

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... We will be raised in *glory*. Imagine that! No more sin. No more weaknesses resulting from sin. No more hindrances from having full and intimate communion of life with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Our resurrection bodies will be like the glorious body of Christ, fit to devote ourselves with our whole being, in the company of all the saints, and in the midst of the new creation to the praise of the glory of God's grace in the Beloved!

See "Our Resurrection Body" — page 427

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## I Believe in the Holy Spirit

Rev. C. Hanko

*Question 53. What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Ghost?*

*Answer. First, that He is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son; secondly, that He is also given me, to make me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me forever.*

*Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 20.**"I believe in the Holy Ghost."*

Precious jewels often come in small packages. It immediately impresses us that our Catechism is so very brief on this very important subject. Our second impression is, that it says so much in such

few words. Rick truths, deep mysteries of salvation are unfolded for our comfort.

The first question in my very first catechism book read: How many Gods are there? To which I was taught to answer: There is only one God. The



second question read: How many persons are there in God? We answered: Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ever since, we have been making the same confession every time the Apostles' Creed is read or recited.

The Trinity forms the basic truth in our Creed. We confess the triune God as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. I like to conceive of this confession in this way: The triune God as our Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. This triune God came into our flesh in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ, Who suffered, died, arose, and is gone into glory, from whence He will return as Judge in the last day. The triune God bestows His Spirit upon the exalted Christ, Who, in turn, pours the Spirit out upon us, His Church. By the Spirit Christ gathers, defends, and preserves His church; grants to us, its members, the communion of saints and the forgiveness of sins; and will ultimately raise our mortal bodies to take us unto Himself, to share His fellowship and His life in glory forever.

Whether our fathers understood the Apostles' Creed in that way, or not, this is certainly the underlying thought in this Lord's Day on the Holy Spirit. Above this Lord's Day I read, "Of God the Holy Ghost." And then I immediately notice that this heading covers all the rest of the Creed. Moreover, little is said about the person of the Holy Spirit, for all the emphasis falls on His work as Spirit of Christ in the church, in me.

We can appreciate that personal approach. No fewer than five times I am referred to as a personal believer. This is no abstract doctrine. Here we meet the living truth of the living God, the God of our salvation, Whom we confess in all the riches of His grace bestowed on us, that we may live with Him and glorify Him forever.

#### The Spirit of God.

"We all believe with the heart and confess with the lips that there is one only simple and spiritual Being which we call God" (The Netherlands Confession, art. 1). "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6:4). "There is none other God but one" (I Cor. 8:4). Moreover, there are within that one divine being three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

From this it is evident that the Spirit is not a mere power proceeding from God, but He is very God. Although He is often referred to as the third person of the Trinity in distinction from the first and second person, He is co-equal with both the Father and the Son. He also is Almighty, Omnipresent, Righteous, Holy, filled with Grace and Truth. Ananias and Sapphira sinned against Him. He can

be grieved. He can be offended. To sin against Him is to commit the unpardonable sin. In one word, He is God.

We know Him by His many names. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter. There are even more names. By these names we can know Him and speak about Him.

He is the Spirit of the Father, for He is eternally breathed forth from the Father upon the Son. (Spirit means breath.) He is also the Spirit of the Son, for He is breathed forth from the Son upon the Father. Thus He proceeds from the Father to the Son within the divine Being, and from the Son to the Father, so that Father and Son meet in Him. We have a faint reflection of that in our family life. A family generally consists of father, mother, and child. Father and mother find their own likeness, their unity and fellowship in the child. Thus God lives an eternal, glorious covenant life of intimate friendship in the Spirit, Who searches out the deep things of God. He is the HOLY Spirit, devoted in all that He does to the glory of God.

This Spirit is the Spirit of Life. The first verses of Genesis 1 tell us that the Spirit moved (hovered over, brooded) upon the face of the waters. Creation is the work of Almighty God, proceeding from the Father, carried out by the Son, the Word, and through the Holy Spirit, Who moved upon the waters. In that same chapter we are told that the triune, covenant God covenants within His own being to make man in His own image (verse 26). This is our Father's world. For He not only created all things in the beginning, but continues to uphold and govern all things according to His eternal purpose. God does this through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of Christ. For the whole course of history serves to bring us as His covenant people into His glory in Christ Jesus. At the holy conception the Spirit comes upon Mary, overshadows her and forms within her the Babe Jesus, God born of God. This Spirit filled Christ during His earthly ministry, equipping Him to carry out the divine program unto our salvation. On Calvary the Father lays His Son upon the altar, the Son surrenders Himself even unto death, and the Holy Spirit sustains Him until all is accomplished. God raised up Jesus by the Spirit, for the Spirit is always and in all things the Spirit of Life.

He is also the Spirit of Christ. When Christ ascended to heaven He again received the Spirit to equip Him for His task as Lord of Glory in the heavens. The Son of God in our flesh now has a Name above all names, with all power entrusted to Him in heaven, on earth, and unto the depths of



hell. The Spirit of God Who qualifies Him for that work is now the Spirit of Christ as He was given to the church on Pentecost.

Amazing gift.

Our Catechism teaches us to confess, "He is also given me." Will we ever realize fully what that gift means to us on this side of eternity? *God* is given to me! God comes to dwell in our hearts, to make His abode in us, to unite us to Him in covenant fellowship, to bless us, and to fill our hearts with joy and praise!

In a sense, that was true already in the old dispensation. God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in paradise. After the fall God spoke through angels, and through visions or dreams. God dwelled in the Most Holy Place, first in the tabernacle, later in the temple. The Spirit of God worked mightily in the prophets, in the priests, and in the kings, that each could function in their appointed offices. The Spirit of Christ made it possible for Enoch to walk with God, for Noah to find favor in the sight of God, and for Abraham to be God's friend.

This Spirit of Christ now works in a far richer measure in His elect. In answer to our Lord's intercession in the sanctuary, God bestows on Christ every blessing of salvation, which He, in turn bestows on us by His Spirit. The Spirit comes to dwell in us, renewing us, applying the Scriptures to us, bringing us to faith, to conversion, and unto the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. As the Good Shepherd Christ knows His sheep, He calls them by name, and they come to Him, to be led by Him into the eternal sheepfold in glory.

The Spirit dwells in us as the Spirit of adoption. "Because ye are sons (already from eternity and on the cross), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). Though our conscience condemns us, we are assured by the Spirit that we are reconciled to God by the death of the cross and have received the right to be sons of God and heirs of eternal life. Powerfully the Spirit cries until He teaches us to cry in child-like assurance: Abba, loving Father! Our Catechism adds, "He is given me, to make me by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits." We are made members of the Body of Christ. The life of Christ pulsates in our souls. By faith we know that God is our Father, Whom we love, in Whom we put all our trust, to devote ourselves to Him with our whole being. Although sin still wars in this body of sin and death, we are more than conquerors, for we are sons of God, princes and heirs, joint heirs with Christ, now to suffer a bit, that we may be glorified with Him forever.

The Comforter.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He promised His disciples and us, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Another Comforter? It would seem that Jesus intended to replace Himself with Another. For example, a father might leave his family and assure them, I am going away, never to return, but I will see to it that all your needs are supplied by someone who will take my place. Not so. Our Lord informs His disciples that He must leave them in His earthly form, in order to come to them in a better, permanent form. He does not leave us comfortless (like orphans), but He has returned to us in the person of the Holy Spirit to dwell with us and to abide with us forever.

Once Christ was *among* us; now He dwells *within* us. Then we saw Him with our earthly eyes in our likeness, now we see Him with the eye of faith, see Him crowned with glory and honor in the heavens. Then He left us in order to prepare a place for us where He is, now He is drawing us unto Himself that we may share His glory to the praise of the Father.

We have an Advocate in the heavens, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is our surety in the sanctuary. And we also have an Advocate within us, even the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Truth, Who leads us into all truth. He convicts of sin, humbles us and brings us to repentance, but also assures us of forgiveness by the mercies of Christ. He teaches us to pray, so that our real prayers are born out of the Spirit. And when we cannot pray as we ought, He intercedes for us with groanings that reach into the heart of God. He saves, He delivers, He protects and defends us, even until the day of our complete salvation!

I believe. I believe in God the Father. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our Lord. And I believe in the Holy Spirit. Through faith I am assured in all the trials of this present time, that I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, with body and soul, now and even unto all eternity. Glory be to our God!

\*I prefer to speak of the Holy Spirit instead of the Holy Ghost.

***The Standard Bearer  
makes an excellent  
gift for the sick  
or shut-in.***



## EDITORIALS

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

# Seminary Graduation — 1982

One of the pleasant and enjoyable experiences amid all the busyness of our Synodical meetings was the graduation program of our Protestant Reformed Seminary. Without a doubt it was pleasant and enjoyable for our graduates. For them it represents achievement of a goal and of their heart's desire. This was, of course, especially true for our two candidates, who during some two-and-a-half days during the previous week had undergone thorough examination (perhaps they would call it grueling examination) in the presence of Synod. But it was also true for our pre-seminary graduates, who have now partially attained their goal and are about to enter upon their seminary training. And it was certainly true for our foreign student, brother Lau Chin Kwee (who by this time hardly seemed foreign to us any longer), who had completed his work with us and who was eagerly looking forward to his return to his homeland and his home church. Especially also for the faculty graduation is a pleasant experience: for they see and enjoy the fruits of their labors in a concrete way at this occasion. And, judging from the goodly audience that was gathered at our Faith (Jenison) Protestant Reformed Church, as well as from the remarks overheard at the end of the evening, this was a pleasant and happy occasion for our people.

Our Pre-Seminary Graduates this year were Messrs. Russell Dykstra, Steven Key, and Charles Terpstra. They will now be the first seminary students to follow our new, four-year curriculum, D.V. Our two new candidates for the ministry are Messrs. Thomas Miersma and Jon Smith. They will be eligible to receive a call on or after July 4. Mean-

while, they have been invited to the pulpits of our Edmonton, Alberta and Edgerton, Minnesota congregations respectively during the summer months. May the Lord soon give them a place in the ministry of the Word in our churches! Our gift to the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, who studied with us for two years and received a special diploma, is Mr. Lau. Mr. and Mrs. Lau, after many fond farewells and not a few tears because of parting, left for Singapore the day after graduation. Soon after arrival in Singapore Mr. Lau was to be examined briefly by the Session of the church there with a view to ordination. We at the seminary all enjoyed the sojourn of brother Lau among us; if I may put it that way, he was thoroughly "integrated" into our life and fellowship, and we thought of him as "one of us" and not as a foreigner. If you wonder why I pay special attention to him, let me explain that this was a "first" for our little seminary. Never did I dream when I came to the seminary that some day one of the students would be a Chinese student of Reformed persuasion from far-away Singapore!

Our program for the evening included lusty audience singing, a trumpet-piano medley by Robert and Renae Lubbers, and the highlight of the evening, a timely address by Prof. Hanko on "The Confessions in the Life of the Church." All our readers may share a bit in the latter: a transcript of Prof. Hanko's address appears elsewhere in this issue.

Pictured with this report are our graduates.



Pre-seminary Graduates, left to right: Charles Terpstra, Steven Key, Russell Dykstra



Seminary Graduates, left to right: Thomas Miersma, Jon Smith, Lau Chin Kwee



## Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches — 1982

Our annual Synod is now a matter of history, having begun its meetings on Wednesday, June 2, and concluded them on Thursday evening, June 10. We are presenting here a very brief account of Synod's decisions; the full and official account will appear, of course, in the *Acts*, which will be published in a couple months. In addition, we expect to comment on certain aspects of this year's Synod in a future issue.

Synod met this year in our Southwest Church, Grand Rapids. The pre-synodical service was also at that church and was conducted by the Rev. G. Van Baren, president of last year's Synod; he preached an appropriate sermon on the letter to the church of Ephesus, Revelation 2:1-7. On Wednesday morning, June 2, the organizational work of Synod was completed. Officers this year were: Rev. J. Kortering, president; Rev. D. Kuiper, vice president; Rev. M. Joostens, first clerk; Rev. D. Engelsma, second clerk. At this Wednesday morning session the material of the Agenda was divided among four advisory committees, who then had to prepare advice to guide Synod in its decisions on various matters. These committees had to work evenings, and in some cases at every spare hour of recess in order to prepare their advice for Synod. In general, the work of Synod was divided as follows: Committee I was assigned all mission matters; Committee II was assigned Contact Committee matters, Theological School matters, and Catechism Book matters; Committee III was assigned matters of appeal and overtures; and Committee IV was assigned matters of subsidy and budget.

Synod, however, could not begin its deliberations on Agenda material until Monday morning, June 7. This was due to the fact that Wednesday afternoon and all of Thursday and Friday were devoted to the examination of our two seminary graduates. The advantage of this was the fact that it gave the advisory committees time to work; and by the time Synod was finally ready to go to work on the Agenda material, most of the advice was also ready for Synod's attention. The disadvantage was that it made for a lengthy Synod, and some of the delegates were under pressure to leave at too early a time, having made air reservations to return to their churches. In the future, all delegates will have to take into consideration the possibility of a lengthy Synod when there are examinations scheduled, so that they can remain to the end of

Synod and so that Synod is not under pressure to work hastily. I also believe, however, that there are some ways in which Synod could improve its efficiency and thus shorten its sessions; about this I will comment in a later issue.

In the area of home missions there is not much of a positive nature to report about this year's Synod. A recommendation to close our East Lansing field, where the Rev. S. Houck has labored, was adopted; and a resolution of thanks to Rev. Houck was adopted. Synod, however, did nothing about the Mission Committee's advice to instruct the Hope Council to seek another field. Secondly, Synod turned down a proposal to declare Bradenton, Florida (where First Church has labored extensively) a denominational field. The future of the work there is now left to First Church's decision.

For some years now there has been a group of families in Wellington, New Zealand who have been in contact with our churches and who for years have been listening to tapes sent them by our Hope Church. This group, now organized as a Protestant Reformed Fellowship, has more than once requested help from us. And this year, in response to another plea, Synod decided to ask the Consistory of Holland to send the Rev. J. Heys to work there for a period of six months. In approving this recommendation of our Mission Committee, Synod also decided that no commitment be made to work there indefinitely and that this did not imply that Wellington be established as a field.

Acting on a supplemental report, Synod also approved a decision of South Holland and the Mission Committee that Rev. Van Overloop's work in Birmingham, Alabama shall "continue for a while, subject to ongoing review."

Synod was also advised no longer to consider the Monroe-Mt. Vernon, Washington area a viable field, and that Lynden no longer be considered a calling church for this area.

A large amount of Synod's time was devoted to matters connected with the work in Jamaica. This came to Synod at the time Synod convened. And since the report concerning Jamaica contained proposals of major importance, treatment was actually contrary to the rules of Synod. Nevertheless, Synod evidently felt compelled to do something about the Jamaica work, though it was not at all ready to adopt any major proposals. The upshot



was that Synod approved only the sending of emissaries for another year.

As to foreign missions, Synod received the report concerning organization of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore and a report concerning Rev. den Hartog's diligent labors there. Apart from approval of Rev. den Hartog's continuing to labor there for the indefinite future as a missionary pastor (upon request of the E.R.C.S.), there was no other major decision. We were also informed that Rev. den Hartog and family will be coming home on furlough, the Lord willing, in November.

Although the preceding report would not seem to indicate this, in light of its brevity, once Synod had passed the hurdle of mission matters, it moved very rapidly. As we said, Advisory Committee II guided Synod on items pertaining to the Contact Committee, the Theological School, and the Catechism Book Committee. From the Contact Committee we learned that contact with the Christchurch OPC is virtually at an end, due to the fact that they admittedly are moving away from us doctrinally. Contact will be limited to the sending of literature. The Contact Committee also reported some interesting contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland; Synod instructed the committee to continue discussions via correspondence and to work toward face-to-face contact with this denomination. The committee also reported interest on the part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia in a theological conference between them and us at a future date; Synod instructed the committee to make preliminary preparations with a view to such a conference and to report to next year's Synod.

As to our Theological School, there was no major proposal to be dealt with. Synod approved the admission of Russell Dykstra, Steven Key, and Charles Terpstra to the seminary program. Synod was also informed that our school is the beneficiary of bequests from two recently deceased members of our churches; and the Theological School Committee was instructed to come with a well-formulated proposal about the use of these monies. Synod also had to face the problem of a serious decline in the number of students in our school, and it asked our consistories to impress this great need upon our young men.

The major item from the Catechism Book Committee was the matter of final approval on a revision of the book "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine." This book for our young people will now soon be republished.

That brings us to Advisory Report III.

The major item assigned to Committee III was a very long and complicated appeal regarding

censure from a member of one of our churches. This was treated in closed session because of its nature, and so I cannot report publicly on the case as such. I do want to report, however, that both the Advisory Committee and the Synod gave this appeal and the decision long and careful attention. No one who appeals a matter of this kind to Synod need feel that he will not receive a fair hearing; both the committee and Synod went out of their way to reach a just decision.

Secondly, there were three overtures before Synod which were ruled out as not legally before the Synod. The ground for this ruling was the rules of Synod, Article 30 of the Church Order, and precedent, all of which require that overtures come to Synod by way of consistory and classis, and that they must be treated by the latter before Synod receives them. I hope to comment on this matter later, due to the fact that there has been a growing tendency to ignore these requirements. This ruling resulted in Synod's not treating overtures from South Holland, Hull, and Southwest — even though some of these overtures may have had some merit.

There were two overtures which Synod did treat. The first was a proposal to make the synodical agenda available to our membership at large. Synod rejected this overture on the ground that the additional cost and work involved are unwarranted, on the ground that concern for Synod and the welfare of the churches does not require that people be informed concerning the *specifics* of what is to be considered at Synod, and on the ground that the desire expressed in the overture can more easily be accomplished by publishing summaries of business to be treated at Synod in the *Standard Bearer*. An overture from First Church about the method of assessment was approved in part by Synod. It was decided to appoint a study committee to see whether a more equitable way of counting families for purposes of synodical assessments is possible. On the other hand, Synod informed First Church that under our present rules there is no reasonable way in which it could be granted relief from last year's assessments.

Committee IV was charged with matters of subsidy and budget. Again I may report that Synod acted very carefully. Subsidies are not simply routinely granted, but requests are carefully scrutinized. While I cannot report all the details of the budget, I may report that this year the assessment per family was reduced to \$347.00 from last year's \$372.00. The Synod was very budget-conscious.

This concludes our brief report. Details of all these matters will appear in the printed *Acts*, and from the latter you may learn more. Be sure to read the *Acts* when this booklet is made available to all our families in early fall.



## Editor's Notes

### Comments on Special Issue

We were delighted by the many favorable comments about the May 15 special issue on Predestination. Several letters were received in which extra copies were requested, and many oral comments were made. One of the striking facts about that issue was that all the writers wrote independently of one another — the one not knowing what the other would write — and yet there was unity and harmony among the various articles.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Annual Staff Decisions

At the time of Synod's meetings we also hold our annual staff meeting. The details will be announced later. But we laid plans for more special issues in

the coming volume-year and made a few staff changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Publication News

In case you missed it, our latest paperback reprint, the late Herman Hoeksema's *The Wonder of Grace* is now available from the RFPA at the price of \$3.95, with a 20% discount to Book Club members.

By the way, why do you keep putting off signing up for the Book Club? Membership is open to all our *Standard Bearer* readers, and all you need to do is send in a card to our Business Office signifying your wish to join. You will automatically get all our new publications at discount.

## SEMINARY GRADUATION ADDRESS

# The Confessions in the Life of the Church

Prof. H. Hanko

The role which our Confessions have played in the history of the church of Christ can hardly be overemphasized. These Confessions have served as powerful weapons in the defense of the faith; they have functioned as the basis for church Reformation over the centuries; they have preserved the unity of the church in her walk in the world of sin; they have been teachers to lead thousands to the knowledge of the truth. It is not an exaggeration to say that our Confessions have served as the strength of the church without which, humanly speaking, it would not have survived.

Because of this, confessional unfaithfulness, in whatever form it appears, is a form of ecclesiastical suicide. This unfaithfulness has taken on many different forms, not the least of which are blatant and open attacks against the Confessions and the doctrines contained in them, and gross confessional indifference. It is therefore not without purpose that I speak to you tonight on the place of our Confessions in the life of the church of Christ.

### The Origin of the Confessions

In the most basic sense of the word, our Confessions have their origin in the work of the Spirit of Christ in the church. This is true not only of our own three forms of unity which serve as our confessional basis, but of all the historic creeds of Christendom which mark the line of the development of the church throughout the New Dispensational period.

The promise of the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Truth runs like a golden thread through that last discourse of our Lord on the eve of His crucifixion. This discourse is recorded for us in John 14-16.

You will recall that the disciples of the Lord were saddened and disheartened by the clear and unmistakable words of the Lord that He was going to leave them. Although He had told them this before, their ears were closed to these words, for they had built all their hopes and dreams upon Christ's continual presence with them upon earth. But now



they could no longer escape from the fact that their Lord was going away.

In His words of comfort to them Jesus made it very clear that, although it was indeed true that He was going to the Father, nevertheless He would come to them and come in a way in which He would abide with them forever. This coming was in the Spirit of Truth. By this Spirit Christ Himself would be with them and remain with them forever. In fact, the essential point which the Lord makes is that He would, by His Spirit, be with them in a far more blessed and wonderful way than He had ever been with them upon earth in His state of humiliation. His presence through the Spirit would indeed culminate in the day when He would take all His church unto Himself in everlasting glory.

It is this presence of Christ with the church through the Spirit of truth which has special significance and meaning.

Christ is, in His own person, the full revelation of the triune God as the God of the salvation of His people. He is this in all the work which He did and does, from the moment of His incarnation, through His suffering and death and resurrection from the dead, on into the glory of His exaltation at God's right hand. By all His great work, He fully reveals to us the Father in all the riches of the truth as it is in God. His presence, therefore, with the disciples and with the whole church of this Dispensation is the presence of the Christ Who reveals all the truth of God.

Because this presence of Christ is through the Spirit which is given Him at His exaltation and which He pours out upon the church, the Spirit Who brings Christ to us is the Spirit of Truth.

There is an objective and a subjective aspect to this. Objectively, the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of inspiration by Whose work the Scriptures are given by infallible guidance. By this work of the Spirit of Christ we have the objective record of the revelation of God in Christ. But this same Spirit dwells also in the hearts of the people of God as the enlightening Spirit Who reveals subjectively the riches of the truth as they are in Christ Jesus. This subjective work of the Spirit is also absolutely indispensable for the appropriation and understanding of the truth. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:12, 13).

Given this work of the Spirit of Truth, the formation of creeds has a certain inevitability about it.

On the one hand, they are inevitable because of

the nature of Scripture itself. Scripture, as we all know, is not a systematic setting forth of the truth. It is not a theological textbook or a Reformed Dogmatics. It is the infallible record of God's revelation through Christ *in history* — where the decisive words are, "in history." All the history of this world is the sovereign realization of the eternal and unchangeable counsel and will of God. At the very center of that counsel stands Christ so that all the counsel revolves around Him and has meaning and significance only in Him. As history unfolds according to the counsel and under God's sovereign direction, Christ is revealed historically. Christ stands straddling all history. He is at its center. He is its alpha and omega, its beginning and its end. He is the line running through all history, giving to history its meaning, its significance. He was spoken of by the prophets, revealed in the fulness of time, taken to glory where He is given sovereign rule over all, and He comes again upon the clouds to make a new heaven and a new earth when history reaches its grand finale, its glorious climax, its determined *telos*. Scripture records this. Scripture is the record of sacred history.

Within those Scriptures, therefore, Christ stands as the fullness of God's revelation. All the truth is in Christ. Nowhere else can you find it.

As the same Spirit of truth Who inspired the Scriptures works in the hearts of the elect people of God, that Spirit leads the church into all the truth so that the church appropriates that truth and makes that truth her own.

Secondly, there is something inevitable about the writing of creeds because the church which appropriates that truth speaks it. She must and does give expression to her faith. She must and does speak what she believes to be the truth of Scripture. "I believed; therefore have I spoken" (Psalm 116:10). "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:8-10).

But this appropriation of the truth and this confession of Christ as the fullness of the truth is a systematic confession. The church searches the Scriptures to find what every part of Scripture teaches concerning every individual doctrine and concerning the unity of all doctrine in Christ. And this she confesses. This we believe! This is the truth of Scripture.

And so you have confessions, from the very beginning of the history of the church. Confessions



which are a glorious heritage of the Spirit of Christ within the church. Confessions which are truly creeds, which give to us what the church believes.

### The Function of the Confessions

Because this is the nature of our confessions, the creeds are authoritative.

It is well that we underscore this tonight, for this is frequently and spiritedly denied. There are many who openly and fiercely attack the creeds and their doctrines within the church and do so with impunity. No ecclesiastical penalty is required of them. This can only come about in a climate of disrespect for the authority of the creeds of the church. But the same authoritative character of the creeds is denied when a confessional indifference enters the church so that the creeds are no longer known and the creeds cease to function as the confession of the church as a whole or the confession of the members of the church. The creeds have become irrelevant to faith and life and the life of the church goes on without the controlling power of the creeds. But they are authoritative. Conformity to the confessions is essential to membership in the church. The exercise of discipline is required against all who militate against them. They are set as the bounds of the believer's faith. By them doctrine in preaching and confession is judged. Within their limitations the officebearers are required to do all their work. The confessional life of the saints is regulated by their statements.

This authority, however, is derived. The creeds do not have an authority which comes from within themselves. They are not self-authenticating — as the Scriptures are. Nor do they derive their authority from the church. This is the error of Rome rooted in intolerable pride. It is true that the church establishes creeds and declares them to be authoritative; but this is not because their authority comes from the church. They are not authoritative because the church declares them to be such. The church declares them to be authoritative because their authority comes from Scripture itself. They must be considered as authoritative only insofar as they express what Scripture teaches. Their authority is only because they state what is first of all found in God's Word. Because they state what God has Himself spoken through Christ, do they possess an authority which is, therefore, not their own, but Scripture's. But when they express what Scripture teaches, they bind the faith of the child of God and of the church of which he is a member.

But this binding character of the creeds is not an unendurable yoke, a theological straight-jacket, a curb on theological reflection, a barrier to the development of the truth, an impossible obstacle to making the truth relevant to our generation. On the

contrary, they arise out of the organic life of the church as the church is impelled by the Spirit of truth to confess her faith. They are the freedom of the gospel. They express forthrightly what our Lord says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They are what the church joyfully, willingly, and freely confesses as her faith, her life, her very salvation.

Because this is the nature of the creeds, the Reformed approach to Scripture is a creedal approach.

There is room here too for much emphasis. A non-creedal church, if indeed there can be such a thing, is a different approach to Scripture from that of a creedal church. A non-creedal church or a confessionally indifferent church goes directly to Scripture. And it is this approach which is always characteristic of the heretic. He appeals to isolated passages of Scripture in support of his own pet doctrine or special theological hobbyhorse. Luther already pungently and scornfully observed that this method of heretics, if followed, could be used by him to prove easily from Scripture that beer was preferable to wine. It is a method contrary to the Reformed faith.

The Reformers without exception spoke of the "analogy of faith." While mistakenly they got this expression from Romans 12:6, the idea which they meant to set forth is a sound one. And Reformed churches throughout history have followed this rule.

The point here is clear. Scripture is a unity, with the principle of its unity the revelation of God our God in Jesus Christ our Savior. Into this truth, with all its parts, the Spirit of truth leads the church. It is not, therefore, a question of what an isolated text may say, taken out of its own context and out of the context of the whole of Scripture. Anything can be proved if this method is followed. But it is a question of what Scripture teaches from Genesis 1:1 up to and including the last verse of Revelation 22. Scripture is its own interpreter. And this must be recognized and clearly maintained. Not the church; not the individual believer; not the decrees and councils of men; Scripture interprets itself. And it is in this way that the "analogy of faith" is discovered and set forth by the church and stated in her creeds.

It is, therefore, in the best tradition of the Reformation to go to Scripture via the creeds. They lead us into the "analogy of faith." They show us the "current" teaching of the Word of God. They lead us into an understanding of the unity of the truth as found in Scripture as a whole. The creeds are not superior to Scripture. Their authority and dignity is not greater. They are the means, the way, the path, by which we go to the Word of God. For it is in that



Word that we find our hiding place, our rest, our peace, the joy of our salvation. But going via the creeds, we recognize the work of the Spirit of truth, the unity of God's Word, the one faith of the church of all ages.

It is for this reason that preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism is so important. Not preaching on a text with occasional references to the Catechism, but Catechism preaching is essential — Catechism preaching which gives to the people of God the analogy of faith and leads them into the riches of the truth in Christ.

### **The Importance of the Creeds**

The creeds make us who live today one with the church of the past and give us a place in the company of just men made perfect. The unity of the whole church is a unity of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. As this same truth is confessed throughout all time, it is this truth which binds the church of all ages together into the one body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a great comfort in this. The truth may be despised and rejected. The company of the faithful may grow smaller. The believer may wonder sometimes if he does not in fact stand alone. But our Confessions assure us that we stand in a noble company of mighty warriors and of faithful men and women and of those who loved not their lives unto death. The company of Augustine and Athanasius, of Gottshalk and Luther, of Calvin and Knox, of Hoeksema and Ophoff is far to be preferred to that of the insipid theologians of our theologically degenerate times.

These same creeds serve as a basis for further development. In our day, as Johannes Vos has expressed it, we do not need less of the truth, but more. It is theologically stupid and spiritually irresponsible to turn our backs upon the truth, and to seek out new inventions which deny the creedal heritage which our God has given us. Development of the truth is ever the calling and privilege of the church. But that is the development of the great truths of the Confessions. They are given to us as a gift of grace. On their basis we stand. On the heights of their confessional integrity we gaze ever deeper into the riches of the knowledge of the truth of Scripture. Development is truly possible only when we have both feet firmly planted in our creedal heritage.

Our creeds are reason for deep gratitude to God. They are the testimony of the fulfillment of the promise of Christ to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. For in this truth as given by the Spirit, Christ Himself abides with us. They were written in blood and in the heat of the mighty age-old battle for the faith. Shall we spurn the blood

of the martyrs which still cries before the throne? Shall we spit out venom upon those who loved not their lives unto death? Shall we retreat from the battle which they, by grace, so courageously fought? God forbid. They are a precious and glorious heritage of the faith of our fathers.

But these Confessions must be the living confession of the church of Christ. It will not do to have a confessional basis as churches if these same Confessions lie unnoticed and inactive on the dusty shelves of a Consistory room closet. They are Confessions in the fullest sense of the word when they are in the hearts and on the lips of the people of God.

They must be preached from our pulpits. Consciously, explicitly, and continuously they must be brought to the attention of God's people. They must be taught in the Catechism rooms. They must be a part of our educational enterprise. There is a movement which wants to strike the Confessions from the theological basis of Christian schools. We must have none of this. Our teachers must in all their contacts with the students, consciously and forthrightly bring our confessional heritage to the attention of our covenant children. They must be studied in our homes. Our parents must lead our children to the Confessions so that our children know them and love them and learn to be thankful for them. And they must be a living part of all the life of the people of God in all their calling.

They still stand today as the defense of the truth against all the attacks which Satan and his cohorts can bring to bear against us. How heretics hate the Confessions! No wonder. They are an impregnable bulwark. They must be taken down brick by brick if the truth is to be reached and destroyed. They preserve our unity — a unity with all the saints and among ourselves. They are a glorious means of transmitting that heritage of the truth to the generations following. With these creeds in our hearts and mouths we can say to these generations yet to rise, "This God (the God of our Confessions), is our God, forever and ever. He will be our Guide, even unto death."

*Take time to  
read and study the  
Standard Bearer*



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### A Missed Opportunity

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Jacob, whose name Israel means Prince of God, at last came to stand before Pharaoh, a prince of this world. Jacob stands there as a stranger in a strange land. Pharaoh sits on his throne as the highest power in his own native land. Jacob was there with Pharaoh's approval and in his good pleasure. Pharaoh, though he does not know it, was king in Egypt in God's good pleasure and according to His sovereign counsel. And although Pharaoh thinks that he is being generous and gracious to Jacob and his family, it is God Who is using him in His grace to Jacob and the church of God which he represented in that day.

This Pharaoh reveals nothing to indicate that he was a believer and thus a child of God. He appreciated greatly the interpretation of his dreams which God gave him through Joseph; but his dealing with Joseph and Jacob and the whole family revolved around the benefits his Kingdom enjoyed, not around Him Whom Joseph represented and the fact that Jacob's family represented the church of that day.

Pharaoh never figured with the fertility that God would give Jacob's descendants in the land of Goshen, nor with God's counsel and covenant. Little did he realize what a later Pharaoh saw, namely, that the Israelites would grow to be a people that would be a definite threat to the Egyptians: threatening to outnumber them, remaining a distinct people with no intention of intermarrying, and worshipping a God Who condemned all the idolatry of Egypt. We may believe that he did not expect Jacob's descendants to remain in his land after the famine was over, and certainly not for four hundred years! How could he ever imagine that they would leave in a way that left Egypt ravished and ruined by ten terrible plagues and the whole army and its chariots wiped out in the Red Sea?

Pharaoh had reason to believe that the stay would be only for the duration of the famine. When Joseph brought his five brothers before Pharaoh they stated quite clearly in Genesis 47:4, "For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for the flocks; for the famine is sore in the land." Note that they speak of sojourning,

not settling permanently in the land. It is true that God had told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not theirs (Genesis 15:13). However, we have no way of knowing whether Abraham handed this truth down to Isaac and whether Isaac made it known to Jacob. Even if this truth had been handed down from generation to generation, it is questionable whether they understood this to mean a sojourn in Egypt or some other country neighboring on Canaan. A land that was not their own could to them have meant Canaan. It was not yet their own in the sense that they did not possess it. It was theirs in that it was promised to them. But there was room to believe that it meant that it would be four hundred years before they would possess it. What is more, God had told Jacob before he left the land of Canaan, "I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will surely bring thee up again" (Genesis 46:4). Had they been told, and had they remembered God's word to Abraham, they could have ruled Egypt out on the basis of this word of God. The brothers who told Pharaoh that they had come to sojourn in the land because of the famine firmly expected to leave the land after a few years. No one saw this sojourn in Egypt as a fulfillment of God's word to Abraham of a four hundred year stay in a land that was not their own.

But, as we stated, Jacob the Prince of God came at last to stand before Pharaoh, a prince of this world. And here before the king of Egypt Jacob is not ashamed of the gospel and openly confesses his faith. Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was. And Jacob responded to the effect that he was a pilgrim here on this earth, and that his pilgrimage had been an evil one and relatively short.

Pharaoh's reason for asking this question would seem to be rooted in Jacob's appearance. He was at the time one hundred and thirty years old; and only a few months before this his sons had said to Joseph — not knowing that he was aware of this — that their father was "an old man." He did live another seventeen years, but undoubtedly what he stated to Pharaoh revealed his great age. He told Pharaoh that the days of his years were few and evil. By evil he refers to the many troubles and struggles which



he experienced. He knew much trouble. His life was not a path of roses but a very rough and hard way. It was for him an uphill climb most of the way. Then, too, he came crippled before Pharaoh because of that hip that God had touched years before at Peniel, when he wrestled with the angel. And all that grief of those last ten to fifteen years because of Joseph's "death," which hurt him deeply, also showed on his face. Had he not said that he would go down to his grave unto his son mourning? (Genesis 37:35)

In comparison we may note that Isaac his father lived to be 180 years, and thus 33 years more than Jacob. Abraham we learn from Genesis 25:8 "gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years." Of Terah, Jacob's great grandfather, and the father of Abraham it is recorded that he died when he was 205 years of age. The number of the days of a man's years was rapidly being lessened, and men who lived to be 120 years old when they died, like Moses, were the exception. In fact it is Moses who wrote in Psalm 90 that our days are threescore and ten, and if by reason of strength fourscore. Jacob then, even though his years were not as many as those of his fathers, still lived 67 years more than the strong of whom Moses spoke.

Do we get here a suggestion of complaint on Jacob's part? He speaks gloomy language. Is he speaking of evil days and of lesser days as one who is sour on life and bitter against God? Had he expected to equal the days and years of his fathers? It is not at all impossible that such is the case, even though in the same breath he calls his life a pilgrimage, which indicates that by faith he looks to the city which hath foundations. It is not at all unusual for a believer while confessing his faith to reveal his old and evil nature. Paul writes in Romans 7:21, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."

And look once at yourself. Give yourself an honest and thorough self-examination. In our prayers, which we begin with sincere praise and adoration to God, very often and so easily we express complaints about what God has done. I do not mean a plaintive cry. But how often is our plaintive cry not a complaining cry? In the midst of great discomfort and misery, facing terminal afflictions for self or a loved one, we in our plaintive cries express great dissatisfaction with God's way with us. How often do we not reveal that we think that God's way is all wrong, and we sit in judgment over Him?

How hard it is in miseries, losses, and afflictions to say with the psalmist what he said in the midst of his afflictions as recorded in Psalm 119:65, 66,

"Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed Thy commandments." How much we need that good judgment and knowledge so that we too judge Him to have dealt well with us. How difficult to add, as he does, a few verses later, "Thou art good and doest good." And then in the next section he declares, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me."

Can you even get those words on your lips when you hurt all over, have overwhelming losses, stand face to face with death itself for yourself or a loved one? How much harder to speak these words from the heart. We run to God in prayer, and that is good. It is evil, a sin, to run to anyone else in our needs and distresses. But when we would do good evil is present. Deny that and you only prove the point.

Jacob's speech here is so different from that of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:18 and 28. Paul reckons, that is judges, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. He does not simply say that the evils we experience are not in any way to be compared with the glory we shall have. He says that it is not *worthy* to be compared. And he says that, "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God." He does not say that we hope, we think, we have been told, some say that all things work together for good to those that love God. He says emphatically that we **KNOW**, we are absolutely sure, we have definite knowledge that our woes, which men call evils, work together for our good. And, by the way, the word evil here that Jacob uses is the same word that God used when He spake to Adam of a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

How different also from Paul's words in II Corinthians 4:17, 18, "For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Ah, there is the explanation. When Jacob confessed to be a pilgrim he was looking at the things which are not seen with the natural eye, but can be seen only with the eye of faith. But he quickly took his eye off these things and, looking at the things which could be seen in his natural life with his natural eye, he spoke of days that were evil, and things which were temporal. Of course! The natural eye can only see that curse here on this earth because of our sin in Adam. It can only see



temporal things, for the curse brings an end to all things in this present world. The eye of faith can see Christ and His cross and the new Jerusalem not only but also that love of God in Christ that works all things together for good to those that love God.

One would think that Jacob, having learned how it all worked out so well that Joseph is not only very much alive but that through him God was keeping His church alive, would speak otherwise than he did. But the sad part about it all, the thing that ought to hurt us and ought to teach and rebuke us, is that Jacob missed such a golden opportunity to witness before the world.

Oh, he began by faith. He did well to speak of being a pilgrim, but he did not magnify God before godless Pharaoh. He did not say to Pharaoh, "The days of my years were fewer than those of my fathers; but God was good to me, Pharaoh. I was

evil so often during them, but God forgave in His mercy, blessed me with all these covenant children, made me rich spiritually, and in it all was preparing me for indescribable blessedness. His counsel did guide me so that afterward I might be received to glory. Praises be to Him."

And you, when the world sees you on your bed of pain in the hospital, visits you in your home or the funeral parlor — what do they hear you say? Do they receive a witness and testimony from you? Is God praised by you before them? Or are you just another sufferer, another victim of evil in this sin-cursed world who, to the world, appears to be one who only sees the temporal?

Jesus said it, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Do that! By all means do that!

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## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Principles and Practice of Bible Study (Part I)

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

We are all aware that the real issue behind so many questions and problems in the church world is the doctrine of Scripture. There have always been those who, in one way or another, denied the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. But in these last days the churches of the Reformation do not even give unanimous assent to this truth, in spite of the fact that the Reformation of the sixteenth century claimed to be a return to the truth concerning the Bible. Even those in Reformed churches who disagree with the age-old teaching of the church on such matters as seven-day creation and women in office will often agree that these differences are to be traced to different views of Scripture.

By the grace of God we, as churches, are among those who still confess that the Bible is the Word of God, perfectly and completely revealing the whole counsel of God concerning the salvation of His elect church. And we believe too that this Word has been wonderfully preserved by God up to the present time.

We must not forget, however, that principle and practice go together. The true doctrine of Scripture must be part of our confession, to be sure, but that

means that the Scriptures themselves must be part of our life, and that means in turn that we must read and study the Scriptures in proportion as we believe them to be God's own Word. If the Scriptures are not the leaven of our lives, permeating every area of life, then we will also eventually lose our good confession.

As is the case so often with us, there seems to be a gap between principle and practice. Not only is there evidence of a real lack of serious, dedicated Bible study among us, but we often find, time and again, that our study of God's Word, whether privately or in the company of other believers, is aimless and without real or lasting satisfaction. We must not only be shaken out of our slothfulness and excited to diligent study, but we must also learn how to study God's Word. And Scripture itself can and will teach us that if we will pay attention to what it says.

That we have a responsibility to the Scriptures is beyond question. God's Word and God's people belong together. And this need for Bible study is rooted and grounded in the truth that the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Because the Scriptures are "God-breathed" they are profit-



able for teaching doctrine to the man of God, for reproving and correcting him, and for instructing him in righteousness (II Timothy 3:16, 17), all of which is part of his eternal salvation. Even our children must be taught that the study of God's Word is of far greater urgency than any of the other studies to which they give themselves. God's Word is a matter of life and death. If we realize that, we will be much more like the Bereans who, when they heard the Word of the Apostles, received it with eager faith, and in that same eagerness searched the Scriptures daily to find there for themselves the truth which the Apostles taught.

Nor must we forget that Bible study — even private reading and study — is a deeply spiritual matter. We can be taught how to study the Scriptures, but that does not mean that Bible study is a mechanical matter of following certain rules and coming to an understanding of what God says in His Word. Because the Bible is God's Word, it is spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14). The unbeliever does not have the spiritual gifts that are necessary to understand the Word, and therefore he can neither see himself in the light of the Word, nor hear God speaking peace to His own people as He does in the Word. On the other hand, every child of God does have those gifts, whether he be the greatest or least of God's saints. No believer need be afraid to study the Scriptures. Nor does he have an excuse not to study them, as if he is not qualified. Christ's anointing belongs to every one of the saints, and that anointing teaches them all things (I John 2:27).

These spiritual gifts include the desire to know the truth as it is in Jesus, the humility and reverence which are necessary to learn from and submit to the teaching of God, and a living fellowship with God through the Spirit. It must be emphasized here that these things are gifts of God's grace to us. Do we see then that the study of God's Word is a matter of prayer above all? How can it be that we poor sinners should open the Word of God, the revelation of His supreme and eternal glory, and expect to receive something, when we do not come with the prayer, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psalm 119:18).

Nevertheless, our study must also be organized and have direction and purpose. Unorganized and aimless study is fruitless study. In making our study fruitful the basic principles of the doctrine of Scripture can be further applied to give us that needed guidance.

In organizing our study of God's Word and giving it direction, the all-important matter is finding Christ in the Scriptures. We must not become so involved with the meaning of words, the rela-

tionship of text and context, differences of interpretation and other questions that we forget to seek the incarnate Word Who reveals Himself in the Word. Jesus Himself says to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures . . . (for) they are they which testify of ME" (John 5:39). He says that also to us. Jesus did not have to admonish the Jews for failing to study the Scriptures. That was not their problem. They had studied the Old Testament Scriptures from youth on and knew them much better than we do; but their search was a failure, and it was a failure because they did not find Christ in all of the Old Testament. They did not even recognize Him when He came and walked among them and did His mighty works in their cities. Let us beware, lest in our study of the Word, we fail to find Him there as God's Christ, the representative of the righteousness of the Living God in this sinful world.

Specifically, this means that, whenever we open the Scriptures, we must set ourselves consciously and deliberately before the question: "What does this passage teach about our Lord Jesus Christ and the only way of salvation in Him?" And, even more specifically: "How does this portion of God's Word lead me to the feet of Jesus?" If we do not ask these questions of ourselves every time we open the Bible, the natural blindness of our minds will prevent us from seeing any more of Jesus in the Scriptures than did the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees. Then we will only find moralism and "Bible Stories" and not the Gospel. I know personally that this is not an idle warning. I myself and the men who graduated from our seminary with me had to be reminded of exactly this truth at our Synodical examinations. May God grant that we never forget it again.

This very practical matter of seeking Christ in the Scriptures is an application of the principle of organic inspiration. When we speak of organic inspiration then we mean among other things that the Scriptures are a perfect unity. They are one and cannot be broken (John 10:35). They are one, first of all, according to the good-pleasure and purpose of God. They are also one because they have one divine Author, the Holy Spirit of God. But especially they are one because from beginning to end they have one message and one theme, Jesus Christ, the revelation of the power and wisdom of Almighty God. Thus our study of the Bible must be a conscious application of this principle of organic inspiration.

This same principle of organic inspiration, that the Scriptures are one, also means that the Word of God must always be studied in its context. The chief characteristic of false teachers is that they quote Scripture passages in isolation from the rest of the Word. By context, however, we do not mean



only the verses which precede and which follow a particular passage, what we might call the chapter context, but also the context of the whole book in which a passage is found and the context of all of the rest of Scripture. That means we ought never attempt to understand a passage unless first we understand the theme of the book in which it is found, and the place of that book in the whole unity of the Bible. We must ask ourselves: "How is this book different from all other books of the Bible, and what part of the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation does it expound?" When we have sufficiently answered that question we may return to the passage at hand and ask ourselves how this verse or these verses fit into the overall theme of the book in which they are found.

To take just one example, a careful study of the Epistle to the Ephesians in the light of all the rest of Scripture shows us the theme of that grand Epistle, that is, the glory of the church in its union with Christ. In this it differs from Colossians, an Epistle very much like Ephesians, in that Colossians emphasizes rather the glory of Christ as the supreme head of the church. That theme of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians must be the golden thread which runs through the interpretation of the whole book, and a study of any part of the book must not lose sight of that theme. In the very first section, for example, verses 3-11, Paul shows us that the glory of the church is not only from God, but according to God's own eternal purpose to glorify Himself in the salvation of the church.

The truth of the organic unity of Scripture does not mean, however, that we ignore the fact that the books of the Bible were written by different men, at different times, and under different historical circumstances. We do not mean by this that the Bible is historically or culturally conditioned, so that at least in certain parts it is no longer applicable to the church today. That idea is utterly repugnant to anyone who really believes in inspiration. It does mean, though, that we take history and culture and all the rest into account when we study the Bible. It is important, for example, for us to know that the prophecy of Zechariah was for the remnant that had returned from the Babylonian captivity, or that the story of the book of Ruth is part of the history of the time of the Judges who ruled Israel after Joshua. Or, to use another example, it is important for us to know enough geography to be able to follow the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, or enough history to know that during New Testament times the Jews still had a measure of self-rule, but that in the trial of capital cases they had no authority to put a man to death, as in the case of Stephen. A study of chronology, history, geography, and social customs of Bible times is, therefore, an indis-

pensable part of our study of the Scriptures, though it may never be used to call into question the authority of Scripture.

Another principle very closely connected with the principle of the organic unity of Scripture, is the fundamental rule that Scripture is self-interpreting. Because Scripture is the handiwork of the Spirit, only the Spirit Himself can tell us what the Scriptures mean. He does that always in and through the Scriptures themselves. The books of the Bible must tell us what their themes are. Scripture itself must solve all so-called problems of interpretation. Scripture must define its own words and concepts, not the dictionary and not commentaries. The dictionary, for example, will tell me that a covenant is an agreement or pact between two parties, but only Scripture will teach me, through careful study, that God's covenant with His people is not an agreement, but a sovereignly established relationship of friendship with the everlasting God in and through the Son of His love, Christ Jesus.

This means, even more specifically, that when we are struggling with the interpretation of key words or phrases in a passage, we must go to all the other passages of the Word of God which shed their light on the one at hand, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture come to understand the meaning of the Word in a particular passage. In doing this a good concordance is one of the most valuable tools we can have for Bible Study. I would even go so far as to say that a concordance is the one indispensable tool for us in our Bible study.

But what we must remember is that this matter of Scripture interpreting itself is of critical importance. Just because it is the Word of God that we are studying, we must be sure that we do not read into the Scriptures the things that belong to the wisdom of man. Nor must we study the Scriptures to find in them support for our own philosophies. But as humble and obedient servants of Jesus Christ, we must come to hear what God the Lord says to His church. And it is exactly a humble consciousness of our own inability to understand spiritual things and of this important principle that will enable us to receive God's instruction with an obedient ear and a willing heart.

(To be continued)

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for many occasions.*



# Report on Singapore

*Rev. Arie den Hartog*

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ:

Greetings from Singapore in the name of our Sovereign Almighty Lord God and our Faithful Savior Jesus Christ. By the time you read this report it will be more than five months since the time of the organization of the Evangelical Reformed Church here in Singapore. With thanksgiving unto the Lord we report again to you that the Lord continues to bless and prosper His church here and also our work as your missionary. The church continues to grow in the knowledge of the Reformed faith which we believe is the wonderful truth of the Word of God. We also see evidence of the fact that the Lord continues to add unto His church such as should be saved.

As the young church develops there is always greater need for a deeper understanding of the doctrines of the Word of God. There is a growing need to be certain that these doctrines are indeed the Word of God. As in all parts of the world so also here in Singapore, the church is confronted by many false doctrines, many worldly philosophies and heathen religions. There is need to defend the truth of God against all of these. We continue therefore to be busy with many classes of instruction as well as Bible study groups to search out the Word of God. As your missionaries we are giving instruction in the Belgic Confession every Lord's Day morning. In the past we studied the creeds, especially for the purpose of preparing the leaders of the G.L.T.S. to be office bearers in the church. Our present purpose is to bring the other members of the church to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the creeds.

Throughout the week there are a number of Bible study groups led by various members of our church. We also have a weekly Bible study in our apartment which is attended by 10 to 12 people and where we are studying the book of I John.

Every Saturday there is a Youth Fellowship (Y.F.) for the younger members of the church and an Adult Fellowship (A.F.) for the older members. Elder Tan Kok Leong is teaching the Y.F. from the Heidelberg Catechism. Instruction at the A.F. is given by all the elders of the church in rotation. I am usually asked to give a message at the A.F. about once per month. I have been asked to speak on some very interesting subjects as suggested by the committee in charge. The topics included; "The Christian's Attitude Towards Other Denomina-

tions," "The Christian Attitude Towards Sex," "The Practical Implications of Calvinism."

The most exciting of all the classes that we have is our new pre-baptism class. On March 14 five adults were baptized. On April 18 we started another pre-baptism class. We were quite overwhelmed when twenty-four people signed up for this class. Five of these young people are presently baptized members of our church and attend this class to be better instructed in the truths of the Christian faith. All the rest of the members of this class regularly attend our worship services and desire to prepare themselves for confession of faith and baptism and thus to join the church. It is an unspeakable joy and privilege to teach these young new Christians in the first principles of the Christian faith. For most of them this is the first formal instruction in Christian truth they have ever received.

Since the time of the organization of the church we have had three infant baptisms. In the next few months, the Lord willing, two more infants will be born to members of our church. On March 27 we had another wedding in our midst. We now have seven married couples. As you can imagine, all of this is changing the character of the church considerably. The Lord blesses His church each time there is a marriage and each time a new infant is born. Sometimes in the U.S.A. we are not as profoundly conscious of this fact as we are in a church of the character of the E.R.C.S. The youth of the church of Jesus Christ certainly add a particular blessing to the church, especially when they use their youthful vigor and strength zealously in the service of the Lord. Each time there is a marriage in the Lord in the church the Lord adds strength and stability. Marriages are particularly a great blessing for the church here because the new homes established become centers where the young people of the church who come from pagan homes can go for comfort and encouragement. Each time the Lord gives infants to the church there is hope for the future of the church as the Lord fulfills His covenant promises.

The month of June as usual will be an especially busy month for us. During this month we will have the annual church camp which is similar to our Youth Convention in the U.S.A. The theme of this year's camp is "In Sweet Communion Lord with Thee." This theme, you will recognize, is taken



from our *Psalter* and is based on Psalm 73. This *Psalter* number has become a great favorite in the church. I have been asked again to give a series of five messages on the camp theme. The Lord willing, this will be the last time I will have to do this by myself. Next year we are hoping that there will be two ministers to speak at the camp.

The new consistory, or session as it is called here, continues to learn many new things by experience. Session meetings are held every two weeks and most of the meetings are very long because of all the matters that must be dealt with. The session is learning what it means to have proper oversight over all of the work of the church and also over the lives of the members of the church. We are especially happy to see the serious view they have with respect to the oversight of the sacraments. The session is also learning by experience some of the sorrows and great hardships of the work of the office-bearers of the church of Jesus Christ, especially those connected with members who walk in impenitent disobedience to the commandments of the Lord and must be admonished and disciplined.

One large project which is presently being worked on is the matter of starting another worship service. We have long hoped for and worked towards the beginning of another worship service. In the past, for various reasons, this was never realized. The session has now made the decision to start another worship service as soon as possible. Plans are to hold this worship service in another location in Singapore. The reasons for this are as follows. For various reasons it would be very difficult if not impossible to hold another worship service at our present place of worship. There would be a great advantage to holding second worship services in another place in Singapore. We would be able to have a witness in another community and be able to work ultimately towards the formation of another congregation. We see several indications of the Lord's providence which constrain us to move in this direction. We see the urgent need to spread the Reformed Faith in Singapore as widely and as faithfully as the Lord gives us opportunity and the means. We see the Lord blessing us by adding numbers to our present congregation and therefore see the wisdom of eventually starting another congregation. Thirdly we are looking forward to the return of brother Chin Kwee from the U.S.A. and to his ordination to the ministry. The Lord willing, we shall then have another minister and preacher of the Word in our midst. Therefore we should expand the work of the church. Not the least of these considerations is that we should have both myself and the newly ordained minister preaching the Word at least once every Lord's Day. It is cer-

tainly true that the Lord is pleased to gather His church chiefly through the means of the preaching of the Word.

Preparations are being made for the calling and ordination of brother Lau Chin Kwee to the ministry. These preparations include preparing a short examination of the brother to convince the session and the membership of the church of his qualifications for the ministry. All of this is quite exciting for the E.R.C.S. The church eagerly anticipates the ordination of their own pastor.

We are continuing our labors of preparing other brothers for the work of the ministry in the church. Two brothers are presently being instructed by your missionary. Hopefully brother Chin Kwee will also be able to help in this work when he returns. One of these brothers, Jaikishin Mahtani, who is an Indian young man, we are hoping to send to our Seminary in the U.S.A. in 1983, the Lord willing.

The greatest of our physical needs continues to be the matter of obtaining a new place to hold our worship services. We have told you in the past of the great difficulty in finding such a place. At the beginning of the year we thought we had found a suitable place and had even paid a down payment on this place. However, in the providence of the Lord it was later discovered that this property would be affected by a road-widening project listed in a government gazette and slated to take place in the next five years. The lawyer advised not to go ahead with the purchase. A number of other places have been considered since that time. All proved for some reason to be unsuitable. Presently we are considering another three-story building, but the present asking price is really more than the church can afford.

Our family is all well. We now have three children in school. This year all of them go to the morning session of classes. They are all becoming quite Singaporean, especially in their manner of speech. Our home continues to be very busy with many meetings and visitors almost every day. Every Lord's Day morning our home is being used as a nursery for all of the new infants in the church. We are looking forward to a furlough in the U.S.A. sometime in November. By then we will have been here for almost three years. The time of our furlough was chosen to coincide with the school vacations here.

We covet your continued prayers for us and for the church of Jesus Christ here. We always greatly appreciate those who write letters to us.

*Take time to read  
The Standard Bearer*



## QUESTION BOX

# Our Resurrection Body

Rev. C. Hanko

From one of our readers we received the question:

"At the resurrection can our flesh and blood body be raised a *glorified* flesh and blood body that is fit for the kingdom of heaven?"

It is usually during the season in which we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, or at the time of the loss of a dear one, that questions of this nature arise. This is only natural, for by faith we look forward to the day when we will be with Christ in heavenly perfection, both in body and soul.

Yet in this respect also we still see in a glass dimly. There are many questions that remain unanswered as long as we are in this temporal and mortal body. But the Scriptures do give us an insight into the glory that awaits us.

Our reader understands, according to the letter, that "flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom of God"; but that only adds to the problem as to how this flesh and blood, this earthly, natural body can be changed into a glorious, heavenly body.

First of all, our attention is drawn to Philippians 3:21: "Who (the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ) shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

One thing that becomes evident from this passage is that the resurrection of Christ gives us directives toward understanding our own resurrection.

Our Lord's resurrection was a *bodily* resurrection. The tomb was vacated. The grave clothes that had been wrapped around Christ's body lay still in the same position, but were now an empty mass of cloth. The earthly body was no longer present. It was raised.

Our Lord arose in *the same body* in which He had died. We must bear in mind that no one could see the resurrection body of Jesus, for it had become spiritual and heavenly. In order to help us to understand the resurrection, our Lord *appeared* at *various times* and in *different forms*. Each appearance served to explain something of the wonder of the resurrection. Jesus appeared to His disciples in a bodily

form that showed the nail holes in His hands and the wound of the spear thrust in His side. This does not mean that Christ's glorified body still has these wounds, but it does show us that Jesus arose in the same body in which He died. Jesus ate in the presence of His disciples. This does not mean that a heavenly body can partake of earthly food, or can digest earthly food. But it does show that Jesus arose in the body in which His disciples had formerly known Him and had eaten with Him.

Our Lord's body had *changed*. It was still a material substance, a real body. Jesus allowed the women to touch Him. He showed to the disciples that He had hands and feet. Yet He did not allow Mary Magdalene to cling to Him, for He had not returned in an earthly body, but had gone through the grave and was risen in a new, heavenly body. He did not need to have the stone rolled away to come forth from the grave. He could enter the room where the disciples were gathered even though the door was closed and locked. He was suddenly seen as standing among them. Likewise, when He had finished speaking to them He faded from sight. They saw Him no more. Jesus was not bound to time or place, nor to any earthly bonds as we are. He was risen from the dead as conqueror over death.

Jesus looked the same as He did before, and yet He was different. When the disciples saw Him they could say, "It is the Lord." Yet John explains this wonder best when he says, "And none durst ask Him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord" (John 21:12).

From this we can conclude that at the resurrection we shall arise in the same body that we now have, even though this body has returned to the dust of the earth. This body will be changed from an earthly body to a heavenly body.

Paul explains this to us in I Corinthians 15:42-44: "So also is the resurrection from the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body."

Beginning with the last statement, we find that



we now have a natural body, but that this natural body will be changed into a spiritual body. According to the original, the natural body is a psychical, a soul-body. This is of the earth, earthy. We see earthly things. We hear earthly sounds. We eat earthly food and breathe earthly air. We are now completely bound to this earth. We cannot see angels, nor can we see heaven. Even Jesus had to *appear* to us in some form that we could see, because we could not see His resurrection body. When God speaks to us in Scripture of the spiritual and the heavenly He uses all kinds of earthly figures, and addresses us in an earthly language. God even makes the entire earthly creation a picture (a parable) of the spiritual and the heavenly. For eye cannot see and ear cannot hear the things that are still in store for us beyond the grave.

That will all be changed. We will receive a real, heavenly body. We will see with heavenly eyes, hear with heavenly ears, and we will eat the spiritual Bread and the spiritual Drink, Christ Jesus. We will be fit to live our heavenly life in everlasting perfection.

Thus it will also be the *same* body. When God brought us into being at the time of our conception, He gave us our own person, our own individuality, our own nature, gifts, and talents. He did so even with a view to eternity. Not only the same body arises from the grave, but with it our own individual nature, our own gifts and talents. I have an idea that many talents that God has given to us never come to manifestation here in this life, but will be fully developed in our resurrection bodies.

We will be the same person, yet changed from the earthly to the heavenly and the spiritual. This body is like a seed that is planted in the earth and grows into a plant, just as a tulip bulb produces a tulip and a grain of wheat produces wheat. This body is sown in weakness and is raised in power. Now we still bear the weaknesses and imperfections that result from sin. At best, this weak and frail body can exist for 70 or 80 years. We are like the grass that withers and the flower that fades. Our strength is limited. We grow weary and need rest. Our plans are never fully realized, for ultimately we are cut off, as it were, by the cold hand of death. This life is but a journey, a pilgrimage that serves as a preparation for the real life that is still to come. But when this mortal body is raised in the last day it will be raised in *power*. Notice, we will still be human beings. We will still be dependent creatures. Yet we will receive power to live with our whole being, body and soul, to the glory of God. No earthly weaknesses or imperfections will hinder us from giving full expression to all the gifts and talents God has given us, that in our own individual and unique way we may serve God's

purpose in the new creation among all the saints. The lame will walk, the blind will see, the deaf will hear. There will be no semblance of death there.

Our earthly bodies are sown in corruption and will be raised in incorruption. As a result of sin and the curse we lie in the midst of death. How thoroughly we are reminded of this every moment of our earthly existence. A mother hovers over her infant child concerned whether it is too warm or too cold, is fed too little or too much, is threatened with this ailment or that infirmity. A thousand anxieties and cares flood our weary souls. For death lurks round about us in the form of accidents, diseases, heart attacks, cancer or some other danger. The earthly tent of this body is breaking down, until finally it is completely destroyed by death. But in heaven all that is now corruptible will be changed to incorruption. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Finally, this present body is sown in dishonor and is raised in glory. In Philippians 3:21 Paul speaks of this present body as a *vile* body, a body that belongs to our present humiliation. We think of Adam and Eve in paradise, as they came forth from the hand of their Creator, the most exalted of all the earthly creatures, formed in the image and likeness of God. What a splendid picture of manhood and kingship Adam displayed with his strong, erect body, his muscular arms and skillful hands! What a masterpiece of feminine beauty and devotion Eve must have been when God brought her to Adam! How perfectly fitted they were to serve God with their whole being in love! How shameful when, after the fall, they cover their nakedness with fig leaves! Our bodies now often control and direct our spirit, instead of our spirit finding a ready servant in the body. Our bodies often stand in the way, hinder us in our spiritual activities. Our faults and weaknesses become evident in all that we do and say. We are even forced to bear with one another's weaknesses. Only grace gives us the victory over this body of sin and death. How comforting to read, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed!" We will be raised in *glory*. Imagine that! No more sin. No more weaknesses resulting from sin. No more hindrances from having full and intimate communion of life with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Our resurrection bodies will be like the glorious body of Christ, fit to devote ourselves with our whole being, in the company of all the



saints, and in the midst of the new creation to the praise of the glory of God's grace in the Beloved! We will drink from the Fountain of life and eat of the Manna of life, Christ Jesus. Our youth will be renewed every day, like an eagle's, to lose ourselves completely in covenant fellowship with our God! That will be glory, glory no end.

True, there are many questions that remain unanswered. But even these questions cannot deprive us of the blessed hope of the saints, for we live by faith and not by sight. Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to subdue all things unto Himself, that all glory may be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, world without end! Hallelujah!

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Ephesians — The Church, One in Christ (Conclusion)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

As the Holy Spirit led Paul to write about the unity of the church in Christ, he did so in two ways. First, he explained the unity from a doctrinal point of view by setting forth God's sovereignty over the establishment of the church. In the second way, he dealt with the life of the church as she expresses her unity in a common bond of faith in Christ Jesus.

### BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

1. The introduction (1:1, 2). Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Christ and addresses the saints in Ephesus as the recipients of this letter.

2. He then explains that the church is united only because God has bound the members together in a common faith in Christ (1:3-3:21). In the doxology of praise to God, he expresses that the reason for the church's existence is to give glory to God. This is true because God predestinated the church unto the adoption of children and blesses them with spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3-6). This adoption is sealed by the redemption through the blood of Christ and the abounding grace which makes us conscious of our unity in Christ (1:7-10). The saints have a glorious future, for this predestination guarantees a glorious inheritance. We know we will receive this inheritance, for the Holy Spirit's presence is proof (1:11-14). The apostle prays for the Ephesian saints, giving God thanks for them and seeking for them the spirit of wisdom that they may know the hope of their calling, the riches of their inheritance, and the great power of God which is given to them, the power which is concentrated in Christ Who is exalted far above all earthly power and has all things under Him and is the head of the entire church (1:15-23).

Paul continues to show that salvation is a wonder of grace. This is seen in the spiritual condition from

which the Ephesian Christians have been saved. They were *dead* in sin and walked in the lust of the flesh and were children of wrath. The power of grace changed this for they were quickened together with Christ and made to sit with Him in heavenly places. This proves that grace is the gift of God and salvation is by faith not by works. The dead sinner cannot merit with God (1:1-10). In addition to this, he reminds the reader that they were Gentiles, uncircumcised, aliens from the covenant, without hope in the world (1:11, 12). Christ changed this, for by His death on the cross He abolished the wall of separation and reconciled all the elect, both Jew and Gentiles, to God by the atonement. He now comes to preach peace to all believers, both Jew and Gentile (2:13-18). Paul then makes a comparison between the temple and the church. The church united in Christ is *the* temple of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself the cornerstone. United by all its parts, it forms a dwelling place for the Holy God (2:19-22).

He then introduces the subject of the "mystery." This refers to the revelation of God which was given to Paul to write to the church. It is the promise of the gospel which is for both Jew and Gentile. To send this forth, Paul was called to be a missionary. The church need not faint at the tribulation which Paul suffered for the sake of the gospel (3:1-13). Paul prays for the Ephesian church that they may be strong in the love of God, comprehend the magnitude of that love, and then be filled with the fulness of God. He expresses a doxology of praise to God (3:14-21).

3. This unity now comes to expression in the lives of the membership of the church. Paul gives detail how this is true in chapters 4-6. He makes the point that it is the duty of every member of the



church to keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:1-6). To do this the members must make use of the gifts which God has given to each one for the benefit of all the members. These gifts include the use of special offices by which God causes the members to grow up from spiritual children to manhood. This marks the spiritual growth of the body in which all the members are properly joined (4:7-16). In order to express this unity, two things must take place. First, they must not walk any more as heathen, as uncircumcised Gentiles who wallow in sin, but they must put off the old man and its lusts. Then they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This produces spiritual tension which involves a daily turning from sin and seeking good. It has special significance for the unity of the church, for it delivers the believers from bitterness and anger and replaces it with kindness and forgiveness. By doing this, they will not fill their time with drunkenness, but redeem it and be spiritually minded, even speaking to themselves with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, giving thanks to God and submitting one to another (4:17-5:21).

Paul now deals with specific situations in which the church should express her unity in Christ. He defines the role of the Christian wife and husband in the home. The wife is exhorted to be in subjection to her husband and the husband is instructed to love his wife. The spiritual motivation for both husband and wife lies in the fact that they are both united together in the body of Christ. This spiritual union affords them the love they need to be faithful in marriage (5:22-33). Children are called upon to obey their parents and honor them, while fathers are warned not to provoke their children to wrath (6:1-4). Servants are instructed to be obedient to their masters and masters are told to treat servants in the awareness that they themselves are the servants of Christ and Christ is their Master (6:5-9). Paul then draws a comparison between the Christian who has to fight the battle of faith in the midst of the world and the Roman soldier. He refers to the nature of the battle (against principalities and powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places). He also makes detailed mention of the Christian armor, both defensive and offensive. To prevail in this battle, much prayer must be offered to God for the members of the church as well as for the apostle himself, and, in our day, the ministers and consistories (6:10-20).

4. As a closing remark, he reveals to them that Tychicus will acquaint them with the details of his personal affairs. He salutes them in Christ and closes with the blessing of the Triune God (6:21-24).

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THIS LETTER

1. The Apostle Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, presents a well-developed statement concerning the church. This letter sets forth Christ as the Head of the church. He is this not apart from the Father; but God, Who is the Father of the universe, is also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. All spiritual life flows from Christ, as the Head of the church, to the members. This is true no matter where the church is manifest in the world. In addition to this, he compares the church to the bride and to the temple. The point is that the church is *living* and as such is to exercise the life of Christ.

2. Paul deals with the subject of the church from a mature perspective, which emphasizes the grand design God has for the church. Consider a few examples. The church has its foundation in the eternal plan of God (1:4-11). The church includes Jew and Gentile elect from all nations (2:11-14). For the sake of the church, God over-rules the whole universe (1:20-22). He sees the members of the church reaching the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (4:13).

3. There are no new doctrines or truths taught in this epistle that are not taught in the other writings of Paul. The feature of this epistle is that these truths are brought together in unity in order to develop a specific subject, that of the church.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give some details about the congregation of Ephesus. When was it organized, what was it like to be in such a church within the wicked city of Ephesus?

2. What evidence favors the idea that Paul wrote this letter especially for the congregation of Ephesus and not for all the churches of Asia Minor in general?

3. Show that this epistle must have been sent from Rome while Paul was imprisoned there.

4. How does the fact that Paul wrote this letter from prison add sincerity and significance to this letter?

5. Explain how election is considered the heart of the doctrine of the church. Show from this epistle that Paul considered this to be true.

6. Prove from Ephesians that the unity of the church in Christ should eliminate petty bickering and division, but does not forbid honest spiritual battle for the sake of the truth. In other words, show that Paul does not advocate peace at any cost.

7. Why was the emphasis on the unity of Jews and Gentiles of special significance for the church at Ephesus?



8. Demonstrate from this letter that spiritual growth in the church begins with personal growth in faith by the members, chapter 4.

9. How does the letter show that doctrine and life cannot be separated? Apply this especially to the doctrine and life of the church.

10. How does the teaching on marriage and home, servant and masters, and the Christian warfare have bearing on the unity of the church?

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, MI) express their heartfelt sympathy to their President, Professor H. Hanko and Mrs. Hanko in the death of her mother, MRS. NELLIE KNOPER.

May the family be comforted by the words of our Lord and Saviour: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24)

Mrs. Leon Garvelink, Sec'y.

### CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY

Having duly examined Mr. Thomas Miersma and Mr. Jon Smith, Synod has declared them candidates for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. These brothers are eligible for a call on or after July 4, 1982.

Rev. M. Joostens  
Synodical Stated Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Our parents, MR. AND MRS. GEORGE JOOSTENS, will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 35th wedding anniversary on July 9, 1982. We are thankful to our Covenant God for having kept them for each other and us. May they experience God's richest blessings in future years.

"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." (Psalm 128:6)

their grateful children and grandchildren,  
Rev. and Mrs. Meindert Joostens  
Faith, Timothy, Steven,  
Joy, and Paul  
Mr. and Mrs. William Joostens

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Doon, Iowa on September 1, 1982, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging are to inform the clerk of the Doon Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma  
Stated Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sympathy to a fellow member, Mrs. Gerald Bouwkamp, in the death of her mother, MRS. NELLIE KNOPER.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (I Thess. 4:14)

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 21, 1982, our loving parents, MR. AND MRS. ARVIN BLEYENBERG, will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 21st wedding anniversary. We, their children, are sincerely thankful to our Heavenly Father for giving us Christian parents in the Lord. We cannot express enough thanks to them for giving and continuing to give us covenant instruction. We are also grateful for their abundant love and concern which they have affectionately shown to us and to each other. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to guide and uphold them, and also to keep them in His tender loving care.

Ivan Bleyenbergh  
Lila Bleyenbergh

Sharon Bleyenbergh  
Arlys Bleyenbergh

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull, Iowa, Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Ben Bleyenbergh in the passing of her sister, MRS. JOHN R. RENS.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17)

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Pres.  
Mrs. Nellie Brummel, Sec'y.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 19, 1982, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. CLARENCE PRINCE celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We their children and grandchildren thank our heavenly Father for the years of love and Christian guidance they have given us. It is our prayer that our Covenant Father will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

Chet and Sharon Haveman  
Janna and Mike  
Doug and Mary Jane Prince

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 11, 1982, our parents, REV. AND MRS. J. KORTERING celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We are grateful to our covenant God for our loving, God-fearing parents who have provided us a home where we have learned the fear of the Lord. It is our prayer that they may continue to experience the blessings of our faithful Father in their remaining years together.

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

their children and grandchildren  
Barry and Lori Gritters  
Curt  
Dennis and Sharon Griess  
Cory

Joann Kortering  
Ellen Kortering  
Carol Kortering

## Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on May 12, 1982 at our Holland Church. Each church, with the exception of Kalamazoo, was represented by two

delegates. Rev. C. Haak chaired this session of Classis.



The business was routine with two exceptions: 1) a consistory requested approval for the erasure of a baptized member and 2) the report of the church visitors was received. The church visitors reported that all was well in the churches. Note was made that 29 years ago (1953) there were strange voices being heard in the churches just as there had been 29 years before that (1924). Twenty-nine years

since 1953 one does not find that occurring. We give God thanks for that fact.

Classis adjourned at an early hour. The next meeting of Classis East will be held on September 8th at our Hope Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

Since our last column, there is much to report concerning the activity of our calling churches. Due to the vacancy left by Rev. Koole who, as we earlier reported, accepted the call to Redlands, California, our Randolph, Wisconsin congregation extended a call to Rev. Slopsema of our Edgerton, Minnesota church. The following handwritten sentence at the bottom of a Randolph bulletin reveals the response they received, "Rev. Slopsema has accepted the call!!!!" As a result, Edgerton has formed a trio of Reverends Bekkering, Bruinsma, and Houck. Meanwhile Edmonton, Alberta, Canada has received a decline to their call to Rev. Kamps of Doon, Iowa; and have since extended another call: this one to Rev. Kuiper, pastor of our Lynden, Washington congregation.

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Nearly all of us, in one way or another, have been affected by graduations in the past month. No matter the level of achievement, Rev. Joostens' remarks in "Across the Aisle" (monthly newspaper of our First Church in Grand Rapids) are worthy of our consideration. "They say, that one picture is worth a thousand words. The Holy Scripture does not have any pictures, but certainly it delineates for us some beautiful examples. There was a Moses, who possessed all the learning of the Egyptians and no doubt could have become a Pharaoh in Egypt. He, rather than to have all the prestige of Egypt, led God's people home to Canaan. He 'esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' I think of an Apostle who sat at the feet of Gamaliel and was schooled in all the formalism of the Pharisees. Yet, he counted all loss and

dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. You must look ahead! You must apply your knowledge and achievements in that way wherein God is glorified. Receive our congratulations and God's blessing as you strive to do that!"

Speaking of graduations the Seminary and Pre-Seminary graduation exercises were held at Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan on June 8. Seminary graduates, Mr. Thomas Miersma and Mr. Jon Smith, were declared candidates by our 1982 Synod. Also on that occasion Mr. Lau Chin Kwee (student in our seminary for the last two years) was recognized for his labor as a special student in our seminary. Incidentally, the day following graduation Mr. Lau and his wife returned to their beloved brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. Finally, the following pre-seminary graduates received diplomas: Mr. Russ Dykstra, Mr. Steve Key, and Mr. Chuck Terpstra.

Many *Standard Bearer* readers outside the Grand Rapids area will have direct contact with some of the recent graduates and students of our seminary this summer: candidate Miersma will be in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; candidate Smith will be in Edgerton, Minnesota, and student Ken Hanko will be in Bradenton, Florida. Prior to student Hanko's early June arrival, Rev. Lubbers spent several weeks laboring in Bradenton.

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An October, 1981 bulletin of our South Holland, Illinois church carried this thought for contemplation from Augustine: "Deliver me, Lord, from myself."

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