

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The wonder of grace that grows richer every day is the fact that we are “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

(Eph. 2:10) Soli Deo Gloria!

See “Wonderfully Made” page 2

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

Wonderfully Made

Rev. C. Hanko

Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?

By no means, but God created man good, and after his own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him and live with him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise him. Heid. Cat., Lord's Day 3, Question 6.

A sorry testimonial.

Our Catechism is speaking of man, that is, of all mankind, of every man, woman, and child that ever lived or will live upon this earth. It speaks of you and me.

Our Book of Instruction makes bold to say that you and I are wicked and perverse, even so wicked, so very wicked and perverse. This conclusion our fathers drew from the previous Lord's Day. There we made the confession that we cannot possibly keep God's

commandments, because we are prone by nature to hate God and our neighbor. That is strong language. I hate God. I hate my fellow man. I hate my family and friends. Why else would I ever speak evil of them, or draw them into sin? Hatred implies wickedness. We manifest that innate hatred in every desire of our hearts, in every thought that flashes through our minds, in every word we utter, in every motion of the body, in every deed we perform. As Scripture testifies of us, "There is none that doeth good; no, not one." We grossly transgress all God's commandments, and keep none of them, for our very nature is perverse. By nature we are heretics. We love the lie that dishonors God and glorifies man. Sin appeals to us, lures us, so that God's "Thou shalt not" arouses the lion in us, the desire to do it because it is wrong. Children are like that, consciously choosing the path of sin. Young people and grown-ups are like that, ready always to condone their evil deeds. I search my soul and see that wicked, perverse nature that opposes God and defies all authority. Yes, even while by grace I will the good, I still find myself doing that which is evil. "O wretched man."

A leading question.

As this sixth question is formulated, "Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?" it is a leading question that requires a negative answer. That is obvious from the word 'then.' I can appreciate that little word 'then' in this question. Otherwise the question would be sheer blasphemy. Imagine! "Did God create man so wicked and perverse?" Perish the thought. Can there be unrighteousness with God? Can we lay the blame of our sinfulness on the Holy One? Let no man ever say that. Yet I can understand that the fathers put this question to us, for persistently the thought arises in our sinful souls, "Why is there so much misery in the world?" or, "Why am I conceived and born in sin?" or, "Do I deserve all this present misery?" and thus on and on ad infinitum. What right have we, mere specks of dust, to bring God to trial before man? What right have we to question the wisdom and power of the Most High? God is just in all His ways and works. Let all the earth be silent before Him.

The word 'then' makes all the difference in this first question. The result is that this question requires a negative answer. Our fathers had their own good reasons for formulating this question as they did. First, they wanted to show us by way of contrast how wonderfully we are made. Second, they wished to point out our exalted position in paradise, in order that we may realize how deeply we are fallen. Third, they wanted us to see that the accountability of our sins lies entirely with us. The accusing finger of God's law points directly at us. So that, finally, we may experience that only comfort in life and death, that we belong to Jesus Christ, in Whom is all our salva-

tion, in order that we may praise and glorify our Maker forever.

God's Masterpiece.

What holy amazement must have flooded the soul of Adam in that first conscious moment when he viewed paradise in all its splendor. His eyes beheld the beauty, his ears snatched up the music, all his senses were stirred by the marvels of his home so painstakingly prepared for him. For the past six days the Almighty had called the things that were not as though they were. On the first day of all days God caused an unformed mass to appear, much like a batch of dough, out of which every earthly creature would be brought forth. By the word of His power God caused the light to radiate upon the earth in such a way that there was at once evening and morning, night and day. The second day the broad expanse of the heavens were spread out, as a scroll that was rolled open. On Wednesday, so to speak, God caused the dry land to appear, soon decked with grass, vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees. On the fourth day our Maker caused the sun to shine in the heavens, and caused the moon and stars to be the guardians of the night. On the fifth day the Almighty brought forth from the waters fish that darted through the seas, lakes, and streams, and birds which filled the air with activity and song. On Friday animals of every sort were brought forth from the earth to make their home in the garden. Last of all, the crown of the earthly creation appeared, looked around, was filled with holy wonder, and must have shouted, "My God, how great Thou art!"

It appears to me that we shall undergo a similar experience when we step out of this vale of tears into the heavenly Home of Father, where our mansion awaits us. That experience will again be ours when in that great Day of days God makes all things new, and we shall see Him face to face. We will burst forth with exuberant praise to glorify His adorable Name forever.

We are told in Genesis 2, that Jehovah, the Almighty (the Lord God) formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, whereby man became a living soul. On the one hand, there was a certain close relationship between man and the animal. Both were created on the sixth day. Both are referred to as living souls, that is, creatures that breathe and move about by their own volition. There is a certain attraction of man to the animal, and of the animal to man, as is still evident, for example, in the dog and the horse. On the other hand, there is a vast difference between the two, so that man could never have evolved out of the animal. First, the creation of man is a distinct act of God. God speaks as triune God at this momentous occasion. Each said, as it were, "I would make man." In

unison of spirit they say, "Let us make man in our likeness." Second, while God *made* the animals, He formed man as a masterpiece of skilled workmanship, destined for a place in the new creation. Each man is an individual, a distinct person down to his finger prints and the tone of his voice. Third, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Man consists of soul and body. While the life of the animal is in its blood, man's body is subject to death, but his soul enters eternity, either heaven or hell. He was created fit to be *image bearer*, bearer of the image of God. The animal stood with its head to the ground, expecting its existence from the ground, but man stood erect with his face lifted heavenward. He had a regal bearing. His eyes were the windows of his soul. His face bore the individual stamp of his person, gave expression to his inner feelings. He could think, reason, plan and devise. He could experience strong emotions of love, joy, blessedness. He could give expression to his thoughts and feelings by his ability to speak, by the skillful dexterous use of his hands, and by the motions of his body. Along with all this, he actually bore the image and likeness of God. He was created in God's image to know God, love Him and serve Him. It was his joy, his life, to devote himself with his whole being in love to God. In one word, he was good, that is, he could serve the purpose for which he was created. He was wonderfully made.

Adam's exalted position.

Our Catechism teaches us that Adam was created after God's image in true righteousness and holiness. Whereupon it adds, "that he might rightly know his Creator." Scripture speaks of the image of God as consisting of all three elements, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Adam knew God intuitively. He knew that God was the Almighty Creator who still upheld all things by His almighty power. He saw God's perfections in the individual creatures. He knew God as his God, his sovereign Friend. Adam loved God. He heard the whole creation, from the broad expanse of the heavens to the small insect singing the song of creation. His soul joined in singing the praises of his Maker. Adam was devoted to God as God's friend-servant, employing the whole creation in serving his God. He was God's prophet, but also God's priest, and at the same time God's king amidst the earthly creation.

Adam was lord over all he surveyed. Every creature served him. The streams quenched his thirst, the fruit of the trees was his food, the animals came at his beck and call. There was a perfect harmony between every creature and its king, a closer relationship than we can imagine today.

At the same time Adam consecrated himself with all creation to his God. When God filled in the one lack in his life by bringing Eve to him as his helper,

his life was complete. As husband and wife they reflected the covenant life of intimate fellowship that they experienced in their communion with God. As they communicated with one another, they communicated with God. This was their very life, expressing itself in its fulness when they walked with God in the cool of day. Devoted to God, they were also responsible to Him. As God's creation they were called to love the Lord their God with their whole being continuously, positively by taking care of the garden, negatively by refusing to eat of the forbidden tree. They were accountable to no one but God, yet they were entirely accountable to Him. And well may we add, rightly so! For God is GOD.

The implications.

I have been speaking repeatedly of *Adam*; our Catechism speaks of *man*. You will notice that our fathers accept without any question the fact that Adam was created as our first father, the root of the entire human race, and at the same time our representative head. Never may we deny that Scriptural truth. Never may we question the justice of God in making Adam our representative head in paradise. We simply accept that and take it for granted, as our fathers did.

It also becomes evident to us, that our first parents were created fallible. Although they were created good and upright, they could fall. Adam and Eve could become unfaithful to their covenant God by eating of the forbidden tree. They could disobey God's command, fall away from God as rebels against Him. Their love could turn to hatred against God and their neighbor. Their very nature could become wicked and perverse.

As we know, Adam did fall and die. Because Adam stood in such an exalted position as king of the earthly creation he could fall into depths of spiritual servitude; a slave to sin, in the bondage of death. Because Adam was our representative head and our first father, we all died in him. Since we are now conceived and born in sin as part of the fallen human race, there is, as far as we are concerned, no escape from this present death. God is just in condemning us to hell.

Finally, God in His holy Word shows us the only possible way of salvation. What is impossible with man is possible with God. God Himself brings the perfect sacrifice for the sins of His people by the death of His own dear Son on the cross. The wonder of grace that grows richer every day is the fact that we are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

(Eph. 2:10) Soli Deo Gloria!

EDITORIALS

Changes For the New Volume

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Annually during the month of June the Staff of our magazine meets at the time when the Synod of our Protestant Reformed Churches is meeting. It would be more accurate to say: as much of the Staff as lives in the vicinity of Synod's meeting or is present for Synod. Sometimes this means a fairly large representation, sometimes a rather small one. We have this arrangement, of course, in order to save money. No funds are ever spent for Staff travel expense; and, in fact, no funds are ever spent for any Staff expenses. The rewards of our writers are not financial; they write "for the cause."

At the annual staff meeting we try to lay some plans for the new volume-year, which begins with the issue of October 1. These plans are, of course, limited by the availability and willingness of writers for our magazine. In many a past year this has meant that we were severely limited, and that therefore the amount of variety in our *Standard Bearer* was also limited, and that the rather arduous task of supplying some 55 pages of typewritten copy to fill our 24-page magazine had to be accomplished by relatively few men. We simply did not have the manpower for a greater division of labors and a greater variety of material. But this year, we are happy to report, our Staff has reached an all-time high — at least for the last twenty-five years — in the number of department editors. This is all for the good, we believe. For one

thing, it means that our *Standard Bearer* can make a gradual transition in the inevitable replacement of its older writers; and when the old soldiers finally have to retire, the younger men will already be on duty and have experience as staff members. For another, it enables us to have more variety; and variety, they say, is the spice of life. It is particularly gratifying, we feel, to see several of our younger ministers assume the responsibility of writing. As editor, I wish to express publicly my appreciation for their willingness to join our Staff.

What changes will there be in this new volume-year?

First of all, Rev. J. Kortering is leaving the department *The Strength of Youth*. He is not leaving the staff, however, but will be writing for a new department, *Triumph Through Trials*, about which he will tell you himself. Secondly, taking over *The Strength of Youth* will be Rev. Rodney Miersma and Rev. Ronald Van Overloop. In the third place, joining Rev. Mark Hoeksema in *Signs of the Times* will be Rev. James Slopsema. For the rest, all staff assignments will remain the same; besides, as in previous years, we also will have several guest articles from various of our ministers.

May the Lord bless our *Standard Bearer* and prosper its witness in this our fifty-fourth year!

"Our Song of Hope" - A Critique

You will remember that we are examining this proposed new confession of the Reformed Church in America from the viewpoint of what it has to say regarding those characteristic truths of the Reformed faith known as the Five Points of Calvinism. Last time we looked at "Our Song" in comparison with our Reformed faith concerning sovereign predestination. "Our Song" was tried and found sorely wanting.

Next we consider "Our Song of Hope" from the viewpoint of what it has to say or fails to say about the doctrine of sin, and specifically the doctrine of total depravity.

In order to do so, seeing it is several weeks ago that we reproduced this provisional new confession in full, let us take a second look at the specific stanza which speaks of sin, Stanza 2:

We know Christ to be our only hope.
 We have enmeshed our world in a realm of sin,
 rebelled against God,
 accepted man's oppression of man,
 and even crucified His Son.

God's world has been trapped by our fall,
 governments entangled by human pride,
 and nature polluted by mankind's greed.

The only other reference to sin and the fall that might be termed significant is found in line 2 of Stanza 3: "After we refused to live in the image of God. . . ."

Now this, mind you, is supposed to be a re-affirmation of the traditional faith in the contemporary situation. And this new confessional statement is intended for use in public worship and in religious education. In other words, with regard to the doctrine of sin it is the language quoted above which will be drummed into the minds and hearts of the membership of the RCA through recitation in public worship and in classes for religious education. It is this language, in effect, which will become the expression of what the RCA believes and confesses concerning sin. And the language of the old creeds will be neglected and forgotten, left to gather dust in the archives of the church.

Notice, in the first place, the studied attempt to be "contemporary" and to view sin on the horizontal plane, i.e., in terms of man-to-man and man-to-creation relationships. This comes to the fore in such expressions as: "We have enmeshed our world in a realm of sin . . . accepted man's oppression of man . . . governments entangled by human pride . . . nature polluted by mankind's greed." The fact of the matter is that a large part of this stanza is taken up by such matters, while the important aspects of the doctrine of sin are totally neglected. This is, of course, fashionable in our day. To talk about social injustice, about corruption in government, about pollution of the environment — all this is very "contemporary" and also quite painless and highly impersonal when it comes to the subject of sin.

Notice, in the second place, in close connection with the preceding, that the stanza gives expression to some bland generalities concerning sin — generalities, I dare say, to which almost anyone will subscribe if you allow him the liberty to interpret them as he sees fit. But that, you see, is the trouble with generalities. I would imagine that even a Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, at the extreme liberal end of the spectrum, would subscribe to this stanza of "Our Song." And I suppose this phraseology is very deliberately chosen to make "Our Song" palatable to all — to all, that is, except those who take sin seriously. For the fact of the matter is that this stanza never comes to grips with the horror of sin. It never comes to grips with

the kind of sin which a man knows who confesses that the heart of man is desperately wicked. It never makes any confession of sin which bespeaks tears of sorrow and repentance.

In the third place, the stanza is sorely lacking in some very fundamental specifics concerning sin. Permit me to point out some of the main ones:

1. It utterly fails to view sin as the failure to obey and the inability to obey the Law of God. And, in connection with this, it fails to view sin as a wanton offense against the infinite majesty of God and as being terribly displeasing to the living God, the Holy One.

2. It views sin, in so far as it says anything significant about it, strictly as the *act*, and says nothing whatsoever about man's *nature*, his heart and mind and will.

3. It says nothing about the origin of sin and about the fall. In fact, in his commentary Dr. Heideman makes plain that this is deliberate; and he makes some very strange comments about the fall:

"Thus we do not talk about the fall of the race as if it happened long before we were born. We know that it happened way back at the beginning of our race, but it has been happening and becoming greater in each generation. Even when we can no longer make contact with our ancestors (whatever that may mean! HCH), the doctrine of the fall of man remains true. . . ." (p. 22)

4. It says nothing whatsoever about the truth of man's total depravity, the truth that we are so corrupt by nature that we are incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil, unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

5. It says nothing whatsoever about the doctrine of original sin — either about original guilt or about inherited pollution. And again, in his commentary Dr. Heideman presents his own doctrine of original sin, with which no Reformed man could possibly agree. He writes:

"We are enmeshed in systems of life which embody the sin of our race. That sin reaches into our political, economic, social, educational, and even into our religious institutions. The way we speak our words, frame our thoughts, and eat our food is part of that realm of sin. It not only touches our souls; it reaches into our bodies, causing blindness in some, malnutrition in others, and kills those who do little harm to others. In the words of the Scriptures, we battle not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities, against the rulers of this age. We feel ourselves caught in a web of evil even when we cannot locate the sources of that iniquity. This web of sin in which we are trapped is what the theologians in the past called 'original sin,' or even 'inherited sin.' (I

wonder which theologians those were; they surely were not our Reformed fathers. HCH) By this phrase they did not mean that God had created an evil world. On the contrary, they always insisted that God had created the world good; it was man who had invented sin. Neither did they mean to say that sin was some kind of a biological inheritance, due to the fact that we are caught up in a world of matter. What they indicated by this phrase was the fact that so soon as we accept in any way our place in the human race (as if we could possibly decline it! HCH), we willingly participate in the whole nexus of sin in the world. By accepting language, family life, money, clothing, food, etc., we accept the way in which a fallen race does things and begin to participate in that realm of evil ourselves. Modern psychologists and sociologists have traced out in detail the struggles, clashes, and jealousies which take place in families. They have shown how even sexual union, that beautiful gift of God for human love, has been corrupted into a battle ground."

Now I must profess that I thought I knew what the doctrine of original sin was. I also thought I knew a bit about how theologians in the past explained this

doctrine. But if the above is true, then I missed the boat somewhere. I have never before seen such an explanation, and I fail utterly to see even the remotest reason why the above description should even be referred to as what theologians in the past referred to as original sin. Of course, this commentary is not official; and it is not the only possible interpretation of "Our Song." Perhaps some RCA theologians can outdo Dr. Heideman.

If after this taste of theological poison you feel in need of an antidote or a purgative, I suggest you go back to the tried and true Reformed confessions. Read the Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 3 to 11, the Belgic Confession, Articles 14 and 15, and the Canons of Dordrecht, III, IV, 1-4. For truth, for beauty, for precision, and for God-glorifying confession of faith they are unexcelled. "Our Song of Hope" cannot even compare! And make no mistake about it, "Our Song" is a completely NEW confession, not a confession of the old truths in contemporary form.

Once again the verdict must be: tried and found wanting!

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Justification Without Works

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and that therein our righteousness before God is implied: as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man, that God imputes righteousness to him without works. And the same apostle saith, that we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in anything in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours, when we believe in him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities, and to give us confidence in approaching to God; freeing the conscience of fear, terror and dread, without following the example of our first father, Adam, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig-leaves. And verily if we should appear before God, relying on ourselves, or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should alas! be consumed. And therefore every one must pray with David: O Lord enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Article XXIII, The Belgic Confession

The title of this article of our creed, "Of Justification," is somewhat misleading, for the doctrine of justification has already been treated rather extensively in the preceding article. There is, however, a distinction. In Article XXII the *Confession* emphasizes the whole doctrine of justification by faith. In that article the *Confession* speaks of the fact that

this justification can only be appropriated by faith. In this article the *Confession* presents the all-important truth that justification is without works. God imputes His righteousness to us apart from any merit in us.

Justification is a legal concept which has to do with one's legal position before God. Legally, and apart from Christ, all men stand guilty before God.

All men fell in Adam, the legal and representative head of the race of mankind. In Adam all men are guilty before God. When man sinned in Adam he incurred a debt before God. With every sin he commits man only adds to that debt. According to the justice of God that debt can only be removed in the way of complete satisfaction. The debt must be paid. And, as long as that debt is not paid, man stands in a *state* of guilt before God. This is man's legal position before God and His holy law. This legal position or state must be distinguished from man's *condition*. This latter has to do with man's actual life and nature. According to his condition, man apart from Christ is fallen, totally depraved and incapable of doing any good. All that man is able to do by nature is sin.

Justification does not have to do with man's condition but with his state. Justification is that act of God whereby the state of the elect in Christ Jesus is changed from that of guilt to that of innocence. While the article does not mention this, it certainly must be said that Scripture teaches that justification is an eternal reality. Scripture teaches undeniably eternal justification. This means that eternally in the counsel of God the elect stand as perfectly justified and therefore eternally righteous in Christ. That "in Christ" is crucially important. The elect may never be divorced from Christ. Christ is always first in the counsel of God. God elected His people in Christ. And, therefore, justification may never be divorced from Christ. God views the elect as perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ. Eternal justification is taught already in the Old Testament. We read in Numbers 23:21: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord His God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." God from all eternity did not see iniquity in His chosen Israel. As one would expect, this doctrine is presented in even clearer light in the New Testament. The Scriptures declare in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The whole point is that there never was any condemnation for "them that are in Christ Jesus." We find the same truth in that beautiful doxology of Ephesians 1:3-12: "... According as he hath chosen us in him (that's Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (verses 4-7) Notice the legal terminology in this passage. The elect are chosen in Christ in order that they should be holy and *without blame*. They

were predestinated unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ. That term, "adoption" has a legal connotation. Finally notice according to the passage the elect in Christ have the *forgiveness of sins*.

That eternal justification of the elect in Christ is accomplished by Christ in His atoning death and resurrection. Concerning Christ the Scriptures tell us He was "delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:25) Christ as fully God and fully man stood before God in the place of the elect. And, Christ paid the debt for them on the cross by bearing for them the full wrath of God which was due them on account of their sin. On account of their offences Christ was delivered to the cross. And on account of their justification God raised Him from the dead. When God raised Christ from the dead He placed His seal of approval upon the finished work of the Savior. Thus the resurrection of our Lord becomes God's proof of the justification of the elect.

Finally justification will be finished and perfectly realized in the last day, the great day of judgment. Then when the exalted Christ appears at the end of the ages all mankind shall appear before Him. Christ, the Judge, will publicly declare before the whole world the elect to be perfectly righteous and worthy of everlasting life. In those justified saints shall be manifest the great glory of God Who forgave all their transgressions.

The blessings of justification are presented in classic Reformed theology as threefold. These blessings consist in the forgiveness of sins. On the basis of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, God declares the elect to be free from the guilt of sins. God dismisses those sins and regards the elect as if he never had nor committed any sins. The second blessing of justification is called the adoption unto children. God, when He justifies the elect in Christ, adopts them as His own children. They are given all the rights and privileges of children. God is their heavenly Father Who provides them with every good thing. The third blessing of justification is the right to everlasting life. As the forgiven children of God in Christ, the elect may be assured of the right to everlasting life. That is their eternal inheritance.

In this article there is little or no emphasis placed on the doctrine of justification as we have presented it above. In both this article and the preceding the *Confession* treats the doctrine of justification only from the point of view of its being a subjective blessing of salvation which the elect receive not by works but by faith. It looks at justification as it lives consciously in the heart of the child of God. For this reason the *Confession* views justification as synonymous with the forgiveness of sins. "We believe," the *Confession* declares, "that our salvation consists in

the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and therein our righteousness before God is implied." By this statement the *Confession* certainly does not mean to teach that our salvation consists entirely and only in the remission or forgiveness of our sins as if there were no other blessings of salvation enjoyed by the elect. Rather, the *Confession* means to emphasize that the remission of our sins or justification is the basic or fundamental blessing of salvation. It is indeed true that justification is synonymous with the forgiveness of our sins, and is therefore the basic blessing of salvation. Apart from the forgiveness of our sins there could be no salvation. But, if our sins be forgiven then all the rest of the blessings of salvation follow without fail.

It is also true that this forgiveness of sins necessarily implies justification without works. One who has no need of the forgiveness of sins has no need of justification. It is foolish to speak of justification by works, for one who can perform good works stands in no need of justification before God. The *Confession* is careful to prove this all-important point. Without quoting directly it appeals to Psalm 32:1, 2 where we read: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Ample reference is also made to the third and fourth chapters of Romans. In Romans 3:28 the Scriptures declare: "Therefore we conclude

that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Later in the same epistle the Apostle says: "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6) Grace and works are mutually exclusive. And justification is undeniably by grace without works. This is also fundamental, for if justification as the basis for all of salvation is by grace alone, then all of salvation is without our works and based in no sense upon them. Salvation is by grace from its inception to its end.

Neither is this doctrine of justification some cold piece of dogma. It affords unspeakable comfort to the people of God. It is exactly in the consciousness of our justification that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1) This is emphasized by the *Confession* which says that holding fast to this doctrine we will always be "humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we are, without presuming to trust in anything in ourselves, or in any merit of ours. . . ." Furthermore this doctrine frees "the conscience of fear, terror and dread. . . ." And, "verily if we should appear before God, relying on ourselves, or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should alas! be consumed." Holding fast to this foundation we will give the glory to God and we will have the confidence when we approach Him that He will certainly hear us.

ALL AROUND US

"Life less painful, death more hopeful"

Rev. G. Van Baren

In the spring, 1977 issue of the Bethesda Bulletin, there came to my attention an article by the chaplain of that institution, Rev. Richard Bennink, with the above title. The substance of the article is rather disturbing — for it is hardly Reformed and surely not Scriptural. He appears to reject the idea that God "permits" pain and death. He will have nothing of the thought that God uses this as a means of testing our faith. He has reservations about the idea that pain and death are the result of sin. He writes:

Along with our personal questions and pain we ask questions when others die, such as "Why do good people suffer and die? A traditional answer from the church has been that God does not cause pain and

death but that He permits it. God allows such things to happen. Why? Well, that is the problem with this answer. We have to explain why God permits it. Some have explained pain and death as a way in which the glory of God may be made known. But how does the pain and death of loved ones glorify God? How does the slaughter of innocent persons reveal God's glory?

Another explanation of why tragic events occur is that suffering and pain are God's means of testing our faith. Is God so capricious as to cause little children to die in order that He might test their parent's faith? Another explanation heard is that pain and death are the result of sin. As much as that may be true, are earthquakes the result of sin? Is this how God punishes sin? I do not believe in that kind of God. Any

attempts to explain pain and death in a logical and rational manner are foolish. There are no answers, no single solutions, no human reason for suffering, pain and death.

Bennink continues by pointing out that when Lazarus died, Martha had stated, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." He points out that Jesus "refocused Martha's attention from the present death to the present life. He did not tell her to have more faith or to recognize this as a test or to see God's glory in the event. He simply offered her his presence, and in that presence there was hope." The writer concludes:

There can be no explanation of pain and death. To have faith in Christ means that in spite of what we see and feel and experience in our lives, there is a hope that life has meaning and worth. The meaning and worth of being alive right now and offering our love and our hope to a world that is afraid of death.

With such ideas, what comfort can a child of God have? Where is the sovereignty of God? And if God is not sovereign, even over sickness and death, faith has no meaning whatever. What would faith in a non-sovereign God be, anyway?

It is true that the child of God is oftentimes at a loss to explain various afflictions which befall him.

Scripture, however, does very much speak of this. The whole of the book of Job reveals the sovereignty of God in the afflictions which befall the saints. Psalm 119 is filled with statements as, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (vs. 71). And: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (vs. 67). Or does not Scripture itself say, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). Note that this Word of God calls affliction "light" (though it does not always seem so), and "for a moment" (though often it seems to continue forever), but especially that it even is *used* by God to *work* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. So there is a Scriptural explanation of affliction and death. Many more passages teach the same.

Yes, there are problems and "whys" in the mind of the afflicted Christian. But the answer to all of this must never, never be a denial of God's sovereignty — for then affliction is only a matter of chance or accident — and then there is no comfort or peace in our trials whatever. Rather, with Paul, we confess: "And I know that all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Reports from other church synods

We have been observing reports of actions of various church bodies which have met during the past summer. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in N.A. (Covenanters) decided to make two changes in their regulations. Whereas formerly they held to "closed" communion (where only members of their own denomination could partake of communion during their services), they now have what we would call a "close" or supervised communion where their session (or consistory) may grant an applicant the privilege to partake. The second change they made seems to allow an applicant for membership to join without subscribing fully to the standards of the church. This means, it is said, that if one does not subscribe to the church's teaching concerning the exclusive use of psalmody in worship, he may yet become member.

Among other decisions, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church US took action approving new ordination vows which take immediate effect. Critics claim that the new vows allow an officer of the church even to deny the infallibility of the Scriptures. This same body, according to the *Presbyterian Journal* of July 6, 1977, "endorsed a controversial study paper on homosexuality, took a position opposite from that of Anita Bryant's 'Save Our Children' movement, and beat back efforts to say that

homosexual activity is contrary to Scripture or that it is a sin."

According to the *R.E.S. News Exchange*, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, after 29 years of study, adopted a book of principles and rules to govern the church more adequately. Debate was strong on another proposal to hire a full-time general secretary. The fear seemed to be that this would be the beginning of creating a "relatively independent bureaucracy" in the church. After first voting down the proposal, it was reconsidered and approved. On the Assembly there was voiced some opposition to continued membership in R.E.S. (Reformed Ecumenical Synod), but the membership was continued. The O.P.C. is one of five presbyterian and Reformed bodies which have decided to accept the invitation to meet concurrently at Calvin College campus next year in their annual meeting.

One of the more emotional issues at the Synod of the Reformed Church in America was the bankruptcy of one of their churches (San Dimas). It seems that many in that denomination (and others) invested in this church venture (millions of dollars) which subsequently went bankrupt. Many aged people lost their life's savings in the venture. The R.C.A. Synod refused to assume any moral or legal responsibility for

this, but did set up a relief committee to assist those who lost their life savings in the project. For the fifth consecutive year, the Synod referred to the Classes the issue of women's ordination to the ministry. If 2/3 of the Classes approve, it would then be brought to Synod for final approval. Last year, the issue was defeated by lack of only one Classis of the 2/3 majority needed. I suppose it proves the old point, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Next year, the R.C.A. will observe its 350th anniversary. It is the "oldest Protestant body with a continuous ministry in the U.S."

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church seemed to have its most heated debates in connection with their college (Erskine) at Due West, S.C. The

two central issues were the rules governing student behavior and the college's faculty hiring practices. It seems that recently the college allowed liquor in dormitories and allowed "closed door" visitation by male and female students. There was also a question of the Christian commitment of some of the faculty. The General Synod decided to direct the board to "require that those teaching Bible will personally affirm and teach the Scriptures as the infallible and inerrant Word of God." The board was also directed to end the permissiveness on drinking and drug usage as well as the practice of "closed door" visitations. However, some pointed out that the Synod by no means condemned these practices as strongly as it ought.

Does God love everyone?

In the *Banner* of August 26, 1977, Dr. John H. Bratt answers the question, I suppose as one could expect, affirmatively. He too has taken the position that not only is God's grace common, but also His love. It was precisely this inevitable development that our leaders feared in 1924 when they opposed the teachings of common grace. Writes Bratt:

It is not stated explicitly in the Bible that God loves everyone, but I do think that it is a valid conclusion from the Biblical givens.

God is the Creator of the world and of everything in it. He loves the world (John 3:16) and His image-bearers in it to such an extent that He was willing to send His Son to die for it.

The prophet Malachi ties up the two concepts of creatorhood and fatherhood when he asks rhetori-

cally: "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10). And fatherhood throughout the Scriptures is synonymous with love. We do have the interesting observation too of Mark that when the rich young man turned his back on Jesus, the Son of God Himself, "looking upon him, *loved him*" (Mark 10:21).

But what of passages of Scripture which speak of the hatred of God toward the wicked (Ps. 11:5)? What of Esau whom God hated *before he was born*? This can not refer to the nation Edom, nor can it possibly be that "Esau took his fatal step, and God hated his evil act." Whom did Christ love? In John 17:9 Jesus says that He does not even pray for the world. Yet does He love it? If He so loved everyone, did He die for everyone? What is the difference between Bratt's view and open Arminianism?

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Wanted: A Covenant Wife

Rev. John A. Heys

A man who was one hundred and forty years old wanted a wife; but it was not for himself that he wanted this wife. It was for his forty year old son who was not yet married, was in no mood to get married or even to look for a wife, and whose father was filled with concern, and was extremely eager to see this son married to a child of God before he

would leave this son and go the way of all flesh. For he, Abraham, had some very rich promises from God that centered in and revolved around his son, Isaac.

That son, Isaac, let it be said to his credit, and let it all be ascribed to the grace and providence of our covenant God, was not attracted to any of the flashy beauties in the land of Canaan. So often, it seems in

the church today, young men see the grass on the other side of the fence to be so much greener. What is a worse tragedy is that our young people often do not even see that there is a fence! They seem to be completely oblivious to the truth of the Word of God that they must marry "in the Lord." I Corinthians 7:39. There is no thought, or if there is it is quickly or ultimately brushed aside, of the truth that they are to marry to live for Him and out of Him. Paul's words that the believer must not be un-equally yoked together with one who does not believe refers, in their minds, to other situations and to other circumstances.

Now Isaac does not appear to us on the pages of Holy Writ as a man very strong in his faith. And when the author of the epistle to the Hebrews reviews his whole life to find the clearest and richest manifestation of his faith in God, he refers to his deed on his deathbed — at least so Isaac himself thought — of blessing his two sons concerning things to come. Yet he does here in his younger days reveal that he had no interest in the young women of the heathen nations among whom they dwell by God's appointment. This was not a natural thing. There were spiritual reasons, and he had been trained carefully and thoroughly by his parents and in no uncertain terms been taught that they were pilgrims and strangers in the midst of a people that did not know God.

Of late — for God works out His counsel and preserves His people in many different and wonderful ways — there was a physical, natural reason. Isaac knew that he was not to take a Canaanite for a wife, but it is also very evident that he had no interest in having a wife. Why did he not go to his uncle Laban and look for one among those who feared God? It may be argued that in those days the parents picked the husbands and wives of their children. But Isaac did not pick Jacob's wives. Jacob chose Rachel for her earthly beauty and took Leah only because he was deceived. But it certainly must be maintained that a young man could choose his own wife in that day. And that Isaac at the age of forty had no wife yet was not due to the fact that his father did not get him one up till that day.

The Scriptures reveal to us that Isaac mourned for three years for his mother, who had died when he was thirty seven years old. We read in Genesis 24:67 that "Isaac brought her (Rebekah) into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." It is, therefore, quite obvious that for three years he mourned over the death of his mother and was in no mood to seek a wife. He must have been very strongly attached in love to his mother, for when Abraham presented him with Rebekah he took her into his mother's tent. That tent had a strong attraction to him because it had been his

mother's. His heart beat for and still went out to her, and there was no thought or desire to go out and get a wife and have a family of his own. And, of course, God was behind all this and used this heaviness of heart in Isaac, in fact sent this mourning in his soul and kept it there those three years so that He would, in the way of Abraham's zeal, provide him with a wife who feared God and with whom he could be married "in the Lord."

We dare not say that Isaac had no covenant interest. We may not say that the covenant promises given his father did not concern him, and that he had no longing to see them fulfilled. Forty years is indeed more than half of our life today, except where there are those who are stronger than the strong of Moses' Psalm, those who reach fourscore years or more. He undoubtedly had intentions of marrying some day. Of him also we read in Hebrews 11 that he had the hope of God's promises. And at forty he, being relatively young, did not consign himself to a single life without thought of seed and of The Seed of the woman that was promised.

But while Abraham, the friend of God, the father of believers is still alive our attention is focused upon this man of faith and his endeavours to be sure that Isaac receives a wife that is spiritually compatible. And we see him call his most trusted servant, one that ruled over Abraham's house and was trusted with all the earthly possessions that he had, to entrust now also the life of his son as a covenant parent. So serious is the matter that he demands an oath of him. He will not have it that this servant, to whom he had given rule over all things in his house, would take a wife of the Cananites for Isaac. With Abraham it is a most serious matter. Today we hear so much about liberties and freedom. The present generation would throw up its hands in horror at the idea of a parent choosing a wife for his son!! Parents must keep their hands off. Children have rights too, and surely after they have become teenagers! But do not condemn Abraham. Do not accuse him of not loving his son and of ruling his son as though he were a slave. Instead, pray for the zeal and faith displayed in him, and take as much interest in your sons' and daughters' wives and husbands as Abraham did.

It is true that Isaac put up no opposition, and children today at very early ages put up strong opposition. Little children defy their parents today. Before they are even teenagers, sons and daughters tell their parents off and boldly and openly refuse to honour and obey them. And I am not talking about children in the world. Children in the church, young people, who hear the law of God tell them every Sunday that they must honour their father and mother, go their own way, and if the opposition gets to be greater than they can stand, they often leave

home to be able to go their way without this "chain around their necks."

But in all honesty it must be stated that parents do not show that same appreciation of the antithesis that Abraham revealed. And parents often send their children for social and carnal reasons where they will come in contact with the "beautiful, talented and handsome" of the world and become attracted to them. Instead of hiring a servant, or of instructing a servant and demanding an oath before God that these by no means take an unbelieving husband or wife for their daughter or son, they actually hire teachers and servants, and send their children away from the covenant sphere, with more interest in their earthly achievements than their antithetical walk as pilgrims and strangers here below. Parents can be far more interested in grandchildren than in covenant children. They do not manifest that sanctified joy of the Apostle John when he wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." John was speaking of his spiritual children. And should not a covenant parent be interested in his own flesh and blood and that these children walk in truth?

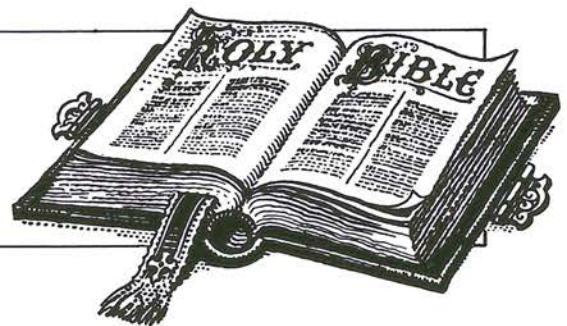
Abraham was. He wanted to see his children's children; and that was certainly behind his act of sending his servant to get a wife for Isaac. But that does not explain the oath which he demanded of that servant and the fact that he sent him away from Canaan. It was not a command to go and get "Miss America" or "Miss Universe" for Isaac. That could have been done perhaps in Canaan. At least Abraham must not rule Canaan out, if he wants that; nor must he limit his servant to his own kinsmen and to his country. Such a wife might not even be physically compatible for this quiet unassuming son of Abraham. She might be far too vivacious and quickly discontented and bored with the life he wanted to live. No, no, Abraham wanted to see covenant children, children in whom God's covenant promises would be fulfilled. Abraham was looking to the coming of Christ, The Seed to Whom God had given the covenant promises, and although it pleased God later on to use a Rahab who had spent some of her early life as a harlot, and a Ruth who was of the unbelieving nations of whom God said that they should not enter into the congregation to the tenth generation, and a Bathsheba who deliberately tempted the king of Israel, Abraham very correctly seeks a wife for his son that will be an help meet for

him in training the children in the fear of God's name. Abraham knows that Isaac himself needs a wife who will help him in his walk as a pilgrim and stranger seeking the city which has foundation and looking for the promises of God to be fulfilled in them and in their children.

A young man must in the church of God have a believing wife; and a believing young woman in the church must have a husband who walks in the fear of the Lord, first of all for their own spiritual lives. Yes, the children may come, and for them there must be two parents who with their own different natures can, being spiritually one, lead the children in the way of God's kingdom. But first, and before the children ever arrive, the husband needs for his own spiritual life one who walks with him and encourages him in his good fight of faith. And the wife in the church of God needs an husband who will strengthen her and help her in the walk of faith which must be hers. They must marry in the Lord in order that together they may live for Him and out of Him. Two lives must flow together that a stronger stream of worship and praise may result. They must be able to add to each other's spiritual life, not take away from and detract from each other's worship and service of the living God. Marriage, as is the case with all things, is and must be for God's sake. And to be married in the Lord means to be married in the consciousness of and willingness to honour him as Lord in a united life of spiritual dedication and separation from the world.

Abraham wanted to see that in Isaac. Abraham wanted that to *be* in Isaac. And he did not simply offer a prayer to God that He would give his son such an help that was spiritually meet for him. He did something about it. Indeed, we must make this our prayer to God for our children, and even after they are married, we are still to pray that God will be pleased to give them the grace, both of them, to be married in the Lord. It is not a matter of the moment of the ceremony with its vows. Their married life must be in the Lord. But we should do something about it as well as pray for it. We do not today pick out their husbands and wives. But we ought to give them good counsel and instruction as to what husbands and wives they choose for themselves, and as much as possible keep them from places where they will be tempted to look among the Canaanites instead of in the sphere of the Church of God.

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TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

Triumph Through Trials

Rev. J. Kortering

It sounds too good to be true — triumph through trials.

It even sounds contradictory.

Trials: the word is pregnant with heaviness:

- pain, “Oh God, how can I stand it; can’t someone do something about it?”
- misery, “Let me die; I can’t go on any more.”
- fear, “Is it cancer? How long do I have, Doctor? Will I have much pain?”
- sorrow, “He’s gone, Oh bitter grief!”
- loneliness, “The house rings with silence. I hear her voice, yet she’s gone.”
- guilt, “I deserve this, God is punishing me.”
- bitterness, “Why, oh God, why, why, why?”
- worry, “How will I ever make it?”
- doubt, “I don’t know; I just don’t have the strength of faith. How can I be a child of God if I feel this way?”

This list is not exhaustive. You can add more. The road of life is beset with so many trials that arise at any moment. The inspired Peter assures us of this: “Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations (trials),” I Peter 1:6. You, dear reader, have experienced these trials at many times in many places, the sickbed at home, the septic hospital room, the chilled funeral home, at the job, by the kitchen table, even during the sleepless night.

One does not easily escape the trials.

Yet we speak of triumph.

That word rings with victory:

- joy, “The Lord is good to us; praise His holy name.”
- peace, “All is well; we know God cares.”
- assurance, “I’m a sinner, saved by grace.”

— confidence, “We do not trust in men, we trust in the Lord.”

— purpose, “God will work all things for our good, that we can better serve Him.”

The two may sound contradictory, yet they are not. Trials are real, but faith enables us to triumph over them. It is not so that faith brings about a victory in spite of the trial, as if they are two opposing forces, and faith wins out. No, faith enables us to have the victory *through* the trial. That is, the trial is a *cause* for victory.

The passage of I Peter 1:3-9 helps us to understand this.

The reasoning of the Holy Spirit is as follows.

First, we are begotten by God to an inheritance: heaven. “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” verses 3 and 4.

Second, we are kept by the power of God to attain this inheritance, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time,” verse 5.

Third, the trial will not last forever, it is for a season, “Now for a season . . . ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” verse 6.

Fourth, the present season of trials is necessary. It does not come by chance, “Now for a season, *if need be*, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” verse 6.

Fifth, this necessity can be seen in that trials contribute to our being kept in the power of God unto salvation. God uses these trials to strengthen us, “The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might

be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," verse 7.

Finally, through these trials we receive the end of our salvation, "even the salvation of your souls," verse 9.

Armed with such spiritual insights, we are able to triumph over the trials of life. We say with the Apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We also "greatly rejoice," though now for a season we are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That rejoicing is in the Lord Jesus, "Whom, though now we see not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The heaviness of the trial is overcome by the triumph of faith.

As we examine the Scriptural basis for this triumph, may the Lord speak to each one of us that it may be ours, whether we presently are experiencing these trials or must be prepared to face them when the Lord finds it necessary to bring them upon us.

"Tho flesh and heart should faint and fail,
The Lord will ever be
The strength and portion of my heart,
My God eternally."

Psalm 73

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Time and Our Calling

Rev. Rodney Miersma

Time!

Time is one thing about which we as youth seem to think so little. We are young; there is so much time left in our lives. But stop a moment, think, do we really know what time is? It is measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, and other similar terms. We can think of a time to get up in the morning, lie down in the evening, time to eat and drink, time to go to school or to work, or a time to go to church. But do we still know what time is? Genesis 1:1 says this; "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Yes, that was the origin of time; it is a creature created by God just as well as the light, the firmament, and all else that God created on those first six days. In fact, time is so much a part of creation that to it we are bound. It governs and rules our entire life. One simply cannot escape its clutches for it controls all that we do and all the creation in which we live.

Since time is a creature it also was affected by the fall into sin by our first parents, Adam and Eve. As the rest of the creation came under the curse, so also did time. The result, of course, was disastrous for man. Since the fall, everything that man attempts to accomplish is foolish and empty, for time brings all man's work to destruction. Psalter #247, a versification of Psalm 90, says it this way: "Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day." That

is right, irresistibly man is carried by this stream to the grave; and all of his mighty works perish with him.

We know that there is a purpose in all that God created, time included. There arises then the question, What is the purpose of time? Certainly it is not an endless succession of moments. No, time has an end, but that end is not a mere arbitrary stop at some arbitrary moment in the misty future. Rather, time works for the end of time, that is, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven. When that goal is reached, time shall be no more. All that God has determined to do in His counsel will have been realized when this end comes. However, in order to obtain that goal, time must also be redeemed from the curse which God placed upon the creation. This is necessary, for in the world of sin time is useless and vain; in fact, it is man's enemy, dragging him remorselessly to the grave. Therefore, time can only serve the purpose of God and point towards the day of Christ's coming again, because Christ has redeemed time. As the redeemer of time He rules over all God's works and therefore is Lord over time as well. He came into this world, our time, worked and ministered, set up the cross, suffered, died, and rose again. In that glorious work He redeemed time, for He came to atone for sin, to bear the burden of God's curse, to pay here the penalty for man's transgression. Thus Christ made time to serve the purpose of God. As

Lord of God's creation He rules time and history in such a way that the purpose of God is accomplished and time comes to its end in the return of Christ from heaven.

By this time you are perhaps asking yourselves, "To where is this all leading?" Look at it this way. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ; He saved us from our sins. But we still live in this world. Before eternity is ushered in we are called to live in time for a while. While we are living in the course of time we are called to redeem the time. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:15, 16 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." This is the call to walk a sanctified life, the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man. If we do not redeem the time, then we live as the world lives and we are carried by this stream of time merely as creatures of time. The muddy stream with its hopeless current pushes us relentlessly to the inevitable end of destruction. Living this way we seek only those things which time has to offer. In other words, we divorce time from the purpose of God. Having divorced time from its purpose, our life also loses its purpose and we are caught in a whirlpool, a swirling eddy of hopelessness. Take a hard look at this truth as you drive through the neighborhood or listen to the conversation of fellow-workers. What do you see and hear? This: the ungodly are completely selfish, working only for a bigger home, a new boat, another car, a longer vacation, a better tennis racket or set of golf clubs, etc. Now none of these items are wrong in themselves, but they are objects of time which constitute the sole goal of almost everyone. However, since this is their goal there is always a sense of emptiness, of not having achieved what life is all about because time erodes these things and carries them away. Nothing lasts, they despair, and cry for more and more to fill an empty void. This we must guard against, for as children of God we are going to be most miserable if we do not lift up our eyes above the world. Our flesh wars against us for the temporal things which are objects of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. We must seek the kingdom of heaven as pilgrims in a strange country seek a better country, yea, an heavenly country where our citizenship resides.

Covenant youth, your strength and my strength is in Christ Who calls us to redeem the time. This implies, in the first place, that we see and believe the works of God as He performs them in Christ. Then we can observe the fact that Christ reigns supreme over time and that He uses it to serve the purpose of God. Time will no longer be a puzzle but we will understand it because we can see it correctly in the light of God's Word. Secondly, having seen that

Christ is Lord over all, we know that He will bring also time to an end in order to usher in the everlasting kingdom. Then the pleasures and treasures of this present world will lose their appeal and we will long for that new heaven and new earth where God shall tabernacle with His people forever. Finally, motivated by the love of God in our hearts we will live a life of gratitude, using God's time unto the purpose for which it was created. With our eyes fixed upon the return of Christ we will utilize every moment of time to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The cause of God and the welfare of His church will always be foremost in our mind, that cause being the preaching of the gospel of salvation, for God through the preaching in the course of time gathers, defends, and preserves His church. Therefore, all of our labors will be directed to God's kingdom. When we work, it will not be for the purpose of satisfying ourselves with all the pleasures of the earth, but that we and our children may be instructed in the truth of God's Word. We will attend church because that church is our connection to Christ, our contact with the kingdom into which we presently shall enter. Consequently, this redeeming of the time, this seeking of God's kingdom, covers the whole of our life. Always we desire to walk antithetically as children of light, that is, contrary to the world of sin in which we are called to live for a short while. Walking in this way we walk in hope of the end of time when we shall be fully redeemed.

This kind of walk calls for wisdom. We must walk as a wise man walks, not as a fool. A fool, you understand, is one who knows reality but does not walk accordingly. This is true both naturally and spiritually. In this case reality is that time is under the curse of God, but redeemed by Christ, Who will bring it to an end and usher in the day of the everlasting kingdom. This reality the fool knows but ignores. He knows that the world is filled with death and decay, that sooner or later he too must die, that the creation in which he lives cannot last forever. But does he live according to that knowledge? No, rather, he adjusts his life to fit his own ideas. He preaches the social gospel in a vain effort to make this world the best of all places. He labors to build a heaven here on the earth, thinking that his house shall stand forever. He lives entirely for himself, sating himself with the carnal pleasures of this present time. But no matter how intelligent he talks, no matter how he thinks he can solve the problems of the world, he is a fool.

The wise, on the other hand, are wise because wisdom is the gift of God's grace which Christ earned for them by His obedient death on the cross. They know reality, are able to see the work of God in time and realize that it is not this world that counts, but the kingdom of heaven. So what does the child of

God do but adjust his life according to that knowledge. This knowledge is our knowledge whereby we redeem the time, walking as children of the light in the hope of Christ's return.

Referring back to Ephesians 5:16 we see that Paul not only warns us to redeem the time but that there is an urgency with respect to that call "because the days are evil." Looking about us in the world it is not hard to see that. Contrary to what the modern philosophers and evolutionists tell us, the world is not getting better, but is getting increasingly more and more wicked. The cup of iniquity is getting fuller and fuller. Sin, like a tree, begins small but grows and grows. The more man invents, the more he has with which to sin. A good case in point is the very country in which we live. Reputed to be the most civilized of nations, it is fast becoming a cesspool of iniquity, lawlessness. There is no respect for authority in the home as this basic institution is broken up by divorce and women's lib. This in turn influences the rest of society so that there is no respect for authority in the school, the church, in labor, or for the government officials. It is fast becoming a nation where everyone

does that which is right in his own eyes. And to make matters worse, this "doing your own thing," asserting your "rights," is approved and condoned by the world and the church alike. We are bombarded from all sides by the false philosophy of the devil. And it all looks so appealing as the church attempts to clothe it in her pious robes, a sure sign of the "mother of harlots" uniting with the antichristian powers. And what we see in the world is also true of that which calls herself the church. The love of the truth is gone. Oh, the appearance remains — a form of godliness but a denial of its power, white-washed sepulchres filled with dead man's bones. Truly the days are evil.

Are you wise? If you are, you will soon see that all this points to the foolishness of ever expecting heaven here on the earth. Do not, then, seek this earth, but seek the kingdom of God, redeeming the time, looking for the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven. This is our calling. Let us continue to call upon God's name to strengthen us that we may heed this calling to the end.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of Synod of Dordrecht

Historical Foreword

(conclusion)

(Connection: In the previous section, the Remonstrants were still trying to obstruct the convening of a National Synod, even after the States-General had decided it should be held in 1618. The Remonstrants sought a Provincial Synod in Holland — something which they formerly opposed. They tried to get an Ecumenical Synod. But the States-General continued to insist on a National Synod. The only thing accomplished by the Arminians was that this National Synod was again delayed for a few months. Meanwhile, in the various provinces, in some of which the ecclesiastical assemblies were badly rent, measures were taken to appoint delegates to the coming National Synod.)

Meanwhile the States-General, after they had various times ordered especially those of Utrecht to dismiss those new Soldiers, or City-Militia, and seeing that it was also known that they had been engaged for the purpose of hindering by armed force the ex-

ecution of the resolutions of the coming National Synod, in case perhaps the Remonstrants could not approve those resolutions, found it good to reject and to dismiss all these militia men, who were now some thousands in number. When his Excellency the Prince of Orange had accomplished this with unbelievable bravery, caution, dexterity, and skill, without any bloodshed, and had imprisoned the chiefest of them who had sought to oppose or to prevent this dismissal by force, then Johannes Uitenbogaard, Jacobus Taurinus, and Adolphus Venator, being aware of danger, forsaking their Churches, fled from the United Netherlands. A short time afterwards Nicolaus Grevincovius, having been cited by the Court of Holland to answer for the same thing, also fled.

And when in South-Holland the particular Synod

was gathered at Delft, in September, then many Remonstrants, despising the previous Resolution of the States, refused to delegate anyone to the Synod. Instead, by petition they besought the States of Holland and West-Friesland, September 13, that instead of the National Synod, which was already authorized, another gathering should be convened, according to the same twelve conditions which those who were cited proposed again a little later in the National Synod. The States, having heard the advice of the Synod of Delft concerning this request (which is also in these Acts), ordered that they should obey the appointed order and the command of the States, and besides, that they should fully declare their views concerning the articles presented in the year 1613 at the Delft Conference, in writing, to the Synod of Delft, and along with this all their accusations against the Confession and the Catechism of these Churches. They delivered the declaration of their views concerning the aforementioned Articles; and this, having been translated into the Latin language by the delegates of this Synod, was shortly afterward forwarded to the National Synod. But instead of the accusations against the Confession and the Catechism, they sent certain things taken from the writings of some writers as being in conflict with the Confession and the Catechism. Johannes Uitenbogaard and Nicolaus Grevincovius were cited before this Synod; and when the one, being a fugitive, did not dare to appear, and the other stubbornly refused to appear, both of them, after the accusations brought against them had been heard and investigated, were deposed from ecclesiastical office by the sentence of the Synod. And because, besides these two, there were also many others, some of whom had been forced upon the Churches in the course of these disunities contrary to their desires and without lawful calling, some of whom had scattered abroad various Socinian errors in addition to the Five Articles, some of whom had grievously offended the Churches with evil and disorderly actions, and some of whom led an evil life, it was judged necessary that the Churches should be purged of these offenses, and the neglected discipline *Cleri* (as they say), that is, discipline of the ministry of the churches, should again be established, and all those irregular Ministers should be summoned to give account both of their calling, of their doctrine, and of their life. It was further judged that this must be done before the holding of the National Synod, in order that if anyone perhaps found himself aggrieved by the sentence of this Synod, he might appeal to the judgment of the National Synod. Among these there were some who appeared and who, after a proper investigation of their cases, were suspended from office, while others were immediately deposed. But of those who because of the brevity of the time could not be cited nor heard, or who, having been cited, did not

appear, five Ministers were appointed, to whom the States added their Deputies, to take cognizance of and to judge their cases in the name of the Synod. These Deputies were expressly mandated that they should exercise no censure over anyone on account of their views of the Five Remonstrant Articles, seeing that the judgment of these must be entirely reserved for the National Synod. And although they partly suspended and partly immediately deposed many in various places on account of the aforesaid and very weighty reasons, even during the National Synod, they never exercised censure on anyone on account of his views of the Five Articles, as can be clearly proved from the minutes.

In North-Holland they acted similarly in the Synod of Hoorn, in which the Ministers of Hoorn, Johannes Valesius, Johannes Rodingius, and Isaacus Welsingius, being suspended from the office of Minister, appealed to the National Synod. And when the Deputies of this Synod, together with the Commissioners of the States, investigated in the Classis of Alkmaar the case of Johannes Geystranus, Minister at Almaar, and of his brother Petrus Geystranus, Minister at Egmond, it was found that they were entirely committed to the blasphemous and accursed errors of Socinus, as appears from their confession, which, since it was to the horror of all openly read in the National Synod, is also included in these Acts. Also in the Synod of Overijsel some of the Remonstrants were ordered to give account of their doctrine and their actions. And seeing that among these there were also the four Ministers of the Church of Kampen, Thomas Goswinus, Assueris Matthisius, Johannes Schotlerus, and especially Emerardus Vosculius, who had been accused of many errors and of various disorderly actions, after the case was investigated it was decided to forward it to the National Synod; and accordingly it was brought to that Synod afterwards.

Meanwhile, the States-General, June 25, had sent letters to his Royal Majesty of Great Britain, James I, to the Deputies of the Reformed Churches of France, to the Illustrious Elector of the Palatinate and Brandenburg, to the most Illustrious Count of Hesse, to the four Reformed Republics of Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Basel, and Schaffhuizen), to the Dukes of the Wetterau, to the Republic of Geneva, of Bremen, and of Emden. In these letters they requested them to send to this Synod some of their Theologians who were outstanding in learning, Godliness, and wisdom, who with their counsel and judgment might diligently labor to still the differences which had arisen in these Netherlands Churches, along with the Delegates of the Netherlands Churches, and might again bring peace to those Churches. Then, when all of this was thoroughly arranged and accomplished, at the set time the Dele-

gates of the Netherlands Churches and also the foreign Theologians, with few exceptions, arrived at Dordrecht; and the National Synod was begun in the Name of the Lord on the 13th of November. What was treated in this Synod the understanding reader will learn in detail from the Acts and Proceedings of Synod, which have now been published for the benefit and advantage of the Reformed Churches. But it was thought good to add to these Acts, besides other documents submitted to this Synod, the opinions themselves of all the Theologians concerning the Five Articles of the Remonstrance as they were presented to the Synod in order that the Reformed Churches should more clearly understand upon what passages of Scripture and what reasons the Canons are based. There is no doubt but that the understanding reader will discover in these opinions an altogether wonderful and complete agreement. In case it might appear to anyone that in certain less important things a degree of diversity arose, then this will even be a proof that in this gathering there was the proper freedom of prophecy and of judgment, and that nevertheless they all together with united voice agreed in the doctrine which is expressed in the Canons of this Synod, which were subscribed to by everyone, not one being excepted or making objection, for a testimony of unity.

Finally, all Reformed Churches are begged that

they will embrace, preserve, advance, and pass on to their descendants this orthodox doctrine, so solemnly declared and established from God's Word in this Synod, to the honor of God and to the comfort and salvation of souls. And at the same time they are asked to hold in esteem the Godly and never sufficiently praised zeal and diligence of the States-General of the United Netherlands for the preservation of the purity and soundness of the Reformed Religion, as well as the labor and blessedness of so many outstanding teachers of the Churches who were present at this Synod to stand for this doctrine and be favorable toward it. And above all they are asked earnestly to pray the good and almighty God that He should from now on mercifully preserve the Netherlands Churches, and also all others who with them confess the same sound doctrine, in unity of the faith, of peace, and of rest, and that He will impart to the Remonstrants themselves, yea, and to all others who are in error, better senses and understanding, and, by the grace of His Spirit, bring them at last to the knowledge of the truth, to the honor of His Divine Name, to the edification of the Churches, and to the salvation of us all, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom the Father and the Holy Ghost, the One true and immortal God, be praise, honor, and glory, forever. Amen.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

By Rev. G. Lubbers

THE GREAT FAITH-EXPERIENCE OF ABRAHAM CITED — continued (Galatians 3:6; Genesis 15:6)

What Abraham experienced under the stars of night was not an experience, which any astronomer in the world could ever have had, who did not read these "stars" in the light of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. They may see many mythical figures in the sky, as really all the ancient and modern pagans did and do; but they could not see any connection between these numberless stars and the numberless throng of the redeemed of all ages, out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. That connection is part of the mystery which was hid in God from eternity, and gradually unfolded in the Gospel in the

Old Testament, and finally fulfilled in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. This is implied in that profound statement of Christ in John 8:56, "Abraham your father rejoiced exceedingly that he might see my day, and he saw it and was glad." If Abraham saw "Christ's day," then he saw the suffering Servant of the Lord, as a prophet and a believer; he saw the Cross and the perfect righteousness for poor, damn-worthy sinners such as he was, and rejoiced in the glad prospect of hope and faith in the forgiveness of sins. Yes, Abraham perceived that this salvation, this righteousness was for him and for all his spiritual children, whether they were in uncircumcision or in circumcision. And he gloried in the

Lord, His righteousness. The "day," which Abraham rejoiced to see in the "Seed" which would be his, was that Christ became to him from God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30, 31; Rom. 4:1-11)

Particularly, we may say, that the text teaches that Abraham's faith was *accounted* unto him for righteousness. No, this does not mean that there was any *meritoriousness* in his faith; there was none at all. Faith is a gift of God and faith itself is one of the gifts of salvation which Christ merited for us on the Cross, and which is bestowed according eternal election which is before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1:4) This is what our fathers saw so clearly in the days of the Sixteenth Century Reformation, and expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 61: "... not that I am acceptable on account of the worthiness of my faith; but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ..." And the fathers of Dort write in the *Canons, Second Head Of Doctrine, Article 8*: "... that he (Christ) should *confer upon them faith*, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he *purchased for them by his death*. . . ."

Faith by which we are justified has too been purchased with the great price of the blood of the Son of God! What a cheap faith this is that is merely an act of man's imaginary free-will, and by which he determines his relationship to God in Christ as a justified sinner. This is not a faith at all. For faith is the tie which connects us with Christ, even as the branch is connected with the vine. Faith is the vibrant lifeline which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, both its first implantation and its continuance and perfection. It is all of God; God's gift it is whereby the almighty God draws us to Christ. (Eph. 2:8-10; John 6:44) It is really a new life in Christ: God's creation in Christ Jesus unto good works!

Such was the faith of Abraham! It was the tie which connected him with Christ and with the entire church, the multitude of the believers. In this faith we see that Abraham was a new creature. That was all that profited. It was faith which worked by love. (Gal. 5:6) And such was the faith which was accounted unto righteousness. Because faith laid hold on Christ, drank deeply from the fulness of Christ, it drank his righteousness. And God put all of the righteousness of Christ on Abraham's account. This erased Abraham's sin and guilt before God. In this righteousness, which was promised Abraham in the Christ, Abraham is righteous. Yes, his conscience accused him that he had kept none of God's commandments, yea, that he had broken them all; he was "ungodly" as he stands there looking at the stars of heaven, but he believed in God's Christ, and the finished work in the redeemed, justified, and sanctified

church of all ages, the Israel of God, and it was counted to him for righteousness without works of law which he had performed. (Rom. 4:5)

Those who would pervert the gospel of Christ in the Galatian churches disown Abraham; implicitly they deny that they are children of Abraham. And the experience of the Galatians is on a par with that of Abraham. They that are of faith are children of Abraham. Let no one further deceive you and rob you of your liberty and sonship in Christ Jesus.

THE TRUE AND REAL SONS OF ABRAHAM (Galatians 3:7, 8, 9)

This is a point which the Galatians must really see and perceive. It should be abundantly clear that "those are sons of Abraham" who are out of faith. These are in the great family of the redeemed, the household of faith, the Israel of God. Not a Jew is a son of Abraham as Jew, and a Gentile is not one as Gentile, but a class called "sons of Abraham" is taken by elective love out of both, out of all nations. These are a chosen generation, a holy priesthood, a peculiar possession unto the Lord, purchased with His own blood. (1 Peter 2: 9, 10; Exodus 19:6; Hosea 1:6-9)

The Scripture passage which Paul quoted from Genesis 15:6 clearly teaches this proposition. It is *propositional* truth which is implied in Abraham's being the *father* of believers and that he, as father, was the *proto-type* of the justification of all his children. And thus the proposition is cogent and irrefutable in our reasonable service and faith: only the ones who are out of faith, ingrafted into Christ, are sons of Abraham; heirs they are with Abraham, heir of the world, in the new heaven and the new earth. (Rom. 4:13) This is propositional truth which is a dogma, a pattern of sound doctrine. From this the church has wandered far in the past, and always the forces of darkness would pervert this truth. In our day we see this in the teaching of the so-called "kerugma," the "message" of the new "Hermeneutic" which distills its messages from the Bible, without preaching the Bible according to sound exegesis of it, as did Paul under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In this "know ye then" we see a very fine conclusion drawn from a seemingly obscure text in Genesis 15:6. The particle "then" is the translation of the Greek particle "ara". It indicates "a transition to what naturally follows by inference from what precedes." (Robinson's Greek Lexicon) Compare Rom. 7:21; 8:1 for two other examples of this Greek particle.

It should also be observed that the Greek verb in the text is *ginooskete*, which is translated "ye know." The term could be translated as an imperative: know ye. However, the context points out that the indicative mood must have been in Paul's mind: ye

know. For a very fine discussion on this point it is well to read Dr. Lightfoot, who refers to such passages as Gal. 4:8, 9; I John 2:29; Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 2:11, to demonstrate that the verb here means: see, perceive, recognize. They see this as an experiential fact, corroborated by the Scripture. Here they will not drown in the quagmire of human reasonings and uncertainties, but they stand on solid ground, and keep the course. The proposition stands: those who are of faith are blessed with faithful, believing Abraham. No one, who is *not* out of the faith, ever is blessed. He is under the curse of the law!

However, to make this one Scriptural teaching sure and steadfast in the minds of the Galatians he will cite another passage from Moses which is very clear and exact in regard to this matter of the "Gentiles" being the intended and God-ordained sons of Abraham without needing to pass through the ceremonial laws and ordinances of the Old Testament "law" as given by God to Israel through Moses. The passage here is the Word of God spoken to Abraham prior to his going forth from Ur of the Chaldees. God came to Abraham as the "God of glory." (Acts 7:2.) He came to Abraham in a glorious appearance, called a Theophany. He is the God of all glory, power, and majesty in infinite wisdom, love, and grace. And in His grace and glory He will save all the sons of Abraham. He gives here expression to what Paul calls in Ephesians 3:8, "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ . . . to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." For known unto God are all His works from eternity. Christ is before Abraham became. (Acts 15:18; Is. 45:20-25; John 8:58) And, therefore, Paul cites a very illuminating text in which the entire scope and design of Abraham and Israel as a nation is set in bold relief. It is within the framework of the teaching of this text that all the further experiences and blessings recorded concerning Abraham in Genesis and all of Scripture must be seen. The one text is recorded in Genesis 12:3b: "*and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" This is quoted by Paul here in Galatians 3:8.

1. It is quite evident that "all families" must refer to all "nations." And these nations were known to Abraham as they existed in his day as having come forth from the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These we have recorded for us in Genesis 10 and 11. And these had been formed by the Lord by the confusion of tongues at Babel. (Gen. 11:1-9) So these are very concrete nations, families of the earth. They were definite families which grew and developed into "nations."

2. It is also quite evident that this was the realization of the prophecy of Moses concerning the future of his sons as given in Genesis 9:24-27. The promise that Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem, and that Japheth would be "enlarged" refers to the salvation of the "families" of the earth. Abraham knew of this prophecy of Noah. It was the "tradition" of the elders in his day; yes, it was rather recently given. God now reveals more of the implication of the prophecy of Noah spoken by the Spirit of Prophecy. Noah was a holy man moved by the Spirit to speak a word which was not of private interpretation. (II Peter 1:20, 21) Surely, this Word of God to Abraham is anchored in the more sure prophetic Word of God unto which he did well to give heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place, till the day dawn . . . the day which he greatly rejoiced to see, the power and coming of Jesus Christ. Surely the day dawned in Abraham's soul when this Word of God came to him: in thee shall all nations be blessed.

3. Later Moses tells Israel, as recorded in Deuteronomy 32: 7, 8, that "when the Lord the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion in His people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Here we see both history and geography as in the hands of God, subservient to the gathering of the church in all nations. It is the manifold wisdom of God. Paul speaks similarly in Mars Hill in Athens, referring to the Lord's having "determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitations." (Acts 17:26, 27)

Annual Secretary's Report

Sept. 15, 1977

Dear members and friends of the R.F.P.A.

In this the 53rd year of publishing the Standard Bearer, the board comes with a report of the activities connected with its publication during the past year.

We are printing a total of 1900 copies of the Standard Bearer, and of these, 200 are kept for bound volumes; others are kept for reprints. With each

issue there are about 1600 copies mailed. To subscribers in the city of Grand Rapids, there are mailed 394 copies, plus another 482 copies in other parts of Michigan for a total of 876. In comparison, there are 124 copies mailed to Iowa, 103 copies to Illinois, and 83 to California. Jenison, Michigan continues to become quite an outlet for our magazine. There, 85 subscribers receive the Standard Bearer. That's more subscribers than the entire state of California.

The program of 10 issues for \$2.00 continues to be very successful. Many of these continue to be regular subscribers. The board urges those who know of someone interested in receiving 10 issues for \$2.00 or who would like the Standard Bearer on a regular basis to contact the business manager.

The board gratefully acknowledges the liberal financial support of our churches. Church collections totaled \$6,756.18 and gifts from individuals \$3,582.37. It is only through these generous donations and gifts included in the renewals that our printing and mailing costs can be met.

The board reports that the necessary forms have been mailed in, in order to obtain a tax exemption letter as a non-profit organization. This was a joint effort by the R.F.P.A. as the central organization and the Permanent Committee for Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature as a subsidiary organization.

The Membership-Education and Information committee has been busy trying to promote additional interest in our magazine. To that end, a

survey type letter was sent to all ministers, professors, and seminary students asking them for ideas on how to increase our circulation.

The board is grateful for the help of the seminary students, who along with the business manager, sorted out and put in proper order all the back issues of our paper. These issues are now ready to be bound. Each student received several bound volumes for his effort in this project.

The board gratefully acknowledges the work of our business manager. Besides mailing the Standard Bearer, he also is busy with the handling, processing, and shipment of book orders. We thank him for all the time and effort on behalf of the Standard Bearer and the Book Publication Committee. We thank Mr. Gerrit Pipe for his faithful efforts in helping with the mailing of our magazine. He has been active in the issuing of our magazine for about 25 years.

With thanksgiving, we acknowledge the faithfulness of our Covenant God. He has provided the means to publish our magazine and has, by his grace, guided and sustained those who write. Thanks be to God for our faithful Editor-in-chief and department editors.

Retiring from the board this year are A. Dykstra, C. Kalsbeek, and the undersigned. We thank these men for their dedicated labors.

The Standard Bearer is sent far and wide and is read and appreciated by many outside of our denomination. What a glorious privilege! Thanks be to God for our distinctively reformed magazine.

Bill DeKraker, Secy.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 1977, our beloved parents, Mr. & Mrs. Jay Boone, celebrate their thirtieth wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our covenant God for His care of them during these years and providing a home where we may know Christian love & discipline.

It is our prayer that in the years ahead they may continue to experience the blessed peace & tender mercies of the Lord.

"The tender love a father has
for all his children dear,
Such love the Lord bestows on them
Who worship Him in fear.
Those who His gracious covenant keep
The Lord will ever bless;
Their children's children shall rejoice
To see His righteousness."

Psalter # 278, vs. 1 & 5

Daniel & Jennie
Daniel, Mindi
Randall & Shelly
Douglas
Kimberly

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 1977, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, Mr. & Mrs. Louis R. Regnerus, will commemorate their 25th wedding anniversary.

With them, we are thankful to our Heavenly Father for His wonderful faithfulness towards them. We thank Him for giving them grace sufficient to instruct us with covenant love in the way of the truth. Our prayer is that in their remaining earthly pilgrimage they will continue to walk in obedience to God's Word and that together we may serve Him Who has so richly blessed us.

Their grateful children,

Ed and Kathy Vander Meulen
Marisa Dawn
Ryan and Nancy Regnerus
Ryan James
Evelyn Regnerus
Bill and Elaine Regnerus
Kimberly Ann
Marcia Regnerus
Louie Regnerus
Jim Regnerus
David Regnerus

South Holland, Ill.

NOTICE!!!

The Annual Office Bearer's Conference is to be held, the Lord willing, October 4, 1977, at the parsonage of our Faith Protestant Reformed Church located at 7194 — 20th Ave., in Jenison, Michigan. The meeting will begin at 8:00 P.M. Rev. C. Hanko will speak on the subject "CHRISTIAN LIBERTY".

All past and present office bearers are invited and urged to attend.

NOTICE!!!

The combined Mens and Ladies League Mass meeting for Fall will take place, the Lord willing, at Hope Church, Tuesday, October 11, 1977, at 8 P.M. Pastor Herman Veldman is to speak on the timely topic "THE COMING OF ANTICHRIST".

Mark your calendar now and plan to attend!

Mens Society Delegate League Board
D.M. Harbach, Sec'y.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CONGRATULATION

On behalf of the congregation of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan, we extend to Rev. Herman Veldman our sincere congratulations upon the completion of 45 years of faithful service in the ministry of the Word of God in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

It is our earnest prayer that the King of His Church will continue to bless and provide for Rev. and Mrs. Veldman in their remaining years of service in His Kingdom.

The Council of the Southwest
Protestant Reformed Church
G. Feenstra, Clerk.

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News From Our Churches

Our church in Randolph, Wisconsin, has a new trio consisting of Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. James Slopsema, and Candidate Kenneth Koole, from which the congregation will select one to receive a call to serve as their pastor.

Rev. Joostens of our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, stands before two choices with regard to the Christchurch, New Zealand area. He has received the call from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church there to labor in their midst for a period of five years, or he can be sent there under the sponsorship of our churches to labor for a period of one year.

The new address of Rev. Wayne Bekkering is: 722 Wild Horse Valley, Katy, Texas 77450. Rev. Bekkering has recently been installed as the first pastor of the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas. Rev. Bekkering's former charge in Randolph is receiving pulpit supply from our Seminary.

Recently, our churches and schools in the Grand Rapids area have received a visitor from Australia — something that does not happen very often. Miss Marjorie Martin, from the Ryke Reformed Presbyterian Church of Sydney, Australia was scheduled to present a short talk on "Life in Australia from a Reformed Christian's Viewpoint" in our Hudsonville Church on Friday, September 23. Miss Martin also illustrates her talks with a slide presentation of Australia.

The Council of our church in South Holland, Illinois has decided to produce a pictorial church directory for 1978. A publishing company does the photography and publishes the directory at no cost to the church. The company offers the family portraits for sale to the church families. The directory, then, is not quite free.

The Council of our South Holland Church has scheduled a number of special meetings during the past several months to continue their discussion as to how South Holland might meet the church's calling regarding missions.

The steering Committee of South Holland Young People's Society was already meeting weeks before the 1977 PRYP Convention to make plans for the 1978 convention for which South Holland is host.

On occasion, a little foreign language creeps into our church bulletins. The Edmonton bulletin has been known to print an appropriate text in the Dutch. Some months ago, the Hudsonville bulletin carried a notice that the Kerkeraad was scheduled to meet. In order to assist those of us not very well versed in the Dutch, the English equivalent of kerkeraad or church council was also printed.

Our church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is located a considerable distance from any other of our churches. Edmonton, therefore, does not often receive visits from other of our ministers. The last Sunday in July must have been just a little bit special, then, as the congregation had the privilege of having three ministers in their services, their pastor, Rev. Moore, and Rev. Miersma of Isabel, South Dakota, and Rev. Lubbers of Pella, Iowa. Rev. Miersma and Rev. Lubbers visited Edmonton with their families on vacation and both consented to preach in Edmonton while visiting there.

On the 5th of July, the Edmonton congregation sponsored a special public lecture under the theme "The Interpreting of The Bible." Rev. Moore treated the Biblical and hence the only proper Christian viewpoint of Hermeneutics. Edmonton also maintains their distinctive Reformed witness in the community with the distribution of a monthly paper authored by their pastor entitled "Biblical Studies of the Reformed Faith."

Nurseries for the care of small children during the Sunday service seem to be a much more common practice than was formerly seen in our churches. Recently Southwest, Hull, and Edmonton have instituted nursery care — at least during the morning service. This is usually accompanied by a request for nursery 'volunteers' and some children's toys. A few weeks later will usually see a set of rules approved by the consistory published in the bulletin.

A Quiet Thought taken from Toplady in the Southeast bulletin: "The book of life, or decree of election, is the marriage register of the saints; in which their everlasting espousal to Christ stands indelibly recorded by the pen of God's free and eternal love."

K.G.V.