful" (p. 119).

The chapter on King James the man, the 54 translators he selected for his *magnum opus*, and the division of the work in translating the Bible is compelling reading. Bobrick is to be commended for giving the reader a biography of as many translators as is possible, and for putting them into a historical context. The men become real flesh and blood men who labored diligently and with a will on the great work which King James had assigned.

We meet Dean Launcelot Andrewes, who headed the Westminster group. Bobrick writes: he was "an immensely learned man who, it was said, 'might have been interpreter general at Babel...the world wanted [lacked] learning to know how learned he was.' ...A remarkable linguist, he eventually mastered fifteen languages, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee; had an encyclopedic memory...and was sought after by fellow scholars from all over the world.... He was also a preacher of great power—'an angel in the pulpit'..." (pp. 218, 219).

Bobrick introduces us to the child prodigy John Bois. "By the age of six he could read the Old Testament in Hebrew, and by thirteen he was competent in New Testament and classical Greek. At fourteen, he entered St. John's College, studied hard, often from four in the morning until eight at night, and in one week advanced from the first to the second level in Greek (a course of study that normally took a year). In the next month, he advanced from the second level to the third, which normally took two years" (p. 232). Bois worked on the Apocrypha—ahead of schedule. Bobrick tells us the human interest story that translator Bois was fastidious about his health and had "almost

an Hebrew alphabet of teeth" when he died (pp. 233, 234).

And so the chapter proceeds. We learn that the translators commissioned by King James were no second-rate scholars. One, a prominent man named John Overall, was so fluent in Greek and Latin "that he once admitted it was sometimes difficult for him to speak English at any length" (p. 223). Bobrick gives personalities to many of the distinguished scholars on King James' translating committee along with their impressive list of credentials. The author informs us that all the translators were ordained men except one. We meet them all, including the man (Andrew Downes) who deemed his stipend to be insufficient and refused to go on until he was compensated more generously (p. 245). We get to know the men who were close readers of texts, those who were "subtle weighers of words" (p. 246), the classical scholars, the men with miraculous memories, and the wits. Bobrick opens the door a crack to let us see their individual temperaments, abilities, and, yes, their faults and foibles. Each translator had his individual strengths; nevertheless, all had a penchant for following the king's orders and Bishop Bancroft's fifteen principles for translation (this list is found on p. 389).

The brightest and best, men most apt in languages, those with sterling character, and men dedicated to the work were conscripted for this awesome task. Checks and balances were in place as the different companies carefully referenced and comprehensively researched each other's work (Appendix Five: Richard Bancroft's "Rules to Be Observed in the Translation of the Bible"). "In working over their material, the translators consulted every known text, commentary, and translation, ancient or modern..." (p. 238). " ' If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the

Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New. These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, wherethrough the olive branches empty themselves into the gold'" (p. 249).

King James, himself fluent in several languages and a serious student of the Bible, took great interest in the work personally and was especially partial to the translation of the 150 Psalms of David. The work took six years, the men laboring faithfully from 1604 to the completion of the KJV in 1611. Bobrick writes:

When it was done, it surpassed all others in the majesty and music of its words. If Tyndale had managed to render the original Hebrew and Greek into the sound and sense of living English, those who followed him could do no better than amplify his strain. The King James translators were the last of that line, but some of their adjustments had the Midas touch. Sometimes they changed only a word or two, or merely the order of the words for rhythmic or dramatic effect; sometimes whole chapters were markedly transformed. (pp. 239, 240).

Bobrick praises the King James men for their "finely tuned ear" to hear the "just and enduring phrases" (p. 243). In another section he gives a blizzard of examples of the critical choices in words which the translators of the KJV made, concluding with, "In retrospect, almost all the choices seem unerringly right."

In the end, the King James Version was such a book that "if everything else in our language should perish it would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power" (p. 259).

It is not a stretch to conclude from this chapter by Bobrick that although the English went to Scotland to get a king, they, in God's good design, received a gift far greater.

Bobrick's main thesis, that the


development of the Bible in the vernacular so diminished the authority of clergy and governments that it paved the way for constitutional change in England as well as triggered the American Revolution, in no way impedes his gripping history of the English Bible.

Kudos to Benson Bobrick for his definitive book on this subject. Here is a book you will read thoughtfully, and refer to again and again in the years to come. Thanks be to God who raises up men of courage and conviction—and immeasurable talent—in the history of the church. We all are beneficiaries of their expertise.

Although the KJV remains an international best seller, it has taken its share of criticism in recent decades. Even within the PR churches, where its use is regulated, there are those who take exception to the exalted language and obscurities of the KJV. "It is not the language of the people" is the voiced concern. That concern was already noticed in 1611. Bobrick tells us that words like "verily" and "it came to pass" were already outdated in 1611, but they were deliberately retained because of their "antique rightness" for which the KJV has always been prized (p. 255).

Is it possible that we of the twenty-first century are accessories to "dumbing down" the language and can no longer appreciate its power and eloquence? Can it be that we no longer have "finely tuned ears" as did the King James men?

We must continue to use language which is well written and well spoken. We must seek out exact translations and precise word choices, especially when God's Word is at stake.

The King's English. 

Heritage Christian High School

In the providence of God, and by His grace, a new school will open its doors this fall. Heritage Christian High School, located this year in the educational wing of the Calvary Reformed Church in South Holland, will begin instructing students in grades nine and ten. The opening of this new school will go largely unnoticed in the world — the newspapers certainly will not promote it. The school will begin without great fanfare, and will scarcely produce a ripple on the educational scene. Yet, this new school is significant and is cause for rejoicing on the part of those who love God's truth and covenant.

The start of any parental, Reformed school is significant. Such a beginning comes only when there is a deep and experiential knowledge of God's covenant of grace. Believing parents and grandparents know their responsibilities. God has established His covenant with them and their children. Deeply conscious of this, believing parents bring their children to baptism to receive the sign and seal of the covenant. At that baptism, the same parents swear an oath before God to teach their children and to bring them up as His children.

Such knowledge of the covenant makes all the difference in the world as far as the basis of the

school is concerned. The Christian school is not a mission school, seeking to convert the unbelieving students. It is not an attempt to flee from the wickedness of this world, or even from the existing schools, however unsatisfactory the parents may find the instruction and atmosphere there. Nor is the Christian school an exclusive academy only for the brightest and best. It is rather a covenantal school, set up for the express purpose of rearing covenant children in the fear of the Lord. Such a school is not erected unless believers have a great love for God's covenant of grace and an unshakable conviction concerning its importance.

Secondly, the opening of a new school is significant because it means there is great commitment on the part of parents, grandparents, and many other believers — young and old. Founding a parental school is no small task. There is no easy way to establish such a school—no government funds, no government-provided building or equipment, no ready-made curriculum. Starting a Christian school is simply hard, hard work. It demands men and women who are willing to sacrifice. It demands men who are willing to serve, with no financial remuneration, long, long hours. It is a commitment that is long term—a lifetime of commitment to the cause.

Thirdly, the opening of a new Christian school is significant because of the governmental regulations that must be met. Christian schools honor the state as the minister of God. Such schools do not thumb their noses at the state.

They obey the regulations of the state—everything from building codes, to a well laid out curriculum, to certified teachers. At the same time, Christian schools are not slaves to the state. On the one hand, they go beyond the required academic minimums; on the other, they refuse to offer the God-denying subjects that the government desires, such as dancing and drama.

In the fourth place, the opening of a Christian school is significant because it means that willing and able teachers have committed themselves to this new work. It means that the parents have found teachers who are one with them in faith and walk, so much so that they can entrust their covenant youth to these teachers. These teachers not only *know*, they *love* the Reformed faith. They know the confessions and heartily agree with them. They maintain (must it be said?) that the Bible is not man's word, but the infallibly inspired Word of God. The parents have found teachers who have been trained to teach and who are capable of doing the work. These teachers have the necessary knowledge of the subject matter, and yet agree to develop and grow all the time they are teachers. Teachers have been found who love God and His covenant, and heartily desire to serve God by serving the covenant youth.

We say again—the opening of a Christian school is a significant event!

And if the opening of *any* Christian school is significant, the opening of a Christian *high* school

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is even more so. This is evident in Protestant Reformed circles simply from the fact that eleven Protestant Reformed grade schools are currently in operation, but only one high school. Soon there will be two.

The endeavor to begin and maintain a Christian high school encounters greater difficulties than that of a grade school. The difficulties fall generally into three areas: 1) finance (including building and equipment); 2) teachers; and 3) students.

A high school is more expensive to *start* because of the need of special equipment and more building space than is required in a grade school. It is more expensive to *run*, largely because of the lower student-to-teacher ratio. Grade schools have nine or ten grades of students whose tuition covers the faculty salaries; and only one teacher per grade, at most, is needed. High schools have but three or four grades. Plus, more teachers are needed. The level of instruction in high school demands so much knowledge and development that teachers need to specialize in certain areas, and that, in turn, makes it preferable, if not mandatory, to have more than one teacher per grade. The cost of educating one student is almost always higher in high school than in grade school.

The second great difficulty faced when starting a Christian high school is obtaining the necessary teachers. The teachers must be equipped to teach a variety of subjects, and to teach them well. Of necessity, the high school curriculum must be broad. One need think of only a few areas of the curriculum to get a grasp of the problem. In history, basic courses would include ancient, modern, European, and American history. Mathematics courses would include algebra, geometry, and some form of advanced mathematics. This list can be multiplied by looking at areas of Bible and church his-

tory, English and literature, business, social studies, physical education, music, and foreign languages. Teachers are the key ingredient to make this work. Their skills, knowledge, and energy are stretched to the limit in a small high school.

The third difficulty in a new Christian high school involves attitudes of students, and the parents with them. The problem is that students may be reluctant to attend a small new Christian high school. This reluctance may have many causes, but for students, the causes are primarily social. I recall well the social stigma of going to a high school which people had never heard of, and many could not pronounce. (Convenient? Calvinent? Covenant? Where is THAT?!) When a sports program did develop, we were regularly drubbed by every opposing team. And yet in many respects I had it easy because almost all my classmates and friends moved with me from grade school to high school. What if they do not? That makes it all the harder. For most teenagers, this is life-and-death stuff. The task of the parents is to adjust the attitude of the teenagers, so that they see the priority of godly, Reformed instruction over the relative unimportance of social difficulties, real or perceived.

Parents have concerns which may give them pause when making decisions about sending their youth to a new Christian high school. Will the school's academic standards slip below acceptable levels, with the result that the students do not gain sufficient knowledge in the subjects taught? Are there a sufficient number of classes taught to give the high school student a solid liberal arts education? Can the teachers adequately teach the subjects assigned? These are legitimate concerns, and are to be distinguished from such paltry objections that the school will not offer woodworking, auto mechanics, or cooking 101. Or, even worse,

that there is no interscholastic basketball or volleyball.

Notwithstanding the frivolous objections, it is proper for parents to concern themselves with academic quality. It is not acceptable that a school be sound in its Bible and science classes, but the quality of the instruction be poor. The reason for this is not that the parents are concerned merely about their children's future ability to make money. Rather, the parents demand that their children be trained for their service of God and His cause. They must be trained well. They must have not only a working knowledge of the various subjects, but also the Reformed evaluation and perspective that will equip them to live as friend-servants of God in an antichristian world. The students are covenant children, and the teachers have as their aim preparing them for a task of no less importance than the service of God now, and eternally. In the face of that, quite obviously, a poor quality education is totally unacceptable.

Exactly with such issues does an association for secondary education struggle mightily. Has God provided us with the large amount of money needed to start a high school? Is God providing us with sufficient money to support the school financially, so that we can pay our teachers and the bills year after year? Has God provided teachers who are not only one with us in the faith, but who are also gifted, dedicated, knowledgeable, capable, and energetic? Most importantly, will our school provide the kind of education for our covenant youth that God requires of believing parents? Only when they are satisfied that the answer to all the above is, "Yes," do believing parents open the doors to a new Christian high school.

A group of believing parents, grandparents, and others in the South Holland area have studied the questions for decades. They have arrived at the point where

they say, "By God's grace, yes!"

For what it is worth, as a very interested "outsider" who was part of the faculty of a new (grade) school some years ago, I am convinced that they are correct. The financial support is plentiful. Support for the school ranges across the generations. The curriculum is well laid out, more complete than I have ever seen in a new school. And the energetic teachers are, in my judgment, well qualified by God for the task. Heritage Chris-


tian High School is necessary for the proper godly instruction of the covenant youth. Thus I cannot but believe that God will bless this work. I urge the believing parents in the area to investigate the school, and send their covenant youth with thankfulness to God.

Reformed believers around the world rejoice over good news of the new Christian high school in South Holland. Well they may rejoice over a covenantal school, committed to the historic Reformed

truth of sovereign grace and the infallible Scriptures and to the truth of God's everlasting covenant of grace with believers and their children. No doubt they will also pray for it.

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Anyone interested in contacting the school may do so at the following address:

P. O. Box 87
Lansing, IL 60438. 

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

The Qualifications of Deacons (4)

Full of the Holy Spirit, Wisdom, and Faith

Because deacons serve as official representatives of Jesus Christ to His church, God requires His church to choose qualified men for that office. We have already noted that they must be men, and that they must be believing men who have received from God the spiritual graces of salvation in Christ.

One who receives such grace must and will manifest that grace in his life.

With regard to every child of God, this is the case. We *must* manifest it, to show our gratitude to God for salvation. And we *will*, for "it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness" (Heidelberg Cat-

echism, Lord's Day 24, Q&A 64). It is impossible because the manifestation of this grace is not our work, but the work of God in us. God does not give the graces of forgiveness, new life, and sanctification, without also giving grace to manifest that new life. We are saved by grace, through faith, not of ourselves, Paul teaches in Ephesians 2:8-9. He then continues in verse 10 to say: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And he reminds the Philippians in Philippians 2:13: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

If every child of God must and will manifest God's grace in his life, all the more must and will the *deacon* do so. He represents the holy and sinless God to His people — let the deacon himself be holy,

as God is holy! His life must be an example, to the people of God, of willing obedience to all God's commands.

Bearing all this in mind, we are not surprised that some of the qualifications for the office of deacon have to do with how he lives his life, that is, how he manifests God's grace in him. And to this aspect of the qualifications for the diaconate we now turn our attention.

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That deacons are required to manifest God's grace is clear from what Scripture tells us about the first deacons. They were to be men "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Two verses later, we read that Stephen was "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

In our last article we underscored that these verses indicate

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.

that the first deacons had *received* God's grace. It is equally true, however, that these verses indicate that these seven men *manifested* God's grace in how they lived. That they were "full" of faith, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit is obviously something that the early church could see to be true of them. If not, how could the early church choose these men for office? What would set them apart from other men as being eminently qualified for the work?

What was true of the first deacons must be true of deacons today. Deacons, do you live as though you are *full* of God's grace? Something which is full cannot hold more. You might respond: "We are weak and sinful vessels; we always need more of God's grace." True enough; we do. Every day we need it. And we can never have enough of it. Nevertheless, God can fill us to capacity with His grace — not in the sense of our never needing any more, but in the sense that we, by nature weak and sinful vessels, are filled to overflowing with that grace. It spills out! That is the point of the word "full" in Acts 6! Deacons, are you so full of God's grace, of the Holy Spirit, of faith, and of wisdom, that you overflow with it? And councils and congregations, is the fact that the men currently serving in the diaconate in your church are "full" of this grace the reason you nominated them for and chose them to office?

Of course, we do not mean to say, and Scripture does not mean to teach, that *every* man full of these gifts must be in the office. What a blessing to have a church in which every man is full of these gifts! But the point is, none may be put in the office of deacon who is not full of these gifts.



The question put to the deacons, whether they are full of these gifts, is a sobering question. What

man can be full of such things of himself? None. Fullness of such graces is itself the gift of God. To Him be all the glory and praise! Furthermore, the deacon knows his own weaknesses and inadequacies. Surely he does not think that at any given time it is evident that he is full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom.

Take heart, men! We are taught in Scripture that God will give these gifts continually, and in greater measure, in the way of our continual and fervent prayers for such. Having reminded His disciples that a man will rise at midnight to give food to a needy friend, rather than turning the friend away, Jesus says that God will do the same to us. Luke 11:9-13 reads: "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask break of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

I quoted this passage in full so that we might be impressed the more with Jesus' point: God certainly will answer our prayers! But notice also what it is for which we pray, what it is that God will certainly give us: the Holy Spirit! This passage shows that all God's children, deacons included, must pray for the Holy Spirit in the confidence that God will surely give it to them. Pray for much, and much will be given!

Inasmuch as faith and wisdom are particular gifts given of God by the Spirit, Jesus by implication instructs us to pray for them also, confident that they will be given

us. But particular passages of Scripture remind us to pray specifically for faith and wisdom. The disciples prayed, as we must, for greater and stronger measure of faith: "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). And James wrote: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). A beautiful promise! God will not upbraid; He will not rebuke us for asking, and cast our request back in our teeth unanswered. Well He might, for the fact that we stand in need of wisdom is our own fault. But He will not. Instead, He will give it — liberally! But we must make our petition in faith, not wavering.

The deacon — and any child of God! — who prays to be made full of these graces, and who prays his prayer sincerely, will be given that which he desires.



One prays the more fervently for needs of which he is aware. What are these gifts, and why are they needed?

The Holy Spirit is, of course, the third person of the Trinity, coeternal and coequal with the Father and the Son. He was given by God to the ascended Christ, and poured out by Christ upon the church on the day of Pentecost, to be Christ's agent in saving His church.

The work of the Holy Spirit, generally speaking, is twofold. First, God by the Holy Spirit works in us all the blessings of salvation. Regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification — all these gifts which comprise God's saving work in us are worked in us by the Holy Spirit. So every child of God necessarily has the Holy Spirit. Second, Christ by the Holy Spirit calls men to office in His church, and He equips them for office. The gifts He gives in this connection are all the qualifications needed to

carry out the tasks which God gives us in Christ's body. And again, every child of God has the Holy Spirit in this sense, for all hold the office of believers, and all have a particular place in the body. In this sense, however, the pastors, elders, and deacons of the church must have the gift of the Holy Spirit in special measure.

The deacon must be filled with the Holy Spirit in both senses — as a saved child of God, and as one called to office. He must have the assurance that his sins are forgiven, and have the strength to live a godly life; and he must also be assured that God has called him to the diaconate and given him the gifts necessary to serve in that office. If one asks, to which sense does Acts 6:3, 5 refer, when it speaks of the deacons and Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit, my answer is twofold. First, the two senses cannot be completely separated from each other; a place in the body of Christ is given only to those who are redeemed by Christ. By regeneration, one is brought into the body. Nevertheless, secondly, the emphasis in Acts 6 does seem to fall on the second aspect, that these men were particularly gifted for the work of the diaconate.

Deacons, surely you know your

need for the Holy Spirit! You must grow in spiritual graces — even faith and sanctification are given continually. Pray continually for them! And you know that you need grace to be qualified for the office you hold. Pray earnestly for it!

Wisdom is the spiritual ability to direct one's actions in such a way that one's goal is best achieved. The goal ought to be the glory of God in all that we do. Every child of God needs wisdom to seek God's glory in how he lives. That wisdom is found in the law of God, in the whole of the Scriptures, and in Christ. Also the deacon needs wisdom in living his life — he needs the ability to know how best to live unto God's glory as a deacon ought, manifesting that he is qualified for the office that he holds. And he needs much wisdom in the carrying out of the work of his office. His goal in this work is the glory of God, through the edification and care of the needy in the church. When confronted with the various circumstances and situations of the poor and needy, and in discussing with other deacons how best to help the needy, the deacon becomes very conscious that he needs wisdom. If he does not become conscious of his need for wisdom as he goes about his


work, he is a very poor deacon indeed!

Deacons, do you pray for wisdom? Fellow saints, do you pray for your deacons, that God will give them wisdom?

Lastly, the deacon must have faith. What this gift is I trust we know well. It is spiritual knowledge of and confidence in the truth of Scripture, and that all spiritual blessings are become ours for Christ's sake. We explained what it means that faith is necessary for a deacon in our last article, in connection with the need for the deacon to hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (I Tim. 3:9).

In this faith the deacon must continually be preserved and must continually grow. It is imperative, then, that the deacon pray for it, and that the congregation also beseech God to bestow a rich measure of it on the deacons in the church.



But up to this point we have noticed only what Acts 6 says about those qualifications of the diaconate in which God's grace is manifest. We must also examine the pertinent statements in I Timothy 3. That we will do in our next article, the Lord willing. 

Book Reviews



Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin: Volume 1, 1542-1544. Robert M. Kingdon, general editor. Thomas A. Lambert & Isabella M. Watt, editors. M. Wallace McDonald, translator. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. IL + 470pp. \$50 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

The consistory minutes of any church make interesting reading. When the minutes are the de-

tailed records of the proceedings of the consistory of the church in Geneva during the ministry of John Calvin, they are very interesting indeed, and instructive. The student of the Reformation will find these records fascinating.

A group of scholars headed by Robert M. Kingdon has completed the huge and difficult task of transcribing and then preparing a critical edition of the registers of the Geneva consistory during the time

of Calvin. Scholars now have access to all of the minutes in readable French. There are 21 volumes.

This book is the beginning of the ambitious project to publish the 21 volumes in English translation. It covers the years 1542-1544. In 1542, Calvin had just returned to Geneva from his exile in Strasbourg. Immediately upon his return in September, 1541, Calvin insisted upon a consistory, to establish order in the church. He

drew up ordinances for this consistory. The article that describes the office of elder explains the registers:

Their office is to watch over the life of everyone, to admonish gently those they see at fault and leading a disorderly life, and where it is proper make a report to the Company who will be assigned to make fraternal corrections, and then make them in common with the others.

The registers, on the other hand, make plain what Calvin intended with the office of elder.

The Geneva consistory met weekly, and more often when necessary. It consisted of elders, "men of good life and honest, without reproach and above all suspicion, above all fearing God and having good spiritual discretion," according to Calvin's ordinances; the pastors; a leading magistrate (syndic), who presided; an official of the civil government, to compel people to appear when summoned; and a secretary, to whom we are indebted for the minutes of the meetings.

The registers record the consistory's examination of the citizens of Geneva (who were also regarded as members of the church) on various charges or suspicions; the confession or defense of the one on trial; the testimony of witnesses; and the decisions of the consistory.

Men and women were summoned to answer to charges of practicing the Roman Catholic religion; blaspheming the (Reformed) gospel and its ministers; not attending sermons, or not attending them often enough; fornication and adultery; gambling; usury; singing indecent songs; wife-beating; hatred and strife with a neighbor; and otherwise living unholy lives.

Some cases must have struck even the consistory as outlandish. Tyvent Tondou, the local blacksmith, quarreled with his wife (over money!) late in the evening, beat her, and made her "jump out

of the window, which she did entirely nude through the window." The consistory gave both "strong remonstrances."

Claudaz appeared to inform the consistory that her husband "threatened to pull her nose off" because she refused to give the wastrel any more of her money.

Jehan Caliat denied that he drank 18 glasses of wine at breakfast at an inn and "gobbled the old cheese like a wolf." Like many of those brought before the consistory, Jehan lied shamelessly, and obviously. Rare was the sinner who honestly acknowledged his fault. Pierre Truffet was a refreshing exception. Asked about his gambling, he replied that "he has to have fun." But he assured Calvin and the others that he gambled only for drinks and then only on Sundays. He was admonished.

An aggrieved husband brought his wife before the consistory because of her conviction that she might sleep with all the men of the congregation. This was a doctrinal position. She had it by direct revelation from the Holy Spirit that sharing her body with all was the implication of the church's being one body in Christ.

A number of cases concerned the evil of "muttering" during the sermons. Evidently, those who remained Roman Catholics and others who had no delight in Reformed sermons, but were compelled to attend, expressed their displeasure by audible complaint as the ministers were preaching.

Calvin remains in the background in these minutes, although he is almost always present at the sessions (each meeting is headed by the list of those who are present). Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that he is the leading figure in the "Reform," as at the meetings of the consistory. A decision appointing the pastors to work at the plague hospital, virtually a death-warrant, expressly exempted Calvin. Calvin could not be

spared. A woman accused of the Anabaptist heresy angrily charged Calvin with persecution and false prophecy. One enemy of the Reformation, a simple woman, was summoned before the consistory for spreading the rumor that dancing was always going on at the home of Calvin. Another woman, examined concerning her Roman Catholic beliefs, defiantly asked the consistory "whether Monsieur Calvin is God."

Whenever the consistory was confronted with an especially difficult offender, it called on Calvin to instruct or rebuke. Claude Tappugnier frankly confessed that he believed Roman Catholic doctrines concerning salvation by works, praying to Mary, and praying for the dead. The register of Thursday, April 5, 1543 then notes: "Of which doubts he was relieved by Monsieur Calvin."

The consistory resolved the marital trouble involving the wife who had heard from the Holy Spirit that our spiritual oneness in Christ permits community of husbands and wives. The resolution included that "Monsieur Calvin gave them [husband and wife] beautiful admonitions from Holy Scripture, both together, and remonstrated with the wife, using firm respectable admonitions."

These consistory records highlight the struggles of the Reformed church as it emerged from the superstition and immorality of Roman Catholicism. They demonstrate the determination of the Calvinistic Reformation that the members of the church live holy, orderly lives. They demonstrate as well the conviction of Calvin and the Reformed church that discipline by a body of elders is essential for this holiness. The consistory took hold of the sins, and even the obvious weaknesses, of the members. There was real oversight. The article on elders in the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541" called for elders "in each quarter of the city in order to have their eyes everywhere,

which we want to be done." The eyes of the Geneva elders were wide open, not shut as much as possible to sin, scandal, and disorder, in order to avoid trouble.

There is admonition here for Reformed elders today. If we were to exercise the oversight of discipline as did the consistory in Calvin's Geneva, we might find that we needed to retain the stipulation in the Dordt Church Order that the consistory meet weekly.

The registers show the falsity of the popular notion that the Geneva consistory in the time of Calvin was tyrannical. Love for the people of God motivated the elders. More than once the minutes record touching instances of hateful neighbors reconciling with handshakes and tears, by the instrumentality of the consistory.

The errors in these ecclesiastical proceedings are glaring. One mistake was the assumption that all the citizens of Geneva were, by virtue of this fact, also members of the Reformed church. How futile, the disciplinary work with obviously indifferent, hardened unbelievers and determined Roman Catholics!

The second error was the involvement of the civil government in church discipline. A syndic presided. A policeman compelled appearance at the meeting of those who were summoned. And punishment for spiritual offenses often consisted of jail terms on bread and water. Regardless that Calvin and the Geneva church technically observed the rule, by sending off the offenders to the civil government for the prescribed sentence, this was grievous violation of the principle that Calvin himself incorporated in the 1541 ordinances:

And let all this be done in such a way that the ministers have no civil jurisdiction and use only the spiritual sword of the Word of God, as Saint Paul orders them, and that this Consistory does not derogate from the authority of the

Seigneurie or the ordinary courts, but that the civil power remain in its entirety.

This book is a valuable addition to the literature of the Calvinistic Reformation in English. ■

Straight & Narrow: Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate, by Thomas E. Schmidt. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995. 239pp. \$11.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

Such is the rebellion against God in Western society and such is the effort of the ungodly to convince the church and her members to call evil good, that the *Standard Bearer* does well to review *Straight & Narrow*. Thus is called to the attention of our readers a helpful book on homosexuality.

The book proves that Scripture condemns homosexual behavior as sin, especially in Romans 1:18ff., but also in Leviticus 18 and 20, I Corinthians 6, and other passages. The need for this is an indication of the apostasy of the churches. Clever theologians are arguing that none of the biblical passages condemning homosexuality refers to "committed homosexual union," or even to homosexual acts between consenting adults.

Schmidt contends that the fundamental wickedness of homosexual behavior, as of the homosexual movement, is that it rebels against the will of God ordaining marriage.

Homosexual acts ... depart from the only acceptable avenue for the full expression of sexuality, which is heterosexual marriage. The Genesis creation story provides the primary basis for a biblical perspective on sexuality, and both Jesus and Paul quote Genesis to support their affirmation of marriage as a permanent union between husband and wife. Paul's profound analysis of the human condition in Romans 1 maintains

that homosexuality falsifies our identity as sexual beings, just as idolatry falsifies our identity as created beings. For Paul, homosexual behavior epitomizes, in sexual terms, the revolt of humanity against God. It is sinful because it violates the plan of God, present from creation, for the union of male and female in marriage (pp. 161, 162).

The more outspoken and candid homosexuals openly declare the movement's war on the family. Schmidt cites Michael Swift: "The family unit—spawning ground of lies, betrayals, mediocrity, hypocrisy and violence, will be abolished. The family unit, which only dampens imagination and curbs free will, must be eliminated" (p. 49).

The chapter, "The Price of Love," informs the reader that the acts particularly of homosexual men are indeed, as the King James Version translates Romans 1:27, "unseemly." Although Schmidt is not sensational, neither is he squeamish. Contrary to the false, sanitized impression now deliberately being given by the media, especially television, mighty engines of the beast, homosexual men are promiscuous and vile. They are also visited with hosts of dreadful diseases and an early, painful death.

There is an examination of all the theories concerning the possible causes of sexual attraction to those of one's own gender. Schmidt notes that there is no scientific certainty, or even consensus, whether the cause is nature or nurture. But it makes no difference. Regardless of cause, the behavior is sin, and the sinner is responsible for his will and deeds.

Like other religious writers on ethics, including Reformed ethicists, who should know better, Schmidt hesitates to call the disposition, or orientation, itself sin. But it is part of the judgment of the gospel upon us that the depravity, or disorder, of the nature with which we come into the world is

sin and that we are responsible for this depravity.


With Scripture, Schmidt rejects the self-serving claim of determined homosexuals that homosexuals cannot be changed.

The subject is thoroughly researched. Statistics and social analysis are deliberately taken from secular sources. The language of condemnation is restrained. Compassion is urged.

Schmidt has keen insight into America's spiritual and moral de-

scend into the abyss. He concludes by observing that the only virtue now recognized by America is tolerance. Christians must disagree, but this will prove costly.

[Since] we find that God has revealed himself and his way in a book, we must place limits on our tolerance in the interest of truth. We should not expect this idea to prevail, or even that our culture will tolerate it much longer. But instead of shaking our heads and

lamenting the sorry state of the world, we should recognize that Truth is not meant to be applauded but to be nailed to crosses. And we had better know the Truth well. That means, first of all, knowing Jesus. It also means knowing the Bible, backwards and forwards, and far more deeply than most churches currently require. Finally, and not least, it means knowing well the larger ideas competing for the minds and hearts of people (p. 171). 

Report of Classis East

May 9, 2001

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 9, 2001 at the Southwest PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. C. Terpstra served as the chairman for this session. In attendance also were students from the church history class at Covenant Christian High School, as well as the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West.

Classis had the delightful experience of approving the organization of a new congregation. The consistory of Hudsonville PRC brought a request, signed by 40 families and 5 individuals, to or-


ganize a new congregation in the Hudsonville area. Classis appointed the consistory of Hudsonville PRC to organize this new congregation. Once organized, the new congregation will be known as the Trinity PRC. The delegates *ad examina* from Classis West were present for this occasion and readily concurred with the decision of classis.

Classis also had to deal with three discipline cases. This is never easy, pleasant work for the classis nor for the consistories who bring their requests. In each case, classis approved the requests of three

consistories to proceed to the second step of censure for one of its members.

Classical appointments were granted for the afternoon service for the new Trinity PRC. Classis also agreed to supply Randolph PRC for four of the eight Sundays requested by Classis West.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,318.55. Classis will meet next on September 12, 2001 at the Kalamazoo PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Sister-Church Activities

We begin this issue of the "News" by passing along our heartfelt thanks and congratulations to the newly ordained and installed Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland. First, we say thanks

because from a personal point of view we grew to know and love the brother during his four years of study at our seminary. He will be especially missed by those in the Hudsonville, MI PRC where he had his membership for four short years. And then we extend to him our congratulations on becoming the first pastor of our sister church in Northern Ireland. That service completed a whirlwind of activity that saw Mr. Stewart complete his

oral examination before our synod on June 13 and 14, with his commencement following that same evening. Then he and his wife, Mary, had to pack all their things and move to their new home in Northern Ireland on June 29, followed by his ordination and installation into the office of the ministry on July 4. This service was led by Rev. B. Gritters of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, who with elder Erv Kortering had flown there to be

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

part of that blessed event. Hudsonville's congregation also held a farewell program for the Stewarts on June 24. Some slides on Northern Ireland were shown, the Sunday School gave a special number, and Mr. Stewart was presented with a monetary gift intended for the purchase of a new computer. So on one hand we say farewell to the Stewarts, but on the other we say, we wish you the Lord's richest blessing as you begin your labors in the congregation of Northern Ireland.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a "Summer Seminar" on four consecutive Wednesday evenings, June 20, 27 and July 4, 11. The theme for these four classes was "The Believer and His Bible." These meetings consisted of a short presentation by Rev. M. DeVries, followed by a discussion and question period. Rev. DeVries first spoke on "The Inspiration & Authority of Scripture." This was followed by "The Providential Preservation of Scripture," "Which Bible? The Crucial Question of Translations," and "Believing Bible Study."

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI hosted a series of summer classes taught by Prof. H. Hanko on the evenings of July 10, 17, 24, and 31. Plans called for him to teach and explain the PR distinctives as they are developed

in his book, *For Thy Truth's Sake*, under the topic of "God's Federal and Organic Dealings with Men." Each week Prof. Hanko will emphasize different aspects of that theme and explain how it relates to Creation and the Fall, the Development of Sin, Salvation, and the Covenant.

Saturday, June 23, the Evangelism Society of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ sponsored a booth at the Big Splash in Ocean Grove to distribute our literature. Starting already at 7:00 A.M., two groups manned the booth throughout the day and were able to distribute a lot of literature. Pray that God will bless this, as well as all our evangelism efforts, and cause them to bear fruit.

The Evangelism Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA asked their congregation for help this summer. First, volunteers were needed to serve at a book table they were sponsoring every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at the Redlands Market Night. And then they needed proofreaders to help in the on-going work of reproducing a number of pamphlets and papers that are presently out of print and which they desire to make available for use for evangelism.

Mission Activities

Our churches' missionary to Ghana, Rev. R. Moore, and his wife were on furlough for six weeks this summer in the United

States. In addition to seeing family and receiving some needed rest, Rev. Moore did some work promoting the field in four public presentations in our churches. Speaking first on June 10 at the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, he followed that with stops in Grandville, MI on June 13, Hull, IA on June 20, and Loveland, CO on July 1. He also was given the opportunity to address our synod this June, as well as the council of his calling church, the Hull, IA PRC, and our churches' Foreign Mission Committee.


Congregation Activities

This summer the congregation of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL has been busy with a Bible memory project. Adults were to memorize Romans 8, while children memorized I Corinthians 13. Sundays were for organized reciting, and awards were to be given at the end of the summer for those who completed the project.

Minister Activities

We rejoice with Rev. Doug Kuiper and his wife, Teresa, serving in the Byron Center, MI PRC, on the birth of a son, Ryan Douglas, born on June 22.

The council of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI nominated the following trio for minister-on-loan to Singapore: Revs. denHartog, Gritters, and Slopsema.

Rev. K. Koole declined the call to the Lynden, WA PRC. 

Announcements

SEMINARY CONVOCATION

The PR Seminary will hold its Convocation on September 5, 2001 at 7:45 P.M. in Faith PRC. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

REMINDER TO PARENTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

The *Standard Bearer* is sent free of charge to young people who are away from home to attend college. Please inform the Business Office of your desire to take advantage of that opportunity.

REMINDER:

The annual meeting of the RFPA will be held on September 27 at 8 P.M. in Hudsonville PRC. Hope to see our subscribers from the west Michigan area in attendance.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 18, 2001 our parents,

**PROF. ROBERT and MARILYN
DECKER,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children, rejoice with them on this occasion. We thank God that they have been a source of love, guidance, and encouragement to us. Their godly example has truly been a blessing to us. We wish them God's blessing and all our love as they continue their lives together.

"Blest the man that fears Jehovah,
Walking ever in His ways;
In thy wife thou shalt have glad-
ness,

She shall fill thy home with good;
Joyful children, sons and daugh-
ters,

Shall about thy table meet;
Thou shalt see God's kingdom
prosper

All thy days, till life shall cease,
Thou shalt see thy children's chil-
dren;

On thy people, Lord, be peace."
From Psalter 360, Psalm 128.

✿ Douglas and Deborah Altena
Jared, Amanda, Rachel,
Michael

✿ Daniel and Denise Decker
Blair, Paige, Danae

✿ Timothy and Kathy Decker
Tyler

✿ Jonathan and Sarah Decker
Jordan

Jenison, Michigan

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by the Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa on Wednesday, September 5, 2001 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the classical agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 6, 2001, thirty days before classis convenes. An officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 4, on the subject of "The Covenant and Missions." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hull,

Mr. Don VerMeer

4149 290th St.

Boyden, IA 51234

Phone: (712) 725-2505.

E-mail: donver@heartlandtel.com

Rev. Daniel Kleyn,
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!

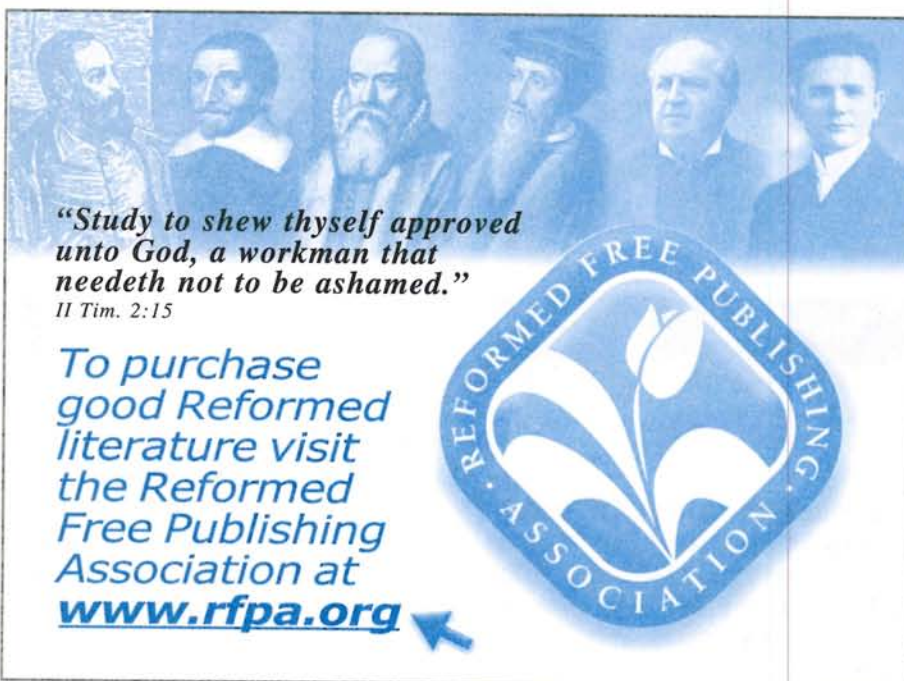
Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2001 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 12, 2001.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who for some other reason would like to be able to listen to a reading of the SB. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.



*"Study to shew thyself approved
unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed."
II Tim. 2:15*

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