

# THE *August 2003* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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# God's Word Never Returns Void

*For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:*

*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Isaiah 55:10, 11

**T**he word of God calls all who hear to faith and repentance, adding the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ to those who heed.

The same word is found in this 55<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah. Imitating the water vendors who sold water on the street, this chapter begins with a call to those who are spiritually thirsty. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy

wine and milk without money and without price" (v. 1). This water and food are the blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ. This call becomes more specific as the chapter progresses. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (vv. 6, 7).

This word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord never returns to him void, i.e., empty, without accomplishing anything. This means positively that the word of the Lord will always accomplish that for which it is intended.

What a significant truth! Many deny this reality both in their theology and in their personal, daily living. It is important not only that we understand this truth but that it guide us both in our theology and in our personal, daily living.



The Lord begins with an illustration from nature. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not

thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater...."

Our attention is drawn here to the water that descends from heaven upon the earth and returns to the heavens, so that there is an endless cycle of rain and snow. The water that comes from heaven does not return to heaven without accomplishing something. It waters the earth. It makes the earth to bring forth and bud. In this way bread is given to those who eat and seed to the sower for next year.

This marvelous phenomenon is explained first by the fact that God made the water and snow and designed them exactly to water the earth, to make the earth to bring forth so that there is bread for the eater and seed for the sower. But there is more. God is also sovereign over the physical creation. Neither the earth, nor the seed, nor the eater, nor the sower is sovereign. God is sovereign and in absolute control of His creation. According to His purpose and pleasure, He causes the water from heaven to bring forth food and seed.

So is it with the word of the Lord. "So shall my word be that

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goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

There is a word that goes forth from the mouth of the Lord. This word is the word of His covenant. It proclaims God's love for His elect people and His intention to live with them forever in intimate fellowship. It speaks of mercy and salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ. It calls all who hear to forsake their evil ways and turn unto Him in faith. It holds forth wonderful promises of salvation for those who do. This covenant word also speaks of wrath and judgment for those who persist in their sin. God in His covenant love strikes down in His wrath the ungodly, who oppose Him and His beloved people.

This covenant word goes forth from the mouth of the Lord. In the OT the Lord spoke this word through the prophets. Then He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, into our flesh and spoke through Him. After the exaltation of Christ into heaven, the Lord continued to speak through the apostles. This finished the revelation of God. But we still hear the word of the Lord from His very mouth today. This is true in that God's word has been infallibly recorded in Holy Scripture by the inspiration of the Spirit. And when ministers of the gospel called by Christ to their work faithfully expound those Scriptures, the Lord is speaking His word through them just as surely as when He spoke through the prophets and apostles.

Concerning that word the Lord says, "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Here the word of the Lord is pictured as returning to the Lord, even as the rain returns to Him. When His word returns to Him it will never return void, i.e., empty. This is because His word shall accomplish that which pleases Him, and

it shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sent it. This means, very simply, that there are certain things that please the Lord. To accomplish His pleasure, He sends out His word. This word shall prosper in these things. The word "prosper" describes a successful venture. And so it is that the word of the Lord never returns to Him void. It always accomplishes that which pleases Jehovah and the purpose for which He sent it out.

As it is in the natural realm with the rain, so is it true in the spiritual realm with the Word.



According to the purpose and pleasure of God, the word that proceeds from His mouth results, first, in the salvation of His covenant people.

The Lord has eternally chosen a people to Himself. It is His purpose to live with them forever in covenant friendship and fellowship.

To accomplish this, Jehovah God sends forth from His own mouth the word of His covenant. Indeed, that word comes to more than the elect. It comes to all nations. But it does come to His elect. Sometimes this word comes to them as children being raised in covenant homes. Sometimes that word comes to them as they live in the darkness of paganism. That word is always the same. It proclaims God's love in Jesus Christ for His own. It proclaims blessings of salvation and life to those who believe in Jesus Christ. It calls all to come in faith and repentance to the Lord to find His covenant blessings.

And that word never returns to Him void. It always accomplishes the purpose of the Lord to bring His own to salvation in Jesus Christ. When it calls to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, that word works repentance and faith in the elect of God. When that word proclaims forgiveness to the penitent believer, it gives the penitent to

know forgiveness. When that word calls to godly living, it produces godly living. When it proclaims peace and safety, this is brought to the people of God. And when it brings warnings of judgment, it is effective and powerful to turn His own from the way of destruction.

But we are well aware of another result that comes from the word of the Lord. Many respond negatively to the word. They do not heed the call to faith and repentance, but continue in a life of sin without Jesus Christ. The word has the effect of hardening them in their sins. The end result is that the warnings of judgment spoken by the Lord become realities in their lives.

We must not think that these are exceptions to the truth we have been considering. Even here the word of the Lord has not returned void. It is also the good pleasure and purpose of the Lord that His word harden the wicked hearts of some rather than soften and turn them to Him. This was obviously the case with Pharaoh. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:17, 18). Yes, it is God's good pleasure to harden some by His word. In Pharaoh's case it was to show His power in destroying him. Certainly God wills the hardening of some also to show His justice in dealing with their sins. But ultimately God wills the hardening of some for the salvation of His church. God will save His church by calling them out of and leading them through a world whose hearts have been hardened to God by His own word. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). This extends even to the hardening of hearts by the word of the Lord. Here we stand



before the awesome and much maligned truth of reprobation.

God's word never returns to Him void.




This truth provides comfort and encouragement, when the word of the Lord brings negative fruits of hardening. These negative fruits are seen on the mission field, in our own communities, and even in our own homes. We are inclined to become discouraged and disheartened. According to the standards of the world, much of our work to bring the word of the Lord to others appears to be nothing but a gigantic failure. Instead of becoming discouraged, we must remember that when the word hardens rather than softens,

it has not returned to the Lord void. It has accomplished God's pleasure and prospered in the thing whereunto God sent it. And we must be content to be used by the Lord to accomplish that good pleasure of His, as was accomplished through Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many of the prophets.

This truth must also guide us as we seek to maintain our own faith and bring others (our children and neighbors) to faith in the Lord. The power of the word of the Lord is grossly undervalued today, even in the church world. It is viewed as a weak means to solve the problems we encounter in our lives. Psychology, medicine, and many other human inventions are looked to as being the solution to depres-

sion, marital strife, family problems, and the like. Nor do many have confidence that the word of the Lord will be powerful to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ. And so some will add all kinds of gimmicks to the word to gain others to the Lord. Others will alter the message of God's word to make it more appealing to sinful man. This is a tragic mistake. The word of the Lord never returns to Him void. It is made powerful by the inner working of the Holy Spirit to accomplish all that the Lord in His good pleasure intends for us. By His word the Lord brings sinners to Himself. By His word the Lord also blesses us in Jesus Christ with life, peace, joy, and comfort.

Let us rely upon His word and prosper. 

## Editorials

# Reformed Spirituality: The Marks of God's Children

**W**ith the publication of a lovely little book entitled *The Marks of God's Children*, the Dutch Reformed Translation Society (DRTS) introduces a promising series of "Classics of Reformed Spirituality." All the books in the series intend to set forth the characteristic Dutch Reformed view of the Christian life and experience. The authors are sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed ministers and theologians. Either the books have never before been translated into English, or the English translation has long been out-of-print. Under the auspices of the DRTS, the translations are new. The books are not reprints of the old English texts.

First in the series is a slim volume by Jean Taffin, *The Marks of God's Children* (Baker, 2003).

### A Prominent Reformed Minister

Taffin was a prominent, influential minister in the Lowlands in the latter half of the sixteenth century. He worked in Belgium and the Netherlands on behalf of the Reformed faith and churches with such worthies as Guido de Bres and Peter Datheen. He corresponded with Calvin and Beza, seeking advice how to defend and promote the Reformed churches in the period of their beginnings in the Netherlands. It was also a period of severe persecution. With Datheen and Colonius, Taffin took

the lead in arranging the first Dutch Reformed synod in Emden in 1571. From 1573 to 1583, he served as court preacher and advisor to Prince William of Orange, father of the Netherlands. For a short while before his death in 1602, Taffin was a colleague in Amsterdam of James Arminius.

During the latter half of the sixteenth century, the empire and the Roman Catholic Church persecuted the Reformed churches in the Netherlands with one of the fiercest persecutions in all of history. Taffin witnessed this fiery persecution at first hand. He himself suffered the persecution, being forced to flee his homeland more than once. *The Marks of God's Children* reflects the

author's experience of persecution. There is graphic description of the cruel afflictions of the people of God. Almost half the book is devoted to suffering as a mark of the children of God.

### Assurance of Salvation

The subject is simple and basic: the marks that assure the believer that he possesses, and shall forever possess, the blessedness of eternal life promised by the gospel. Assurance of salvation is precious: "In this present life there is no greater joy or contentment, nothing more certain or necessary for rising above all the difficulties we face, than to know and feel that we are children of God" (p. 35).

The marks by which the Spirit assures every believer of his salvation are external and internal.

The external mark is membership in a true church of Christ. Taffin identifies a true church much as had Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of Faith, written some thirty years earlier than *The Marks*, in 1561.

Now we call that the church of Christ the place wherever God's Word is truly preached, wherever the sacraments are purely administered, and wherever the one God

is addressed in the name of his only Son, Jesus Christ (p. 36).

The internal mark is Spirit-worked faith in Jesus Christ with its fruits.

These witnesses of the Holy Spirit include the internal marks of a peaceful and quiet conscience before God, the experience of our justification by faith, our love for God and for our neighbor, our changed life, and our desire to walk in the fear and obedience of God (p. 40).

As regards the internal mark also, Taffin is in agreement with Article 29 of the Belgic Confession, which gives not only the marks of the true church but also the mark of the true Christian: "With respect to those who are members of the church, they may be known by the marks of Christians, namely, by faith."

Taffin guards against doubt of salvation by contrasting the shallow, temporary feelings of reprobates in the sphere of the covenant (those, in the language of Romans 9:6, who are merely "of Israel") with the deeply rooted, enduring affections of the elect believer. In this connection, Taffin correctly explains Hebrews 6:4-6. The passage does not teach the falling away of some who were regenerated and true believers, or, what amounts to the same thing, some who were covenantally united to Christ. If it does, it terrifies us all. Rather, the passage admonishes us by the example of the falling away of reprobates who for a time were mentally enlightened and emotionally moved by the gospel.

This is what happens with the reprobate. When they hear or read what the Bible says about God's rich grace for sinners or about the supreme glory of the heavenly kingdom, they are moved by it since they understand it with their minds. They even feel something of it, as the apostle says. But because these benefits are not for

them, those emotions and feelings do not take root in them. They do not penetrate their hearts. They disappear very quickly. They die. With God's children it is very different. They have a strong attachment to these blessings as belonging to them. That feeling may temporarily grow lukewarm and drowsy, but it can never die.... Whatever emotions, insights, and spiritual stirrings the reprobate ever have, they never have the Holy Spirit in their hearts as the Spirit who testifies that they are God's children. If they had this testimony, then they would be God's children and remain such, since the Holy Spirit can neither lie nor deceive (p. 65).

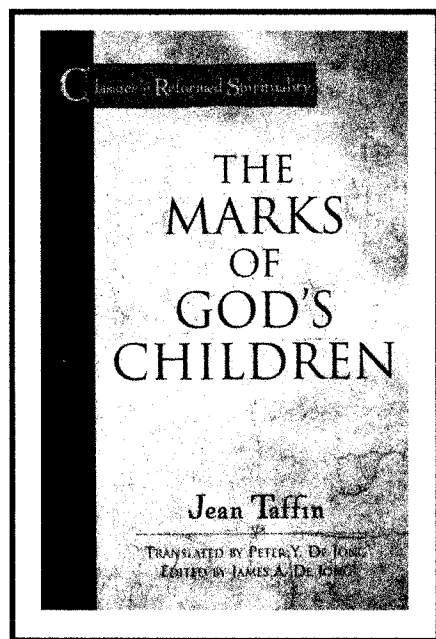
The second half of the book assures the Reformed believer that neither apostasy nor suffering, especially the suffering of persecution, is cause for doubt. The apostasy of some is no proof that the believer may also fall away. Only hypocrites fall away, never the true believer.

As regards the tribulation of the Reformed church and the suffering of the Reformed believer, these are not signs of God's disfavor, but the inescapable lot and glorious privilege of the church of Christ and of the children of God in this world. "The children of God, as long as both the devils and they remain in the world, should expect nothing less than that the devils will use every kind of instrument and power to persecute them" (p. 84).

The chapters on apostasy and suffering are powerful and comforting. The topics are urgent for Reformed churches and Christians today.

### Distinctive Reformed Spirituality

The characteristic Christian life and experience of the Reformed faith, as presented in *The Marks*, differs radically from the life and experience of superficial fundamentalism, triumphal postmillennialism, and giddy neo-Pentecostalism.



Genuine Reformed spirituality differs also from the life and experience practiced and promoted by some Dutch Reformed and Scottish Presbyterian churches. Some claim Taffin as the father of the movement known as the "*nadere reformatie*"—a second, or further, reformation of the church following the Reformation of 1517. Others deny the claim. But it is certain that Taffin did not countenance the obsession with introspection, the encouragement, if not glorification, of sinful doubt, and the reliance on mystical experiences that came to devastate at least some strains of the *nadere reformatie*, as these evils also devastated certain, prominent strains of Puritanism. The result was, and still is, churches, Reformed in name, full of members—*adult* members, *respected* adult members—who their life long doubt their salvation and refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper.

This life (spiritual death, rather) and experience are not Reformed, as they are not Christian. Nor is the religion that spawns such life and experience, and tolerates them, or even encourages them, Reformed Christianity. It is a caricature of Reformed Christianity: "What is thy only doubt in life and death?"

Taffin held that all believers, even the weakest, can and must have assurance of salvation. "Among God's children one who in his life has the very weakest faith will possess Jesus Christ completely and totally and will receive not just a small or halfway salvation but the perfect salvation of life eternal" (p. 54). For Taffin, the *desire* to be holy is evidence of the indwelling Spirit. "When you yearn for the work of the Spirit, then you belong to this Spirit and you are no longer condemned (Rom. 8:1)" (pp. 56, 57).

Like Calvin, Taffin was vehement in condemning the Nicodemites, those who profess the Reformed faith, but for all kinds of self-serving reasons remain in

churches that are false or apostate. Taffin, who was master of the apt, homely illustration, compared the Nicodemite to the wife who loudly professes the love of her heart for her husband, but meanwhile gives her body to another man. Consideration of the error of Nicodemism occasioned an urgent admonition to the reader, to join and "continue steadfastly in God's church" (p. 134ff.).

### Early Reformed Orthodoxy

The importance and interest of the book are not limited to its description of Reformed spirituality. From the book one also learns the doctrine held and taught by one of the earliest ministers and theologians of the Reformed churches in the Lowlands. The characteristic Reformed spirituality, of course, is fruit of the distinctive Reformed doctrine. Sound doctrine is fundamental. The craving of some today for spirituality while despising doctrine is as foolish as would be the love of the farmer for apples who hates trees.

Long before Dordt, Taffin boldly taught double predestination, reprobation as well as election:

By the illustration of the potter who has "the right to make from the same lump of clay some vessels of honor and others of dishonor" (Rom. 9:21), Paul shows that God has the right to choose the one for salvation and to reject the other. Thus, the reprobate destined for eternal doom has no right to contradict or complain against God (p. 107).

He defended the truth of the perseverance of saints, quoting Augustine: "He who made us good also moves us to persevere in the good. But those who fall away and perish have never belonged to the number of the elect" (p. 77).

"Faith," wrote Taffin, "is a gift of God and has its source 'in his exceedingly great power,' as the apostle Paul teaches (Eph. 1:19)."

He went on: "Faith comes only to the elect, as it is written, 'And as many believed as were ordained to eternal life' (Acts 13:48)" (p. 48). Taffin may have been a colleague of Arminius; he was no friend of Arminius' theology.

With all Reformed, indeed Christian, orthodoxy, Taffin conceived the kingdom of God as spiritual. In view of the widespread, and spreading, notion that the kingdom is earthly and political, it is worth quoting Taffin at length on this matter.

The Jews longed for the Messiah and prayed to God for his coming. For a long time God delayed, but finally he sent the Messiah. But he did not send the kind that most Jews and even the apostles expected—a conqueror in battle, another David, to deliver them from the yoke of the Romans. He did not send one who like Solomon would be resplendent in wealth and glory. Instead, God sent a Messiah who, having conquered the devil, sin, and death, established a spiritual kingdom of everlasting life and glory (pp. 58, 59).

For Taffin, the church is the kingdom of God: "This church, first of all, is often called 'the kingdom of heaven' because through the church, which could be considered its outskirts or gate, we enter heaven" (p. 36).

Taffin knew nothing of an earthly kingdom of God—a "Christianized culture"—being built by a common grace of God, at least, not in this book. He also rejected, beforehand, the erroneous teaching that the prosperity of the wicked must be viewed as a divine blessing by virtue of a common grace of God. This teaching, of course, prevails today as the veriest Reformed orthodoxy.

Taffin rejected this teaching as wrong and dangerous *practically*. The prosperity of the godless is a temptation to the suffering Christian to doubt the goodness of God to the Christian, and his own sal-



vation. Taffin quoted Augustine on the earthly prosperity of the ungodly: "There is no greater calamity than the happiness and prosperity of the ungodly; it is a strong wine which makes them drunk in their unrighteousness, and they incur thereby a huge amount and heavy load of God's wrath" (p. 127).

Insisting that we must judge both the temporal suffering of the believer and the temporal happiness of the unbeliever in the light of the coming eternity for both, Taffin called on Reformed Christians to *curse* the prosperity of the wicked:

Let us then curse the state of the rich man, as pleasant as it seems, and praise that of the poor, oppressed Lazarus as blessed, and let us look forward to the time when we will too be taken up into eternal glory. For the wicked there is nothing in heaven, for us nothing in this world (p. 129).

If we are called to curse the prosperity of the ungodly, that must be because the prosperity of the ungodly is accursed of God. We hardly dare to curse His blessing.

But perhaps Taffin was an early hyper-Calvinist.

One passage is doctrinally dubious. Taffin spoke of the proclamation of a "general pardon" in connection with the external call of the gospel (pp. 45, 46). Dordt

would clarify and establish that the death of Christ was not a general, but a particular atonement; that the proclamation of the gospel based on Christ's death is not the announcement of a general, but a particular pardon; and that the errors of a general atonement and a general pardon imply each other.

#### **Conniving at the Sin of the Prince**

Puzzling in the introduction to the work, which gives a brief account of Taffin's life and work, is a long paragraph detailing, without criticism, Taffin's approval of and involvement in William of Orange's remarriage. Prince William remarried while his first wife was still living and only "estranged from him." Taffin's conduct reminds one of the similar shameful behavior of Luther in the bigamy of Philip of Hesse and of Cranmer in the great marital matter of King Henry VIII. When ministers curry favor with earthly princes, supposing that the fortunes of the church depend upon these princes, invariably the Word of God is compromised and the name of God, dishonored.

The introduction acknowledges that the remarriage of William "caused some scandal." Indeed. The remarriage was scandalous. So was Taffin's participation in the remarriage.

Mention of Taffin's connivance

at the sin of adultery in an introduction to a work on Reformed spirituality virtually begs this observation concerning genuinely Christian and Reformed spiritual life. Reformed spirituality is first and foremost *obedience to the law of God*. It is obedience *from the heart*, but it is *obedience to the law*. The law of God includes the seventh commandment.

All talk about spirituality, experience, piety, godliness, and religious feelings, when there is impenitent disobedience to one of God's commandments, is just that: talk. "If you love me," said Christ, "keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He did not say, "Have warm feelings."

#### **The Good Work of the DRTS**

The translation of the book by Dr. Peter Y. De Jong is faithful and flowing.

The editing by Dr. James A. De Jong, which includes helpful notes, useful maps, and copies of appropriate paintings, enhances this attractive, significant volume.

Soon to follow in the series, "Classics of Reformed Spirituality," are books by Koelman, by Voetius and Hoornbeeck, and by Teellinck.

For information concerning the DRTS and its work, current and projected, write the DRTS, P.O. Box 7083, Grand Rapids, MI 49510.

— DJE 

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## BRF Family Conference 2004

**T**he British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) has asked that I announce and promote its family conference scheduled for August 13-20, 2004. A goodly number of the *Standard Bearer's* readers have attended this conference in the past.

The BRF has sponsored these family conferences every two years since 1990 somewhere in the Brit-

ish Isles. The conferences are a happy mix of instruction in the Reformed faith, good fellowship with likeminded Christians from different nations, and sightseeing in the area of the conferences.

Next year's conference will be held at High Leigh Conference Centre, a Christian conference site not far from Cambridge, England.

The conference center has forty acres of lawns, parkland, and woodland. It is near many tourist attractions. It is conveniently located for day trips to London and Cambridge. These delightful day trips are part of the conference. Pictures and more details of the conference center can be found at <http://www.cct.org.uk/>



highleigh/high\_leigh.htm>

Conveniently for travelers from North America, the conference center is about thirty minutes from Luton airport and about fifty minutes from Heathrow.

The biblical theme of the conference is "Keeping God's Covenant," with emphasis on the practical life of the covenant family and of the church. The speakers will be Prof. Herman Hanko and Prof. David Engelsma of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The BRF is a group of men and women throughout the British Isles who have organized to promote the Reformed Faith of the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity in Great Britain. It promotes the Reformed faith mainly by the biennial conferences and by the *British Reformed Journal*. The BRF is associated with and supported

by, but by no means identical with or controlled by, the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland.

The 2003 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in North America decided to carry on their mission in the British Isles by means of a missionary, the Rev. Angus Stewart, who is presently working with the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Ballymena, Northern Ireland.

The BRF desires especially to bring together at its conferences those who love, or have some interest in, the Reformed faith in the British Isles. At the same time, it warmly invites Reformed Christians from all over the world to attend. It extends a particular invitation to members of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Reservation of the conference center requires that the BRF have notice of those planning to attend, or thinking seriously of attending, well in advance of the conference. Interested persons in the British Isles are to get in contact as soon as possible with Rev. Angus and Mary Stewart, 7 Lislunnen Rd., Kells, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland BT42 3NR, U.K. The Stewart's telephone number is 282-589-1851. Rev. Stewart's e-mail address is <revangusstewart@ntlworld.com>

Interested persons in North America should get in contact with Bill and Ardith Oomkes, 6299 Wing Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, U.S.A. The Oomkes' telephone number is (616) 698-6697. Their e-mail address is <oomkes@iserv.net>

— DJE 

## New Publication from the Standard Bearer

This month all *Standard Bearer* subscribers will receive a new book, compliments of the *Standard Bearer*. The book is *Common Grace Revisited: A Response to Richard J. Mouw's He Shines in All That's Fair*. The book's contents are the editorials, somewhat revised, that appeared recently in the magazine under the title, "He Shines in All That's Fair (and Curses All That's Foul)."

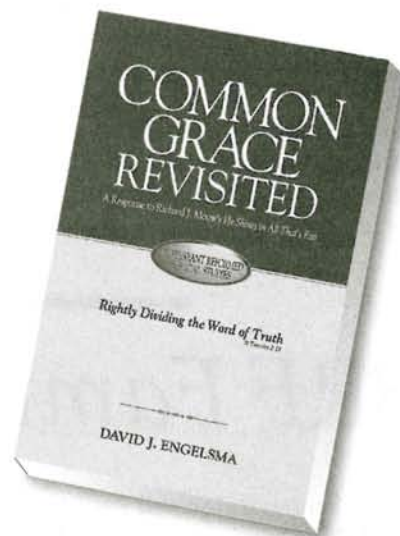
The book introduces a new publishing project on the part of the *Standard Bearer*. In cooperation with the Book and Publishing arm of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), the *Standard Bearer* plans to publish two books a year consisting of series of articles on important, timely subjects that appeared first in the *Standard*

*Bearer*. The books will be smaller than most RFPA publications, about a hundred pages. All will be paperbacks.

The title of the paperback series is "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth." All books in the series will have the same cover-design, readily identifying all works in the set.

The purposes of the series are to make certain articles that appeared as a series in the *Standard Bearer* available in collected form; to distribute these writings more widely; and thus to promote the *Standard Bearer* and its witness to the truth of the Reformed faith.

Initially, these books will be given to all *Standard Bearer* subscribers without charge. The RFPA will distribute them to others without



charge as well as part of its witness. Individuals and evangelism societies that want to make use of the books in their own work of witness will be able to buy copies at a nominal cost, probably the cost of printing.



The second volume in the series is ready for publication. It will be titled *Reformed Worship*. This book will consist of the articles on public worship by three authors that ran in the *Standard Bearer* a few years ago.

This publishing project is made

possible by the generous gifts to the *Standard Bearer* by Protestant Reformed congregations in their offerings on the Lord's Day and by generous contributions to the magazine by individual donors.

Response to the project in general and to the individual publications is welcomed.

May God prosper these efforts of the RFPA for the sake of His truth.

— DJE 

## Letters

### Reality Left Out

**A**lthough a few good points were made in "Dating and the Deep Blue Sea" (*Standard Bearer*, March 15, 2003), I fear that reality and selected portions of God's plan were conveniently left out. Dating is also generalized hastily into an excuse for teenagers to fulfill their lust before marriage, which is often not the case. And although dating can be a "tourniquet" on a spiritual life if allowed to take God's place, it, like many other things, can also help someone grow in Christ. It can be an opportunity to discuss God and grow together with another person.

My first question is this. How do people learn how to interact properly and in a godly way with the opposite sex in a marriage relationship if they never have been allowed to be with them? How can two people be expected to spend their lives together in an emotional relationship when they never even learned how to deal with that? Of course, dating relationships are on a much lower scale than a marriage relationship, but you have to learn how to interact.

Second, why is it that women are not given any choice to pursue a godly husband? Why are the women "taken" to be a bride? God created man in his likeness. God created man with the logic and reasoning abilities to make right decisions. Women are included in this. They can decipher and study Scripture just as well as a man. God blessed women with a brain also, and not only a brain to cook and clean, but a brain to grow as a

Christian, a brain to make right choices about her life in Christ. Women are not property to be taken. They are to be a companion, not a footstool. God created women also with a spirit, and He would be disgraced to have them called anyone's property but His own.

Women are not helpless, as they were written to be in this article. They do not need to be supported "physically, economically, and spiritually." God gave women an equal spirit and equal talents. Women can be successful working in the job market. Women can be successful as housewives, but that does not mean they are helpless.

Third, there is the issue of love. God did mean for His people to join in godly marriage. However, a very important element of marriage is love. God has blessed us with the gift of love. Love in marriage is a separate kind of love not to be ignored but cherished. God wants His people to experience a small token of His love through relationships, especially marriage. Where is this binding love if the marriage is arranged? It is taking out what should be the center of a godly marriage — love. God wants us to enjoy marriage and our spouses, not be set with what someone else says is the right companion for you.

Finally, the idea that a father knows his child better than she herself does is simply ridiculous. The only one who knows a person, even a woman, better than herself is God Almighty. No one else knows the depths of her thoughts and spiri-

tual life.

Emily Zandstra  
Illiana Christian High School  
Highland, IN

### RESPONSE:

Concerning the questions posed in the letter....

As to the first one, the writer wonders how, if they do not date, a man and a maid are going to learn how to interact. For an answer to this I would urge the sister to read the last articles of the series I have written on the covenant way of a man and maid (March 15, April 1, May 1, 2003 issues of the *Standard Bearer*).

The second question deals with the matter of who pursues whom: man, woman, or both? The sister thinks, I think, that it should be both. But if men in marriage are pictures of the Christ (Eph. 5), does it not follow that on the way to marriage the man must reflect Christ, and the maid, the church? As Christ alone pursues and woos His bride, so the men in marrying are the pursuers. To be sure, the maid, picturing the church, does respond, and choose her man. But this choosing is a "being made willing" in the day of the power and advance of the man (Ps. 110:3). It is a response. Clothed with humility and meekness (I Pet. 3:1-6) the woman waits, always, on her man.

On property. Miss Zandstra objects that "women are not property to be taken." Women are not chattel, to be sure. They are not real estate, or slaves. But they are property — very valuable prop-



erty! They are covenant people property! They are the property, first, of their Father in heaven. If they be God's elect, they are bought with the price of the precious blood of the Son (I Cor. 6:20). They are the property, as well, and in behalf of the Savior, of their earthly father. That is why the Bible says the father is to "give" the daughters away in marriage (I Cor. 7). When the Man comes pursuing the Maid he takes her to be his own. Godly women love this "belonging" to another. It teaches them of their only comfort in life, and in death.


On helplessness. I agree with Miss Zandstra that women are not helpless. Good thing they are not, or all of us married men would be without great helps! This is true,

however: women, weaker vessels that they are (I Pet. 3:7), need to be supported "physically, economically, and spiritually" by the man.

About love, and arrangements, Miss Zandstra contends that marriages that are "arranged" would be loveless. A few comments. According to Scripture, covenant arrangements are always brimming with love. God predestinated in love (Eph. 1:4, 5). Abraham "arranged" the marrying of Isaac, and there was love and happiness (Gen. 24:6, 7). When covenant fathers today "arrange" (read: wisely and prayerfully and carefully consider) for the future of their children in marriage, this "arrangement" is in great love — for God, for covenant, and for the children of the covenant. And it shall be for love between the men and maids who love

and learn to love Father's best.

Last, Miss Zandstra has a problem with my saying that "a father knows his child better than she herself does...." Not sure I said it at all just like that, but to the point: it is my position that godly covenant fathers represent God in the family. I believe they are authorized and qualified by God not only to lead the children to Christ (the greater thing!), but to lead them to covenant marriage. The way of the covenant man and maid is the way of their following fathers to a godly mate, a sacred altar, and a wonderful marriage. This way of fathers and their children is the way of family, of church, of honor, of peace, and of praise. It is the way of Christ. The grace life way!

—Rev. Mitchell Dick 

*Ministering to the Saints*

*Rev. Doug Kuiper*

## *The Election and Installation of Deacons (6) Tenure of Office*

**W**e have examined the principles of Scripture and our Church Order regarding the election and installation of deacons. Before leaving the subject, however, we should treat a few related issues. One issue regards how long deacons should serve in office. The second regards how long the deacon must be out of office before being nominated and installed into that office again. And the third regards the resignation or removal of the deacon from office. To the first two of

these issues we now direct our attention.



The basic question concerning how long deacons should serve in office is the question whether a deacon should serve for life, or for a limited tenure. The practice that most, if not all, Reformed churches follow is that of term elderships and deaconships. This practice is prescribed by the Church Order drawn up by the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619. We read in Article 27: "The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire every year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the cir-

cumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Articles 22 and 24, render a reelection advisable."

Notice clearly three things.

First, the article does not prescribe how long a deacon's term must be. It does give the minimum of two years, but allows for a longer term. The specific length of term is left up to the individual church's discretion, as is clear from the phrase "according to local regulations."

Second, the article clearly does not allow a man once elected to serve in that office for life. It requires "a proportionate number" to retire annually. Should a church desire an elder or deacon whose term is ending to continue in his

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office, a new election, a new period of approbation, and a new installation are all required, in accordance with Articles 22 and 24 of the Church Order. A church might do this, for instance, if she has no other men qualified to serve in that office, or if she judges one of her retiring officebearers to be so eminently able and qualified to serve in office, that she desires him to continue in it.

To this requirement that a proportionate number of officebearers retire annually, the Protestant Reformed Churches have added this allowance: "In case of difficulties in the congregation, the officebearers then serving shall continue to function until their chosen successors can be installed" (Classis of June 1934; and Synod of 1944, Articles 66, 67). This allowance does not violate the principle of the article, for in such an instance not *one*, but *all* of the retiring officebearers continue in office, and then *only* until the circumstances are such that all can be replaced.

Third, in saying this is the practice of most, if not all, Reformed churches, we use the term "Reformed churches" in the narrow sense, distinguishing them from most, if not all, Presbyterian churches. By "Reformed churches" here is meant those that subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt, and who are governed by the Church Order adopted at Dordt. While Presbyterian churches are also historically and confessionally Reformed in doctrine, their form of church government differs in some ways from that of Reformed churches. One difference is this, that they do not practice term elderships and deaconships, but consider the one elected, approved, and installed, to serve for life, unless for good cause he should resign or be removed from office.



What are the arguments for and against terms of office?

Against the practice of having terms of office, and in favor of having officebearers serve for life, weighty arguments are put forward.

Some of the arguments are of a practical nature.<sup>1</sup> One such argument is that it is not good for the church to have her best, most qualified men be unable to serve for periods of time. Another is that her officebearers are deprived of good experience, which would help them perform their work, by being relieved of their duties after several years. A third is that the continuity of the work of the consistory or council is interrupted by retirement of officebearers and installation of new ones.

More weighty are the arguments based on scriptural data. It is pointed out, for instance, that Scripture nowhere speaks of such limited tenure; but, on the other hand, it does seem to teach the principle of lifetime service. In the Old Testament, the kings of Israel/Judah, in the line of David, served in office for life or until sickness or old age prevented them from carrying out their work; the priests served many years in the temple; and the prophets also were not limited in their tenure. In the New Testament, we find no limit on the length of service for deacons or elders. And our own practice, as well as that of the church throughout history, has been that our ministers serve in their office for life. Consistency would require us, then, to allow elders and deacons to do the same.

Against the practice of life elderships and deaconships, and in favor of terms of office, are also put forth practical arguments. One is that by having her officebearers serve for a term, a church guards against hierarchy. Furthermore, the amount of time and energy that the officebearer must give to the work, and the sacrifices that his family must make while he is in

office, necessitate a break from the work. Besides, replacement of officebearers is good for the church because the new officebearers bring with them new energy and new ideas. And, if any of the officebearers do not perform their work well, having them serve for a term is the easiest way to remove them from office.

More weighty, again, are the principle reasons. One is that Scripture, being silent on the issue, leaves it to the liberty of the churches to do as they please. The fact that God does not expressly require that officebearers serve for life means that He could be glorified either way. Another argument is that, generally speaking, the Holy Spirit has given the gifts of ruling and shewing mercy to many people in the church. By having terms of office, more people are given the opportunity to use their gifts in the service of the church and God.

Because the arguments that appeal to Scripture and scriptural principles are more weighty than the practical arguments, our evaluation will concentrate on the scriptural arguments.

First, by way of evaluation, it is certainly true that if God desires the church to do something, He must make that clear in Scripture, either by express command, or by giving principles that necessarily lead to a certain practice. That Scripture makes no express command pertaining to the length of term of officebearers is clear to all. Nor, in my judgment (and that of Reformed churches), does Scripture set forth principles that require the church's officebearers to serve in

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1. Unless specifically noted, the arguments for both sides of the debate are gathered from VanDellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941 edition, pages 125-126; Rev. G. VandenBerg's article "Compulsory Retirement of Officebearers" in the *Standard Bearer*, volume 33, pages 69-70; and P.Y. DeJong's book, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, pages 126-127.

office for life unless health, age, or other compelling reasons require him to put down his work and office. The church of Jesus Christ is therefore at liberty in this regard to do what she thinks is most conducive and edifying to her members. That church is not wrong that requires her elders and deacons to serve for life; nor is that church wrong that has her officebearers serve for terms.

Secondly, an examination of the scriptural data, especially as found in the Old Testament, will help us better to understand that it is not wrong for the church to have limited terms of office. It is true that the kings from David's line served for life. But this was particularly because the Christ would come from David's line, and would reign over His people forever. That David's sons were to rule successively and for life pointed Israel to this everlasting rule of Christ, as II Samuel 7:12ff. makes clear. Christ does now reign over His church; and He does so through elders. However, no elder is personally a type of Christ, and therefore the church is not required to keep any individual elder in office for life. As regards the prophets in the Old Testament, they did not necessarily prophesy for life, but only for the length of time that God was pleased to use them. Some apparently prophesied only for a very short time. And of the priests and Levites, God specifically required that they not begin their work in the temple before age 30, and must finish it by age 50 (Num. 4:3, 23, 30; 8:25). Certainly twenty years of service is a lengthy time, and might seem to favor life service more than terms. But we know also that in the time of David there were 24 courses of priests — each course serving in shifts (I Chron. 24:1-19 *et. al.*), indicating that, while priests held the office continuously, they did not do the work of the office continuously, because there were more priests than were necessary for the work. All of this

indicates to us that it is not wrong for our officebearers to serve for limited terms.

Thirdly, the point is well made: "The office does not cleave to the person, but to the church. It is the church who puts a man into office. The church, therefore, may determine how long a man shall have the office."<sup>2</sup> The offices in the church are perpetual. The office of deacon, as well as that of elder and pastor, must always exist in the New Testament church. And if the office exists, the church must see to it that men fill the office. But those men may be replaced by other men at any given time, when such is conducive to the well-being of the congregation. The continuity of the office does not depend on any one man holding that office.



How long ought a term be? We have already noticed that the Church Order says "two or more years," but leaves it to each church to decide just how long her officebearers will serve.

Interestingly, in Geneva during the time of John Calvin, all officebearers served one-year terms. They could be immediately reappointed if they had served well. Some Reformed churches have their officebearers serve terms of four, five, or even six years.<sup>3</sup> Many require a three-year term of service.

Certainly two years ought to be the minimum length of term; and most often two years is not enough. A two-year term means that half of the council is replaced annually; that could greatly affect the ability of a council to do its work. Yet, if the terms are for four or five years, the danger would be that the officebearers become weary of the work before their term is finished, and that the sacrifice required of the families is too great.




How long must the deacon be out of office, before being nominated and perhaps elected to that office, or the office of elder, again?

The Church Order's requirement in Article 27 is this: "The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others, unless the circumstances and profit of any church, in the execution of Articles 22 and 24, render a reelection advisable."

The general rule, therefore, is that the retiring officebearer cannot be immediately nominated for office again. He must be out of office for at least one year. This is profitable for the congregation and officebearer alike. That the officebearers not be immediately reelected is in keeping with the practical reasons for having terms of office. Whether officebearers are eligible for reelection after being out of office for one year, or whether a longer time period is feasible, each congregation is at liberty to decide for herself.

The rule, however, is not hard and fast; for in small congregations it is possible that there are no other men able to serve, and that the retiring officebearer must be nominated or even appointed immediately. The Church Order takes such into account when it allows for reelections if the circumstances or profit of the church make such advisable.

In either case — that of a retiring officebearer being immediately reelected, or that of one being reelected after having been out of office for a year or more — not only must the man be elected to office again, but he must also be installed again. This is because he was elected to a term of specific length, which term cannot be arbitrarily extended. This is also in keeping with the significance of installation, of which we have spoken in a previous article. 

2. Rev. R. Cammenga, "Term of Office," *Standard Bearer*, vol. 68, page 22.

3. VanDellen and Monsma, page 124.



# Reconciliation of Public Sins (2)

"The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the church has been despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public shall, when there is difference of opinion about it in the consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring churches or of the classis."

## Church Order, Article 75.

**A**rticle 75 deals with the reconciliation of those church members who have fallen into public sin. In general, the article calls for the reconciliation of those who have repented of public sin in a public way, before the entire congregation. Public sins are those sins that in their very nature are public, sins that are and can be known by the congregation generally and in the community. These are sins that have created general offense and brought shame on the name of Christ before both the church and the world. Through public confession and restoration, the sinner is restored to the congregation and the blot on the name of the church is removed. This is both necessary and desirable. It is necessary because the Word of God requires that public sin be reconciled publicly. In I Timothy 5:20 the apostle Paul enjoins, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." And this is desirable, desirable from the sinner's perspective. The repentant sinner who has been guilty of public sin ought to desire to have his name cleared and have it known publicly that he is repentant for the sin he has com-

mitted. A consistory ought not to have to coerce a repentant sinner into having a public announcement of his repentance read to the congregation. He ought to desire this and even insist on it. This in itself is an evidence that he is repentant, truly repentant for the sin he has committed.

### Resolution of Differences over Public Reconciliation

Article 75 requires a unanimous decision by the consistory when reconciliation is to take place publicly. So serious a matter is public reconciliation that the consistory must be of one mind if reconciliation is going to take place publicly. If unanimity cannot be reached in the consistory, the matter must be submitted to two neighboring consistories or to the classis.

In case the matter is presented to two neighboring consistories for their advice, all three consistories meet together to discuss the case. The consistory seeking advice presents the facts of the case, including the sin that has been committed and the reasons on account of which it deems public reconciliation to be necessary. The neighboring consistories are provided the opportunity for any member to ask questions regarding the nature of the sin or the judgment of the consistory. After being apprised

of the case, the two consistories then meet separately to discuss the matter and to vote on their support for the decision that has been taken by the consistory seeking their advice. If the two neighboring consistories support the decision of the majority of the consistory seeking their advice, that consistory can proceed with the public reconciliation of the sinner. However, in case of disagreement between the consistories, the advice of classis must be sought. As always, "advice" in the Church Order is more than brotherly opinion. It is advice with teeth. Advice of one or both of the neighboring consistories that opposes the decision of the consistory to proceed with public reconciliation halts the process until the classis can adjudicate the matter.

It is also possible that when there is disagreement in the consistory regarding public reconciliation, the consistory bring the matter directly to the classis for its consideration. Ordinarily, this would be done by way of the questions of Article 41: "Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?" The decision seeking the advice of the classis would then be attached to the classical credentials of the consistory. Classis would treat the matter in

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closed session, obtaining from the consistory the details of the case, including the grounds upon which the consistory feels obliged to proceed with public reconciliation. The classis would then take a decision either approving or disapproving the decision of the consistory. In either case, the judgment of the classis is decisive and must be submitted to by the consistory.

Although not mentioned in the article, a consistory would certainly retain the right of an appeal to the general synod. If a consistory still felt constrained to proceed with public reconciliation, even after the disapproval of the classis, the consistory could certainly present its case to the synod by way of protest against the decision of the classis. The decision of the synod would then be the final and binding decision in the case.

#### **Public Sin by Non-Confessing Members**

The immediate concern of Article 75 is with confessing members of the church who have fallen into public sin. This is plain from the statement in the article "...or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised...." The reference is to the admonitions of the church that have involved announcements to the congregation of the various steps of Christian censure. That Article 75 concerns confessing members is plain from what follows in Article 76: "Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper." Only confessing members can be suspended from the Lord's Supper.

Nevertheless, the principle that public sin ought to be reconciled publicly applies to non-confessing members as well as to confessing members. Baptized members of the church are members of the church. By virtue of their baptism they are members of the church

and bear the name of Christ. Public sins by baptized members of the church also create public offense and bring a blot on the name of Christ. Consistories must not overlook the sins of baptized members simply because they are only baptized members. Their sins must also be dealt with by the elders, and ordinarily public sins of baptized members too must be reconciled publicly. It happens from time to time, for example, that baptized members of the church fall into public sin against the seventh commandment. In this case, the public nature of the sin must be taken seriously, and public reconciliation is required.

Although the general principle that public sin must be reconciled publicly applies also to baptized members, consistories ought to take into consideration that baptized members are, for the most part, immature members of the church. This is not to minimize the seriousness of public sin on their part. But it is to recognize the difference between confessing and non-confessing members of the church. Taking this into consideration, along with the nature of the sin committed, a consistory may deem it most "conducive to the edification" of the church and the erring baptized member that reconciliation take place only before the consistory. A consistory may certainly make this judgment. In such a case, the elders will undoubtedly work closely with the young person's parents, as well as with the young person himself. If the consistory is confident that there is genuine repentance, it may be satisfied that the sin is confessed before the consistory, with no announcement being made publicly before the congregation.

Again, this does not minimize the seriousness of public sin on the part of baptized members of the church. But it does recognize the difference that our Church Order itself recognizes between mature and immature members of the church.

#### **The Restoration of Repentant Sinners**

The consistory and congregation have an obligation to deal properly with public sin on the part of members. But consistory and congregation also have an obligation to restore those sinners who have publicly confessed their sins. This is the purpose of public reconciliation.

There is a real danger in this regard. The danger is that those who have fallen into public sin, but have been reconciled to the church, are regarded as second-class members of the church. The danger is that although formally they have been reconciled to the church, they are not actually received again by the members of the church. They are held at arm's length. They are not accorded the friendship of the members, but are avoided or even shunned. Rather than to extend to them the right hand of fellowship, they are ostracized. This ought not to be.

The apostle Paul addresses this concern in his second epistle to the Corinthians: "So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (II Cor. 2:7). The apostle is concerned about the attitude of the members of the Corinthian congregation towards a repentant sinner in their fellowship. In his first epistle he had called for the Christian discipline of this wayward member (I Cor. 5). This member had been walking openly in the sin of fornication. In regard to this member, the apostle had written: "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:3-5). The Corinthians had heeded the




apostle's advice and had disciplined this public sinner. The effect of that discipline had been the sinner's repentance. This had been reported to the apostle. Now in his second epistle, the apostle calls the Corinthians to receive the repentant sinner back into their fellowship. He urges this upon them, adding the concern that if this is not done the sinner may be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."

This is a legitimate concern. In receiving the repentant sinner, let the members of the consistory, let the pastor, and let the members of the congregation assure him of his forgiveness. Let them comfort and encourage him, assuring him of their prayerful support. In the announcement that is read to the congregation, it is appropriate that an exhortation to this effect be in-

cluded. The joy of the father in receiving again his prodigal son (Luke 15:20ff.) ought to be the joy of the church in the restoration of the penitent sinner.

The repentant sinner ought to be restored to all the rights and privileges of church membership. He ought to be encouraged to resume full involvement in the life of the congregation. Those who have confessed public sin and been properly restored may even serve in the special offices in the church. This may not happen immediately. But over time, having proved the genuineness of their confession and not having fallen back into the same sin, they are certainly eligible to serve as officebearers in the church. This has been the case with a number of men in our churches who have very honorably served

in the special offices after having fallen into public sin.

Article 75 calls for the proper handling of public sin in the congregation. When the church deals with public sin as it ought to be dealt with, according to biblical principles, God's blessing rests on the church. When the church ignores the directives of God's Word, and public sin is tolerated in the congregation, God's wrath is aroused. This was the case in the congregation at Corinth (I Cor. 11:28ff.) and the congregation at Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17). In harmony with Article 75 of our Church Order, may public sin continue to be dealt with properly in our churches. And may the outcome be the glory of God, the honor of the church, and the salvation of repentant sinners. 

## All Around Us

Rev. Kenneth Koole

### ■ Some "Better" News

A previous article by the undersigned reported that authorities in Malaysia (the country directly north of Singapore) had approved a ban on publishing Bibles (along with books by several well-known Reformed authors) in the Iban language, the language of the largest indigenous tribe in Malaysia. We are pleased to report that, following appeal and negative publicity, that law has been repealed. *World* magazine, in a news brief entitled "J. I. Packer, John Stott, & 'Public Peace' " (June 14), reports the following.

A ban of an indigenous-language Bible in Malaysia went all the way to the prime minister's office. Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawli, acting as head of state until he takes office in October, lifted the ban on the Iban-language Bible

following an appeal from church leaders.

The ban had come from Malaysia's Home Ministry, which ruled the Iban Bible and 35 other publications — including books by Christian apologists J I Packer and John Stott — "detrimental to public peace." Home Ministry official Elias Mat Rabi said the books confused Muslims because they used the Arabic word "Allah" for God. The Iban Bible uses the phrase "Allah Tala" to refer to God, but its use, like the Arabic, likely predates Islamic usage.

Iban is the largest indigenous tribe in Malaysia, with a population of approximately 550,000. The lifting of the ban, said Elizabeth Kendal of World Evangelical Alliance, "is a victory for constructive dialogue and religious liberty."

It is encouraging to be reminded that not only do Christians have a right and calling to appeal to God-ordained magistrates when evil laws are enacted, but that going the "lawful way" can still bear positive fruit.

As is plain from the book of Acts, the apostles appealed to unbelieving magistrates on more than one occasion. So must those who would maintain Christianity's good name today. Even if the appeal in Malaysia had been rejected, the good name of Christianity would have been maintained. First, by demonstrating that the Christian faith recognizes magistrates (even the unbelieving) as God-ordained, while at the same time reminding these magistrates of the One to whom they are accountable. And second, by demonstrating that Christians are law-abiding and do not resort to rioting in the streets even when injustice is self-evident (and hard to "put-up-with").

While we can be thankful for this small victory in Malaysia, the reality is that the increasing, worldwide antagonism against the Christian faith and the spread of the gospel continues unabated. There comes a time when magistrates will be no more sensitive to public pressure or tolerant of Christians that

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appeal for justice than Caesar Nero was to Paul. This too we will have to endure.

## ■ Giving Christianity a Bad Name

While it is true that the abiding enmity of the unbelieving mind against the things of God and the cause of Christ is ultimately hatred "without a cause" and rooted in unrighteousness, the sad reality is that "Christianity" (that is, that which goes by the name) too often has given itself a bad name, and thereby gives the world ample opportunity to justify its derision and scorn. "Christianity? What is it but hypocrisy! Christians are simply those who are forever pointing a condemning finger at the sins of others, while engaging in similar deplorable, greedy, and even violent actions themselves." As a well-known swamp-bottom philosopher (of cartoon fame) put it, "We have met the enemy, and he is us!" Sad, but too often true.

Witness the late lamentable fall (or, at least, exposure of the gambling addiction) of William Bennett (he of "family values" reputation). And, of course, there are the on-going disclosures of the widespread sexual abuses (together with the cover-ups) rampant in the Roman Catholic priesthood. To those you can now add the names of Randall Terry (founder of Operation Rescue) and Eric Randolph (charged with being the Olympic Games bomber as well as being responsible for the bombing of a number of abortion clinics in the South.)

In the case of Randall Terry, who was a leading figure in the anti-abortion movement during the mid-'90s, and was forced into bankruptcy by pro-abortion groups filing numerous lawsuits against him, serious questions are being raised about the ethics of a fundraising drive he is engaged in. Terry has been actively soliciting funds, ostensibly to restore what he lost for "the cause." *World* magazine itself was

once sympathetic to his situation and was willing to aid in the solicitation of funds. Recent disclosures by Terry's first wife (and mother of his first four children, divorced after 19 years of marriage, and replaced by a then 22-year-old assistant in Terry's failed 1998 congressional campaign) have compelled former supporters and *World* magazine itself to reassess their sympathy and support. Terry's divorced wife is concerned that donors not be misled about her (former) husband's true situation. In an article entitled "Appalling Appeal?" *World* magazine gives a fuller picture of Mr. Terry's situation as he has sent out e-mails and mailings urging supporters to "give generously as you can to restore what the enemy took," with donations to be sent to the Terry Family Trust. As *World* goes on to note:

But neither the fundraising letter nor the website disclose that Mr. Terry is set to close on a new \$432,000 home near St Augustine, Fla., in South Ponte Vedra Beach. (Mr. Terry told *World* he plans to close this month.) Nor do they reveal that Mr. Terry contracted to purchase the home eight months before he sent donors letters saying he'd lost everything to pro-abortion forces. Donations to the Terry Family Trust will go to pay for the house, Mr. Terry told *World* in a February 2003 telephone interview.

Some of Mr. Terry's former allies say the fundraising appeal is unbiblical and disingenuous....

Mr. Terry's critics also say many donors who receive the fundraising letter are likely to assume that the proceeds of the Terry Family Trust will benefit Mr. Terry's four oldest children, along with Cindy Terry, his wife of 19 years. Instead, the Terry Family Trust is to help Mr. Terry get back into ministry and to benefit his infant son and his second wife....

Mr. Terry told *World* that he wanted a home where his family will be safe and where "we could entertain people of stature, people of importance. I have a lot of important people that come through

my home. And I will have more important people come through my home."

Sad to say, it is self-serving behavior like what is reported above that gives the ungodly opportunity and apparent grounds to justify their cynicism and their condemnation of all things Christian.

Then there is the instance of Eric Rudolph and the crimes with which he has been charged. He also was heavily involved in the anti-abortion movement, and, from all the evidence, apparently resorted to bombings (resulting in deaths) to drive his convictions home. What is striking is how quickly many in the news media seize on these acts of lawlessness and seek to implicate the whole of Christianity itself. Again we quote from a *World* news article (entitled "Religion & Terror," June 14).

...reading out 23 charges against Mr. Rudolph — some of which carry the death penalty — took up most of the half hour-long hearing. He responded, "Yes, Your Honor" to the judge's question about whether he needed a lawyer.

He will need several lawyers. After the Ashville arraignment, officials moved Mr. Rudolph to Alabama (at Attorney General John Ashcroft's request) to stand trial for the bombing of a Birmingham abortion business. He will then go to Georgia in connection with bombings there, including one at the 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta.

Christianity, according to the Washington Post on June 2, might also need legal representation or at least public relations help. "Is Terrorism Tied to Christian Sect?" the Post headline asked, and a prominently displayed photo depicted a metal cross at the entrance to a possible Rudolph hangout in the North Carolina mountains.

The lead paragraph of the story asked, "Is he a 'Christian terrorist'?" Following paragraphs quoted a political-science professor at Syracuse University saying



the answer is yes, and Idaho State University sociology professor James Aho offering an 'aha, gotcha': Christians who protest the juxtaposition of "Christian" and "terrorist" may understand "how Muslims feel" when they hear the term "Islamic terrorism."

We live in an age when the leading lights of society (its intellects and educators) are looking for excuses to put Christianity in the worse possible light. The grim reality is, time and again they do not have to search very hard to justify their accusation and condemnations. Too much has been done in the name of "Christianity" that is anything but biblically approved.

But what can one do about this unfair lumping of all Christians together? Not much —especially when it comes to "policing" the activities of others associated with the Christian name. But this we can and must do: as Christians who represent the name of Christ and a denomination we must be zealous and as blameless as we ourselves can be.

The words of I Peter 2:12-15 are much to the point. Look them up.

## ■ The Real Assault Continues

What is the "real assault" these days? The state's ongoing attempt to disenfranchise parents, and make children its own special "wards." Today this is the goal of liberal, ungodly educators and politicians alike. An instance of this deadly spirit of Evil is coming to evidence in, where else, California again. A bill has been introduced in the state legislature that, in the words of the reporter Robert B. Bluey, "...would allow schools to survey students on topics like sex and religion without written parental permission." For the godless liberals these day, that phrase "without parental permission" (and eventually, even "without parental knowledge") is what it is all about.

Bluey's article in *Crosswalk*, and

entitled "Parents Warned about Calif. Bill on Student Sex Surveys," is self explanatory. Concerning this bill Bluey writes:

...a pro-family group is warning that the bill opens the door for homosexual activists to leave their mark on students from kindergarten to high school....

The Campaign for California Families, which opposes the bill, is warning California families to write their legislators about the bill. The group's executive director, Randy Thomasson, said parents should be outraged. "It's a very deceptive bill that destroys parental rights, puts the burden on the parents and uses invasive sex surveys on little kids," he said. "The Democrats don't believe in parental rights. They believe children are sexual creatures, and they want to unleash the homosexual 'desires' of little children."

The biggest change resulting from the bill would come with anonymous questionnaires. Under current law schools need to inform parents in writing and obtain written permission (sic! — KK) when asking about sex, family life, morality or religion. But under [assemblywoman] Hancock's bill, schools could administer questionnaires anonymously as long as they informed parents in writing, allowed them to review the material and gave parents an option to decline (sic! — KK) participation. The bill also deletes the reference to "family life."

In addition, schools would be permitted to survey students on the topics of school safety, school violence and "prohibited discrimination" without having to notify parents (sic — what falls under "discrimination" is anyone's call — KK)....

Thomasson warns that while these surveys might appear harmless, interest groups distributing them often have ulterior motives. If the bill passes, he said, groups like the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network could ask questions such as, "If you have never slept with someone of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer that?" or "Is

it possible you merely need a good gay experience?"

"When kids can't even read, write or compute properly, the schools shouldn't be pushing social engineering of any type," Thomasson said, "These children belong to their parents, they do not belong to the state. And the state has no right to invade the sanctity of the home and push the parents off of their throne."

The justification for this "invasive" bill ostensibly is to get more accurate data for a wide range of social evils facing young people (the abuse of drugs, alcohol, smoking, etc.), and their familiarity with such things, so that educators can respond in a more informed and sensitive way (and so on and so forth). In reality it is one more thinly disguised attempt to cancel out parental influence, and to obtain another channel of direct access to children in order to convince them that sexual perversion is really quite normal and a thing "to be desired." ("How will you know until you have tried it?")

While it may be hoped that there is enough of a public outcry to derail this "invasive" bill and policy for the time being, the fact is that those who send their children to state-run schools must understand that it is only a matter of time before the perverted gain the right to ask any question they please and to indoctrinate their children in every ungodly practice known to man.

The real question is, how long before the state is convinced by these same agents of evil that it has the right to invade parental schools, asking our children whatever questions it deems fit. And all for our children's protection, of course, in order to find out what "dangerous things" our children are being subjected to in our homes and schools. The Dragon's appetite for the seed of the woman and their destruction is as insatiable today as it has ever been. ☹

## The Real Saint Patrick (5) Patrick's Missionary Labors

**W**e have considered the biblical message of the gospel that Patrick knew in his heart and that he brought to the people of Ireland. We have also seen that Patrick was called by the British church to labor in Ireland and that he had unshakable confidence in his divine calling. However, he was not sent to preach in wholly virgin territory. That there were some believers in Ireland before Patrick's visit is evident from the writings of a contemporary, Prosper of Aquitaine, and Patrick himself tells us that there were believers in Ireland before his mission (cf. *Conf* 51).

But how did Patrick go about his work? Philip Hughes gives a fine summary of Patrick's labors:

The saint spent himself in an endless apostolate, preaching, baptizing, ordaining, consecrating other bishops, everywhere establishing monasteries and a curious kind of ecclesiastical settlement, part monastery, part seminary, part center of administration, which, in this country where cities were unknown, serve as the bishop's see.<sup>1</sup>

Diligent labor, Patrick explains, was the means of his success. After the kidnapping and murder of some of his converts, he speaks of "the flock of the Lord which was increasing in Ireland nicely as a result of hard work" (*Letter* 12). Patrick spent himself for the souls of his Irish converts (*Conf* 53), taking trouble and labor for the sal-

vation of others (*Conf* 28). Thus he had a good conscience, serving God "in faithfulness to the truth and in sincerity of heart" (*Conf* 48).

But he does not accredit this to his own power. Right from his earliest days as a Christian, Patrick learned to supplicate the throne of grace. Even as a shepherd-slave he would "rise before dawn" and pray fervently in the power of the Spirit (*Conf* 16). The great missionary to Ireland confesses, "By God's gift I achieved everything industriously and willingly for your salvation" (*Conf* 51).

That Patrick saw his mission in terms of preaching is clear. He speaks both in his *Confession* and in his *Letter* of "hunting" sinners and "fishing" for them with the gospel net (*Conf* 40; *Letter* 11). "The children of God whom [the Lord] has recently gathered at the ends of the earth," Patrick says, have been saved "through my exhortation poor though I am!" (*Letter* 9). He confesses that God enabled him "to come and preach the gospel to Irish tribes" (*Conf* 37). Mohrmann reckons that Patrick must have been a "very eloquent preacher," since "the language and style" of his writings are "very dynamic."<sup>2</sup>

But what did Patrick see as the basis for preaching? In *Confession* 40, he lists the classical biblical texts for missionary work, including Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16. The promises of the gathering of the catholic church were dear to him. In both the *Confession* and the *Letter* he quotes Matthew 8:11: "They will come from the east and from the west and will sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven"

(*Conf* 39; *Letter* 18). Patrick describes the Irish as a people

whom the Lord chose from the ends of the earth as long ago he had promised through his prophets: to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and will say: *just as our fathers took to themselves false idols and there is no usefulness in them, and in another place, I have set you as a light to the Gentiles so that you may be for salvation even to the end of the earth* (*Conf* 38).

One striking point about Patrick's missionary work is that he understood it eschatologically. He speaks often of the "last days" (e.g., *Conf* 34; *Letter* 11) and the Rule of Faith says that "we ... await [Christ's] Advent which will happen soon" (*Conf* 4). Patrick quotes the classic text linking the spread of the gospel and the end of the world: "This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony for all nations and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14; *Conf* 40). For Patrick, the mission to Ireland was not merely one of many missions to hitherto unreached nations. He did not know of Iceland and the Americas to the west, so he thought of Ireland as being at "the end of the earth" (*Conf* 1). Patrick saw himself as one of those whom

the Lord had long ago foretold would declare his gospel as a testimony to all nations before the end of the world, and we see as a consequence that it has been fulfilled just so: you can see that we are witnesses that *the gospel has been preached as far as the point where there is no beyond* (*Conf* 34).

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Hanson accurately presents Patrick's thought: "When the gospel will have been preached to every nation (and the Irish are the last on the list), then the world will end."<sup>3</sup>

Like all true missionaries of all ages, Patrick was motivated to obey the call to go to other lands to preach the gospel out of love to God and love to the people to whom he ministered. He tells us that the love of Christ "carried" him to Ireland (Conf 13). He testifies, "I live among barbarian tribes as an exile for the love of God; God himself is witness that this is true.... I exist to teach tribes for my God" (Letter 1).

Patrick thought of his converts as part of the universal church of Jesus Christ. They are the "flock of the Lord" (Letter 12) and "children of God" (Letter 15) for whom Christ died (Letter 7). Patrick speaks of them as "most beautiful and most beloved brothers whom I have begotten in Christ" (Letter 16; cf. Letter 2; Conf 38). William Henry Scott notes that in Patrick's writings "not the slightest innuendo betrays any sense of patronizing superiority or paternalism."<sup>4</sup>

When Coroticus butchered and kidnapped many Irish Christians, Patrick quotes I Corinthians 12:26: "If one member grieves all members should grieve with it" (Letter 16). Thus he is filled with "sorrow and grief" (Letter 16). At this point he identifies fully with the Irish church: "They think it derogatory that we are Irish" (Letter 16). Of course, Patrick was not Irish by birth but British, but his heart so burned for his brothers in the Lord that he adopted their nationality. This was quite a statement to make in a letter addressed to Britons who despised the Irish as non-Roman barbarians.

Patrick's love for the Irish people did not result in his watering down the gospel. We see him declining to partake in Irish idolatry and immorality right from the time of his escape from slavery in

Ireland (Conf 18). His hatred for their paganism comes out in *Confession* 41: "Those in Ireland ... up to now always only worshipped idols and filthy things." Irish pagans who worship the sun, Patrick affirms, "will come to a bad end in wretched punishment" (Conf 60).

Persecution resulted but, by the grace of God, this too failed to make Patrick compromise the gospel.

God ... prevailed in me ... to enable me to come and preach the gospel to Irish tribes and endure insults from unbelievers, to bear the reproach of my pilgrimage and many persecutions, even as far as being thrown into irons (Conf 37).

Patrick speaks of his "twelve perils" (Conf 35) and several imprisonments (Conf 15, 21, 35, 37, 52). Three times he expresses the hope that God might grant him the crown of martyrdom (Conf 37, 55, 59). It was always a distinct possibility. In one place Patrick refers to himself as one "whom this world hates" (Conf 13). He tells us, "I daily expect either assassination or trickery or reduction to slavery or some accident or other, but I fear none of these things on account of the promises of heaven" (Conf 55).

In many ways Patrick showed faithfulness in his gospel labors. He was not afraid to travel to the more remote and barbarous parts of Ireland with the Word of God (Conf 51). He took great pains to be straightforward in his dealings with the Irish tribes. Patrick was not, as much of the (later) medieval church, tainted with simony (Conf 55). To avoid even the appearance of covetousness he refused many voluntary gifts (Conf 48-50). Patrick's motivation for this is striking:

But I [did it] because of the hope of the permanence [of my mission] to safeguard myself carefully in every way, for this purpose that they should not catch me or the ministry of my service out in any

charge of unfaithfulness and that I should not give an opportunity for denigration or disparagement even in the smallest matters (Conf 49).

... for the sake of God and his church ... in case the name of the Lord should be blasphemed through me (Conf 48).

Patrick's reference to the desired "permanence" of his mission is also important (Conf 49). "The Lord Christ," he tells us, "commanded me that I should come to be with them for the rest of my life" (Conf 43). Patrick was not a fly-by-night evangelist with no long-term goals. Instead, he wanted to stay in Ireland all his days, that the church might be solidly established and so continue to prosper after his death. Patrick's goal was an indigenous church served by Irish officebearers.

I must ... promulgate the name of God everywhere fearlessly and faithfully, so as to leave after my death a legacy to my brothers and my children whom I have baptized in the Lord, so many thousands of people (Conf 14).

Just before this, Patrick had spoken of the necessity of his teaching "from the rule of faith of the Trinity" and making known "the

1. Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 68. The debate as to where his center of labor was (Armagh, Tara or elsewhere) does not concern us here.

2. Christine Mohrmann, *The Latin of Saint Patrick* (Dublin: Dublin University Press), 1961, p. 48. Remember that Patrick would have spoken to the Irish in Gaelic, whereas he wrote his *Confession* and *Letter* in Latin for a British audience.


3. R.P.C. Hanson, *The Life and Writings of the Historical Saint Patrick* (New York: The Seabury Press), 1983, p. 105.

4. William Henry Scott, "St. Patrick's Missionary Methods," *The International Review of Missions*, 50, 146 (April, 1961).

gift of God and eternal comfort" (Conf 14). Clearly the legacy he wished to leave to the succeeding generations of the Irish church was creedal Trinitarian orthodoxy, the comforting gospel of the grace of God (Conf 51). This alone would stand the test of time.

Patrick's lament was that he could not serve his Lord perfectly (cf. Conf 13). He knew his academic limitations. He also knew

the struggle with the old man, which he refers to as "this body of death" and "the hostile flesh" (Conf 44), and with Satan and the wicked world (Conf 13, 20, 44, 55). But through it all his only hope was in the faithfulness of his God (Conf 35, 54-56). Patrick's closing words in his *Confession*, disclaiming all credit for his mission and attributing it all to the pleasure of the Lord, are especially poignant.

But I beg those who believe in God and fear him whoever shall condescend to peruse or to receive this writing which Patrick, a very badly educated sinner, has written in Ireland, *that nobody shall ever say that it was I, the ignoramus, if I have achieved or shown any small success according to God's pleasure, but you are to think and it must be sincerely believed, that it was the gift of God. And this is my confession before I die* (Conf 62). 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

## Mission Preaching in the Established Church (4) *The Burden of the Messenger*

**T**he preacher has an awesome task. When he sounds forth the call of the gospel, heaven is opened and closed to his hearers. This is true in the mission setting when the missionary labors with a view to the establishment of a local congregation. It is no less true in the established church. At all times, the preacher calls men to repent of their sins, to turn from their evil ways, to seek and embrace Jesus Christ as the only Savior, who can reconcile them to God. The call goes forth to forsake every sinful way and walk in a new and holy life of thankfulness to God. Such thankfulness arises out of the positive effect of gospel preaching by which sin is removed and we are reconciled to God. The Holy Spirit works through such preaching. In some He works true repentance, while others turn away disgruntled and unbelieving. The preacher never knows who will truly be saved in the end, for the Holy Spirit works in His own time and way. He knows very well that

not all are saved through his effort. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, has a double edge. This is awesome — some are saved, and others perish, under his ministry.

Fully aware of God's sovereign way with his ministry, the preacher carries a burden for the salvation of those with whom he labors. This is true for the missionary who labors in the mission field. He stands in awe before God's mysterious ways, in which men are brought under the word preached. He cherishes the times when a non-Christian is sitting under his preaching on the Lord's Day. He goes out of his way to talk to someone who is not a Christian but is willing to listen to the word he speaks. All this stirring in his soul is rooted in the burden that he has, that God may use such moments to work true faith in the heart of the hearer. This he desires more than anything else. He knows the despair of those gripped by superstition or the horrible consequences of sin. His heart goes out to them and earnestly desires that they may convert to God and enjoy the life of liberty that comes through faith in God.

This is no less true for the pastor in the established church. He, too, knows God's sovereignty over his ministry and the opening and closing of the doors of heaven through the very word he brings. This does not make him fatalistic; he doesn't develop an attitude of: "I can't do anything about the outcome so I just leave it to God. Why care?" As God's servant, he brings the word with compassion, preaches and labors as a pastor with the urgent prayer that God may save those who hear the Word, may turn the wayward, and may lift up the weak so that they may enjoy spiritual strength. His labors are stirred by the passion that burns in his soul that God may truly save those who hear. While doing this, he does not resist God and rebel against God's outcome if God does not save, but condemns, through his ministry. Until God makes this evident, he labors from the perspective of seeking their salvation and spiritual well-being.

This is his burden. This is the burden of missionary preaching in the field and in the established church. We understand fully the passionate words of Paul in Ro-

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mans 9:1-3, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...."

Lacking this burden, the preacher will find that preaching becomes mechanical and dead. Every God-fearing pastor knows this from his own experience. If we struggle with the inadequacy of our preaching and its lack of sincerity and passion, more than likely we will find the root cause is this, that we are not focused upon the burden for the souls of those with whom we labor. We may be more performance orientated. If so, we are more focused on our sermon-making and delivery and how our messages are accepted by the people, than by the influence the messages will have in their lives. In such a state, we know little of the heaviness of heart and the cry from the depth of our souls that God will use us to show mercy upon the people who sit under the ministry of the Word we bring. We need the burden for the salvation of lost souls.

Allow me to suggest four things that I personally learned over the years, things that helped me greatly to carry this burden into the pulpit on both sides of the Pacific.

First, we must pay attention to our own spirituality as a pastor. True, the Word of God instructs all believers to do this: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). This is the most critical thing for a pastor or missionary. Paul expressed it this way, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). The practical significance of doing

this is that when we make sermons and deliver them, we will be honest enough to admit that we are preaching to ourselves first of all. We know our own sins and faults and that *we* need to hear mission preaching, we need God's sharp word of rebuke against sin and the need to convert to God. The passion for such preaching comes from our own soul. We need both the admonition and comfort of the Word of God. Why is this so important to us as preachers? We know in the depth of our being that all our preaching and teaching has as its one focus, communion with God. All the teachings of the church (the doctrines) and all the details of holy living have *one* focus, the enjoyment of covenant communion with the ever blessed God. If we as preachers experience this, our preaching will reflect it as well. We who emphasize and understand the significance of the covenant of grace are in a position to understand, experience, and preach its vital significance in a daily walk with God. This spirituality is the heart of passionate preaching.

Secondly, we must be the kind of shepherd to our flock that Jesus wants us to be. What generates the necessary burden to preach with passion, with urgency, to call to repentance, faith, and obedience? It is the keen awareness of the spiritual needs of those who are listening to our preaching. What gives us this awareness? It is our interaction with the congregation. The

better we know our flock, the better we can minister to their needs through preaching. This awareness is gained through daily openness and interaction. It is enhanced through the annual family visits. More than anything, however, it is through pastoral labors. We shepherds know our sheep when they come to us with their burdens, struggles, and conflicts of every sort. We hear their cries in the hos-

pital, in the funeral home, in their own homes, in the prison, at their work places, on and on. Out of such pastoral ministry comes the keen awareness that our sheep have burdens, and their burdens become our burdens. That makes us preachers with a burden. Our preaching will not, then, be abstract or irrelevant. It will deal with issues that we know cause the hearts of our sheep to bleed. Some struggle with serious doctrinal errors. When we preach about these errors, we do so with the burden of those sitting in church. The call to repent and turn from evil will live in our souls as we speak to those sheep who are so dear to our hearts. The tears of sorrow and fears of death are the burdens our own sheep put in our hearts.

This is not to say that the preacher must take to the pulpit personal needs of the congregation and incorporate them into his preaching. I recall my days with Rev. Gerrit Vos in seminary. Though he taught me Dutch, I always liked his digressions into practical issues that he would share with a young student. Once he said to me, "When I preach, I see nothing but cabbage heads." He certainly did not mean to degrade his congregation, for anyone who sat under his preaching knew he preached out of deep passion and love for his people. He meant that he did not focus on individuals and preach directly to them. He properly warned, you will be tempted to use the pulpit as a *steek stoel*, a means to hit at people with whom you disagree, a very dangerous thing. He carried their tears in his heart, and that burned as fire in his soul to incite him to preach with a burden.

Thirdly, I mention intercessory prayer for the members of the congregation. Pastors are not only instructed to preach, to shepherd the flock (I Pet. 5:1-4), but also to pray for them. The Pauline example is replete throughout the New Testament. He always prayed for indi-

*We need the burden for the salvation of lost souls.*

viduals and churches. He instructed the pastors to do the same (I Thess. 5:25). Over the years I had to learn how to do this. It is important that the pastor include in his quiet time in the study, prayer for the specific needs of individual sheep of the flock as well as the needs of the flock in general. Mid-week prayer meetings in Singapore helped me refine this labor of love. It taught me to be much more specific and focused on such needs. During the sharing of such prayer items, I learned to appreciate that as a pastor I must be aware of ministry needs, individual needs, needs that we faced as a congregation in the society and the world around us. There were those who were attending church for the first time, and we included them in prayer that God would use the Word preached to reach their hearts. Others mentioned their sharing the gospel with family members or acquaintances, and we listed them and prayed for them in the prayer meeting. This was helpful for me as a pastor in two ways. It helped me focus on these needs very directly, so that I could pray about them as a pastor privately and in obedience to Christ. In addition, it gave much life to the congregational prayers. The pastoral prayer is an important part of the worship service. I learned then that I had to give careful thought to the congregational prayer ahead of time and give careful attention to what I would include in the prayer for that morning or evening. My prayers became less abstract and more direct. They focused on many situations that needed prayer, and the congregation was glad to pray together for such needs.

Besides the benefit of more meaningful pastoral prayers, it also incited me to preach with greater burden and passion. The more I was focused on these needs, the more effectively I could address them in the preaching. Whatever text was used for that service, it

took on a pastoral burden in the sermon. It was not prepared in the abstract, it was not delivered in the abstract, it was before a congregation of people who needed very much to hear the Word of God. It contributed to an eagerness and earnestness to preach that sermon that day.

Finally, I have also learned that it is helpful and necessary to preach in the second person and less in the first or third person. Jay Adams makes a good point of this in his book *Preaching with Purpose*. He distinguishes the preaching stance from the lecture stance. We can summarize his points this way. The lecturer talks to the congregation about the Bible, the preacher talks to the congregation about themselves from the Bible. The lecturer talks about what God did long ago and far away, the preacher talks about what God is doing and what they ought to be doing. The lecturer talks in the third person (he, they), the preacher talks in the second person (you). The lecturer talks in an unemotional, uninvolved, reporting style, the preacher speaks in an emotionally involved but controlled style.

It is the use of pronouns that I consider here. It is true that many passages of the Bible come in the form of first person (I, we) and third person (he, they). Others are written in the second person, directed to the reader as you. The point that I like to make is this, when we focus on "mission preaching" or preaching that calls for repentance and faith, forsaking evil, turning unto God, and such like, if we preach in the first or third person, it loses its personal effect. This is especially true if the preacher uses "we." The impression is left that the church is the one who believes certain truths, the church acts in a certain way, the church has responsibilities to perform certain duties, and the convicting and binding responsibility on the individual sitting under the preaching

is lost. Persistent use of we or they in preaching allows the listener to conclude that because he is part of the audience, the congregation, the church, he is included and all is well. He doesn't have to do anything more than to listen to what is being said. If the preacher, in the Name of Jesus Christ, addresses the message to *you*, and talks directly to the audience, the congregation, the individual listener, it comes direct and personal. This is necessary for "mission preaching" as we are talking about it.

Christ speaks through the pastor to the listener. It is all wrong if a person sits in church and at the conclusion of the service is able to say, "Christ didn't say anything to me. The pastor was talking about Christians, what they believe and how they act, but never spoke directly to me." If that should take place, then Christ does not speak directly to the listener. Then we have lecturing instead of preaching, as Jay Adams suggests. We need the lively preaching of the gospel, and that means that Christ must speak. As the servant of Jesus Christ, the preacher must look the listener in the eye and say, "you."

This is the thrill of preaching. It makes no difference whether one is in the mission field or in the established church, he preaches in the name of Jesus Christ and calls men to repentance and faith. The burden of the preacher is so great that he is eager to preach and trusts in the one in whose name he speaks to cause the blind to see, the leprous to be cleansed, the dead to arise from their spiritual graves. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to hear this call of the gospel, and the same is true for anyone who may be gathered with them. If any have not true faith, they will certainly hear the voice of Jesus call, "Come unto me and rest."

In our next article we will consider the place of special gospel services in the established church.





### Minister Activities

**T**he Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has formed a new trio consisting of Candidate Langerak, Rev. Slopsema, and Rev. Smit. They will call, the Lord willing, one of these men on July 13, when Candidate Langerak is eligible for a call. The Byron Center, MI PRC has called Rev. Bruinsma to be their next pastor. The Faith PRC in Jenison, MI has called Rev. Slopsema to be their next pastor. The congregation of the Hull, IA PRC has extended a call to Rev. Terpstra to serve our churches as a second missionary in Ghana. Synod 2003 has extended a call to Rev. Gritters to become the new professor in our seminary. Rev. Cammenga was chosen as alternate. Should Rev. Gritters decline the call, it will automatically go to Rev. Cammenga.

The seminary faculty has licensed two men, John Marcus and Dennis Lee, to speak a word of edification in our churches. Mr. Marcus and his family are members of the Byron Center, MI PRC. Mr. Lee and his family are members of our sister church, the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and attend the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Congratulations are in order to Rev. and Mrs. Richard Smit and their children, who were blessed by the Lord with the birth of a baby daughter and sister, Rosalyn Dawn, on Sunday morning, June 7.

In late June Rev. and Mrs. Jason Kortering left their home in West Michigan to spend three months in Singapore teaching in the Asian Reformed Theological School.

### Congregation Activities

**T**he congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudson-

ville, MI was invited to join their Fellowship Group as they bade farewell to Paul and Suet Yin Goh. Mr. Goh graduated from our seminary this past June, and he and his wife attended Georgetown for four years, while Paul was trained for the ministry in our seminary. Now we pray God's blessings upon them as they return to Singapore, especially praying that the Lord will bless Paul during his classical exam in late August, and that the Lord will open the door for him to be ordained into the gospel ministry soon afterwards.

This time of year one would think that church life would slow down a little in our various congregations, but just the opposite seems to be taking place in many of our churches, and it appears you can be as busy as you want to be.

Members of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI have organized a summer Bible study group that meets every Monday evening to consider A.W. Pink's book, "The Sovereignty of God."

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI invited friends and members of our churches to attend a series of classes on the Reformed creeds. Classes were scheduled for four Tuesdays in July and covered: The Development of Doctrine in the Church and the Importance of Creeds; The Ecumenical Creeds; The Reformed Creeds; and The Westminster Confessions. These classes were taught by Prof. H. Hanko.

The Byron Center, MI congregation was invited to take part in a Summer Reading Program. There were rewards planned for everyone in each age group who read at least twenty books from their church library.

Members of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, CN recently organized a Seniors Bible Study. This group plans to meet once a month at their parsonage. The first

meeting was May 7, with discussion being on Chapter 1 of "O Taste and See," by Rev. G. Vos. Coffee time discussion was on John 12:32 in "Daily Meditations for Spiritual Comfort" by Rev. J. Heys.

A Congregational Summer Doctrine Class was made available to members of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL starting already in early May. The class began by studying the 1st Head of Doctrine, Canons of Dordt: On Divine Predestination. About one month later, on June 2, Rev. D. Kleyn, pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC, invited his congregation to join him in a study of the Canons of Dordt. That first class planned to cover Head 1, Articles 1-6.

The consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC held a summer pre-confession/new members class, starting Sunday, June 15. This class was available to anyone interested in growing in the knowledge of the PRC and the Reformed faith. Subjects covered ranged from "Introducing the PRC: Faith and Practice" to the "Anti-Christ" to "Women in Office."

The congregation of the Loveland, CO PRC was invited to continue attending a class on the history of the split of 1953 in our churches.

With thanksgiving to God, Cornerstone PRC in Schererville, IN met in their new church building for the first time on June 29. They are thankful for the blessings of God seen on their building project. Their morning services will be held at 9:30 A.M. and their evening services at 5:00 P.M.

### Missionary Activities

**R**ev. A. Spriensma, foreign missionary in the Philippines, provided a slide presentation on the mission work in the Philippines on Sunday evening, June 29 at the Doon, IA PRC. All were cordially invited to attend, to see for themselves the progress of our mission

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



work in metro-Manila and the other two areas of labor.

Rev. R. Miersma and his wife, Sharon, left their pastorate in Lacombe, AB, Canada on May 27

for the Ghana mission. They planned to labor there until July 22, while our foreign missionary, Rev. W. Bekkering, and his wife, Phyllis, were in the United States on furlough. In their absence, Im-

manuel's consistory arranged for pulpit supply from Rev. Dale Kuiper for the month of June and Rev. Gise VanBaren for the first three Sundays in July. 

## Announcements

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Hudsonville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Wanda Kamminga and her 6 children, and to Mrs. Betty Kamminga, in the passing away of their dear husband, father, and son,

**ELDER DAVID KAMMINGA.**

We pray that the family will experience the gracious love and comfort of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who took our brother in Christ to his eternal rest. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11: 28).

Rev. Barry Gritters, President  
Ralph VanderVeen, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Randolph PRC express their sympathy to Shirley DeVries in the loss of her husband,

**JAMES DEVRIES,**

on July 2, 2003. We also express our sympathy to Don and Hilda DeVries, Ted DeVries, Frank DeVries, Hank and Barb DeVries, and Morry and Arlene DeVries, in the loss of their brother. May they find comfort in confessing: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved" (Psalm 62:1-2).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, President  
Mr. Gene Braaksma, Clerk

### NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene, the Lord willing, in the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois on Wednesday, September 3, 2003 at 8:30 A.M. An officebearers' conference is planned for Tuesday, September 2 on the subject, "Remembering the Schism of 1953." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging and/or transportation should notify the clerk of South Holland, Mr. George DeJong, 18320 Stony Island Ave., Lansing, IL 60438. Phone: (708) 895 4967. Email: buyspinach@aol.com

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, Stated Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With praise and thanks to our covenant God we announce the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

**TIM and CLAIRNE KOOIMA,**

on August 25, 2003.

We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together and for the covenant care and instruction they have given us. Our humble prayer is that God will continue to keep them in His care and bless their marriage in the years to come.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

✿ Marvin and Melinda VanMaanen

Carl and Jill Maassen

Mark, Byron, Alyssa

Brian and Janae VanMaanen

Kaleb

Nathan and Lisa Schiermeyer

Beth, Nathan

✿ John and Sharon Keizer

Kimberly and fiancé

Michael DeJager

Kerri, Michelle

✿ Steve and Rachel Kooima

Travis, Jessica, Lindsay

✿ Glenn and Krista Kooima

Justin, Kelsey, Jordan, Shane

✿ Kevin and Joan Kooima

Kayla, Matthew, Brandon

✿ Mark and Nancy Kooima

Connor

Hull, Iowa

### NOTICE

Seminary convocation will be held on September 4, 2003 at 7:30 P.M. in SW PRC.

### NOTICE

The Annual Meeting of the RFPA will be held on September 25, in Trinity PRC at 8 P.M.

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 2003 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

The Southeast PRC's  
Evangelism Society presents:

**Professor David Engelsma,  
Professor of Dogmatics,  
Protestant Reformed Seminary**

&

**Dr. Richard Mouw,  
President,  
Fuller Theological Seminary**

## A Debate on Common Grace

**Sunshine Community Church**

**3300 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids MI**

**Friday, September 12, 2003**

**7:00P.M.**

**FREE Admission**

Please plan to attend this historic lecture/debate regarding the vitally important doctrine of common grace and its effects upon your worldview!

## Reformed Witness Hour

### Topics for August

Date	Topic	Text
August 3	"A Light Unto Our Path"	Psalm 119:105
August 10	"Its Author"	II Peter 1:20, 21
August 17	"Its Authority and Profit"	II Timothy 3:16, 17
August 24	"Its Completeness"	Revelation 22:18, 19
August 31	"The Blessing of Christian Education"	Proverbs 22:6