

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . God's smiting of His people is a measured smiting; it is always with moderation.... He may smite according to the place in glory which His people shall occupy in the everlasting day—a place for which they must be fitted and prepared. He may smite according to the measure of our sins.... But of one thing we may be certain: the Lord our God always smites with that measure that is necessary to bring us to the destination.

See "Saved Through Smiting" —page 194

CONTENTS

Meditation—	
Saved Through Divine Smiting	194
Editor's Notes	197
Editorial—	
Needed: Students!	197
The Day of Shadows—	
Divinely Transcendent Thoughts	198
All Around Us—	
More on the Union Issue	201
How Absurd Is Evolution.	202
Bible Study Guide—	
I Thessalonians—Pastoral Care for an	
Infant Church (conclusion)	203
Faith of Our Fathers—	
Nicene Creed	205
Taking Heed to the Doctrine—	
God's Providence and Sin (3)	207
Special Feature—	
The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses	
of the Protestant Reformed Churches	
and Possible Remedies (2)	209
From Holy Writ—	
Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures	212
Book Reviews	214
Report on Classis East	215
News From Our Churches	216

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

Saved Through Divine Smiting

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?
Isaiah 27:7

The two questions of this verse are rhetorical. And the answer is expected in both instances is an emphatic No!

The questions may seem at first glance to be rather sudden and without connection in the chapter. However, the connection is there; and it is very beautiful and comforting.

In the first part of this chapter the church of God

is celebrated in song as a beautiful vineyard, kept night and day watered faithfully by Jehovah. For He shall cause "Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." Implied, therefore, is the truth of the indestructibility of the church. For in the figure of the vine which again takes root lies the idea that it continues to live. The situation and condition of the church of Christ in the midst of the world may

sometimes be pitiful and apparently hopeless. But reality is that the church never goes down to defeat. Reality is that the situation of Christ's church in the world is never hopeless! Never is the church destroyed, and never can the church be destroyed!

Indeed, the people of God are smitten, and even slain. God smites both the righteous and the wicked, both Israel and Babylon. But there is an incalculably great difference. He never smites Israel as He smites those that smote him; nor is Israel slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him. Because of this difference, Israel always and again takes root and blossoms and buds, and shall fill the face of the world with fruit. The vine of God's planting may be severely pruned betimes. But Jehovah our God roots out the thorn and the thistle, while the vine is preserved.

How God smites the righteous!

There is a smiting of which we may say that it comes directly from God, without any mediation of men. This is a smiting through the sufferings of this present time in general. God smites His church and His children through natural calamities and disasters. He smites them with hunger and famine and pestilence. He smites them with dreadful sicknesses and pain and lingering suffering. He smites them with grief and sorrow of every kind. The pages of history are written full of such suffering. It comes upon Israel, the church, as a whole; it comes also upon the individual child of God. In fact, God's people often complain of it that they are smitten much more than the wicked, that the church is made to suffer much more than Babylon. Sometimes—think of Asaph, for example, in Psalm 73—they complain that they alone are smitten, while the wicked have prosperity and peace and plenty.

But it would seem that the prophet has something else in mind. For he refers to "those that smote him," that is, that smote Jacob-Israel. And those that smote him were the powers of this world, the wicked, Assyria, Babylon. The reference, therefore, is emphatically to a smiting and a consequent suffering that comes upon the church and the children of God through the agency of the wicked world-power, through the agency of the ungodly, who hate and persecute and seek to destroy the people of God. Nevertheless, we must not forget that also this smiting comes from the hand of our heavenly Father. Our Confession puts it this way in Article 13: "...He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment." And again: "...He so restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without His will and permission,

they cannot hurt us." And the prophet refers to the wicked Assyrian world-power (10:15) as the axe wherewith the Lord of hosts heweth, and the saw which He shaketh. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that throughout the ages the church and the righteous are sorely smitten, and smitten precisely because they are righteous. In fact, the more righteous they are in the midst of the world, the more severely they are smitten.

Could not Israel sing, Psalm 129: "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows."

And cannot the church of the new dispensation, looking back across the centuries of fierce persecution, join in this Psalm?

And could not many an individual saint from the past testify of being smitten and slain for the sake of God and His Christ? Could not the apostle Paul produce a long list of sufferings in the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Just listen: "...in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Cor. 11:23-27).

Looking at experience, looking at the things that are seen, one would be inclined to exclaim that things are all wrong, that there is no wisdom in the Most High, that He smites His people much more and to a much worse degree than He smites the ungodly.

But the Word of God emphasizes that the reverse is true.

And to emphasize it very strongly, Scripture phrases it in question form: has God ever smitten His people as He smote the wicked, and that, too, the very wicked who smote His people?

God forbid!

There is a fundamental difference!

The difference between Jehovah's smiting of His people and His smiting of the ungodly consists, first of all, of a difference in *motive*. When the Lord smites His people, He always does so in love!

That is not true of the reprobate, ungodly world. Contrary to the philosophy of some, God's wrath, only God's wrath, is upon that world. The hatred of His eternal good pleasure is against them. The hatred of His righteous wrath against their ungodliness He manifests toward them; never—not even for a moment—His favor! The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. In His righteous wrath and in His eternal hatred, He smites the ungodly. Even in their prosperity there is still a revelation of His wrath: for when He causes the wicked to prosper, He is setting them in slippery places, in order to cast them down to destruction. And how much more is this true when He pours out the vials of His wrath in fierce judgments upon that world! Then God reveals Himself as the Righteous Judge and as a consuming fire!

But with regard to His children and His church this is different, fundamentally different!

He loves them!

From all eternity He has known them and foreknown them, even as He has conceived of them in His eternal good pleasure, even as He has graven their image in both the palms of His divine hands. Zion's walls are continually before Him! And even as He has known them from eternity, He has loved them with an eternal love. And in that love He has given them to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that He should bear—and bear away forever—all the wrath of God in their place.

And it is that motif of love which characterizes Jehovah's smiting of His people, whether He smites them directly and through the sufferings of this present time, or whether He smites them through the agency of their enemies.

Right here, therefore, is the underlying difference. It is the difference between hatred and love, between wrath and favor. It is the difference between a judge who smites out of fierce vengeance against trampled righteousness and justice and a father who smites out of fatherly love.

In all our chastisements we must keep this in mind, first of all!

He loves us!

But is not this divine smiting a loss for me, for the church?

No, it is all gain! It is always for our profit!

In fact, it is necessary: without it we cannot be perfected.

For here in the world God's people are still imperfect.

Still imperfect—that cannot be said of the world

and the ungodly. There is nothing in them to be perfected. In them is no principle of life and sanctification. One does not expect grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. And when the Almighty smites the ungodly world, He has no purpose of perfection with those ungodly. They are vessels of wrath, and they are that according to the eternal will of God.

But God's people are still imperfect—and they must be perfected. That is true of the church as a whole: there is always present in that church in the midst of the world a kernel, a remnant according to the election of grace; but there is also present the carnal chaff. True it is, also, of the individual believer. There is in him a delight in the law of God after the inward man; but there is also still the law of sin which is in their members. And while the ungodly reprobate must be formed unto vessels of wrath, and that, too, according to the determinate counsel of God, Jehovah's purpose with His church and His people is that they must become perfect. Ultimately they must be formed according to the image of Zion which He has in both the palms of His hands.

Hence, His church must indeed be preserved in the midst of an ungodly world.

But it must also be purified from unrighteousness.

And for this purpose God's smiting is necessary. His smiting of His people is profitable, sanctifying, perfecting. It ends in their everlasting glory!

Not so for the wicked! If God as Judge smites in His wrath, who shall stand? If the ungodly are not only smitten, but slain, how can that ever prove profitable? But that is the portion of Babylon, of the Antichristian world-power, and of everyone who is ungodly. They are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. They go away into everlasting destruction; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. How dreadful!

But there is hope, glad hope, when God smites His people! For He never smites them to death, no matter how deep their way may become under His hand. He purifies them, sanctifies them, glorifies them. Just as a vine can be stripped of almost every branch by the pruning-knife, but it lives and is not destroyed, so it is with the church, with His people. Jacob's iniquity is purged away; the whole fruit is to take away his sin.

Church of Jesus Christ, when the enemy rises up and you are persecuted, rejoice! Great is your reward in heaven. Child of God, pay attention to this! Our God chastises us out of His eternal love, and to our profit.

Thus we may understand, too, that God's smiting of His people is a measured smiting; it is always with moderation.

That implies, in the first place, that a limit is set by God Himself. When He smites the wicked, it is without measure. But not so for God's people: there is always a boundary and a limit. No, we do not know that measure; but God does! There may be various factors which enter into the divine determination of that measure. He may smite according to the place in glory which His people shall occupy in the everlasting day—a place for which they must be fitted and prepared. He may smite according to the measure of our sins, according to the measure of corruption that is present in His church or in us individually—to purge it away. Our character and our circumstances enter into the measure of that smiting. But of one thing we may be certain: the Lord our God always smites with that measure that is necessary to bring us to the destination.

But there is a second limit to God's smiting of His people that is of great comfort. It is this: He always smites according to the measure of our strength and our endurance!

Is that not a great comfort? He never sends more than we are able to bear!

That is true for His church. It is true for the individual believer.

The way may seem very dark and hopeless and impossible to us. Sometimes we might be inclined to say, "Now God has slain them; they are lost under His wrath. They can never survive!"

But this is not necessary! He knows our frame. He is mindful that we are dust. He always smites with measured strokes. He never sends too much. With the temptations He always gives the way out.

Till His tender mercy shall break forth and shine in full glory, to the praise of His holy name!

Then we shall be smitten nevermore!

Editor's Notes

Rev. M. Schipper, a regular contributor to our *Meditation* department, is still recuperating from recent surgery and therefore unable to take his usual turn in writing meditations. That accounts for your editor's taking a turn as substitute. Rev. Schipper, the oldest of our retired ministers (going on 77), at last report also expected to have to undergo further surgery, this time for the correction of an aneurysm on his aorta. May the Lord sustain and comfort our brother!

The campaign for extra funds for the publication of the Bible story book to be produced by the RFPA Publications wing has, at last report, brought in close to \$3000. A good beginning! This is a reminder that the campaign has not ended. We need more dollars—many of them—in order to proceed with this large project.

EDITORIAL

Needed: Students!

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The approaching end of our first semester at our Protestant Reformed Seminary and the beginning of the second served to remind me that two of our present five seminary students expect to graduate this year, the Lord willing. That also means that after this year our churches will have only three students left in our seminary department (There are none in the pre-sem department at present.), and these three will be three years away from graduation (1986).

That also served to remind me of the fact that our churches need more students. Note, please, that I did not say: our seminary needs more students. But: our *churches* need more students. For this is, indeed, not a private need which we at the seminary have. The seminary is the seminary of our churches, and the needs of the seminary are the needs of the churches. The students are trainees for the ministry of our churches. It is indeed the *churches* which need more students.

It is also the *churches*, and the covenant homes in our churches, which must produce these students—under the providence of our God, of course.

For that reason I am also calling your attention to this need. We do not have and we do not want a *re-recruiting* program at our seminary. It is the calling of the churches to produce students for the ministry in our denomination.

But, you say, the need is surely not great. It might even be argued that there is no need at all. After all, we will have two graduates next June for whom there are at present no open places in the churches. Besides, in only three more years there will be three more graduates. What will we do with all the potential candidates for the ministry?

My answer is: I don't know. Neither do you know. None of us can lift the veil and peer into the future.

But let me remind you, in the first place, of the Scriptural truth that the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few, and of the consequent necessity to pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into that harvest. Do we believe that? Then let us obey the injunction, and pray fervently.

Let me remind you, in the second place, that we soon forget. It was not too many years ago that our churches and our seminary suffered from a very severe shortage of ministers and students. There were years when we had one or two students in our seminary but when the need for more students and more ministers was looming large on the horizon of our churches. Also at that time there were some who did not foresee the coming need. There were others who saw the need and who pleaded that it be met. Then there came a time when it became necessary to take emergency measures and to institute a speed-up program in our pre-seminary and seminary departments in order to meet the need as

soon as possible. And now when the need has apparently been met for the time being, and when there is even an apparent surplus of potential ministers, are we about to fall into the doldrums again and to be satisfied that there is really no great need?

That would indeed be shortsighted.

And it would be wrong.

And it would be dangerous.

I say again: you and I do not know what the future holds, or rather, what the Lord's plan holds for our future. We do not know what sudden need may arise. We do not know what fields of labor the Lord may have for our churches, what calling we may have in even the immediate future. And we do not need to know. We need only believe, and obey.

In the third place, let us bear in mind that the need for students is also long-range. A high school graduate who needs all of his pre-seminary and all of his seminary training, remember, is eight years away from candidacy for the ministry. Put in concrete terms, that means that a student who begins his pre-sem program next fall would graduate in 1991, if the Lord tarries. How far off that seems. How much can transpire in our churches before that time, much that could change our needs and make them even greater and more pressing.

Hence, let our churches and our people remember this need before the throne of grace.

And let our elders and parents impress this need upon our covenant young men.

And let our young men consider the question whether the Lord has not bestowed on them gifts which would indicate that the Lord is pointing them in the direction of preparation for the ministry of the Word.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Divinely Transcendent Thoughts

Rev. John A. Heys

In Isaiah 55:8, 9 the sovereign God of our salvation declares, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." And how often is it not that we find this to be so very true as far as what happens in our lives is concerned, as con-

trasted with what we had planned as the way we wanted our lives to develop?

How often likewise is it not that what we had planned for our children, and what God had in mind for them as the way which He ordered are complete opposites? This is the case so often not only with their natural lives but also with their spir-

itual lives. Adam and Eve certainly did not plan their son Abel's natural life to end so soon and in such a tragic way. Nor did they plan the life of their firstborn Cain to be that of a murderer. Isaac did not choose a reprobate walk of life for Esau, nor a life of trickery and deception for Jacob. Yet the truth of Isaiah 46:9, 10 stands, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."

Jacob experienced this difference between man's and God's ways when it appeared as though his most beloved son Joseph seemed to have been slain by a wild beast. This was not the way Jacob had planned for his son. And Joseph experienced this as well when he brought his two sons before his dying father to have them blessed. He planned to have his older son, Manasseh, receive the richer blessing, and therefore that his father would place his right hand on his head while pronouncing the blessing in God's name. Therefore he placed them before his father so that Manasseh was on Jacob's right and Ephraim on his left. But Jacob crossed his hands to place his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on the head of Manasseh.

Jacob did God's bidding and not his son Joseph's. And he therefore refused to interrupt the blessing and reverse the pronouncement of it.

Undoubtedly God had revealed to Jacob before he placed his hands on the heads of these grandsons that the richest blessing would go to Ephraim. The crossing of his hands was deliberate, intentional, and with purpose. He had made no mistake, either purposely or in faulty judgment. It was not a case of faulty eyesight in a dimly lit tent. It was not a case of mistaking the taller one as the older one, which would make it necessary to cross his hands. It was not a case of thinking that Joseph had made the mistake of placing the wrong son in front of his right side. Jacob's answer to Joseph's "Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn" reveals that Jacob knew God's will and had acted accordingly. He said, "I know it, my son. I know it." And we also read that his father refused to change his hands. He knew not only what he was doing, but he knew that this was God's way and according to God's thoughts which are always higher than our ways. For His thoughts and ways are sovereign.

Joseph, therefore, must and did submit. Hearing the word of God from his father's mouth, and recognizing that what his father said was God's word, he submitted. For this God had given him grace so that, after hearing what God spoke through his father, Joseph did not utter one word of protest. By God's grace he changed his way and

thoughts to agree with the sovereign way and thoughts of God. And this is the lesson that we must learn and relearn so often. This is the truth that time and again reveals to us the need of getting down on our knees and praying for grace to say, and also to mean it when we say it, "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

It often pleases God to take a child, a wife, a husband away and to disrupt so completely all our plans and thoughts and the way we wanted for them. The way we planned for them as far as their natural life is concerned is suddenly an impossibility. Sometimes the way of their spiritual lives also is shown not to be God's way with them. The way He has for the neighbour and his children is also so often different from our thoughts. The neighbour's child is sickly, frail, and apparently destined to live but briefly on this earthly globe. But that child, though sickly and frail, continues to live while our healthy, strong son or daughter is suddenly snatched away from us by a swift stroke of an unexpected disease or "accident."

I speak here of "accident" in quotation marks because with God there is no such thing. An accident is something unplanned. It can bring joy as well as sorrow. Cures for diseases have been discovered by "accident." But with God there is nothing that has not been planned in every detail from before the foundation of the world. And when it looks to you as though God has crossed His hands by mistake, just bear in mind that you are the one who is making the mistake. Let us commit that thought in Isaiah 55:8, 9 to memory and take it with us wherever we go, to have it whatever may happen. His ways are not only different from our ways, He declares in these verses, but His ways are higher. Higher they are because He is above us in His unchangeable sovereignty. His thoughts and ways are also way above our wisdom. For He knows how to work ALL things together for good to those that love Him. We are not wise enough to do that. We so often choose a way and have thoughts which, if executed, would hurt us.

Jacob had experienced this before this event. Had he had his way, Joseph would not have been sold into Egypt; and what would they have done during the famine? Jacob did not plan as Benjamin's way that he go down to Egypt to buy corn. Had he not, would Jacob have ever seen his son Joseph again? And the disciples—and Peter was their spokesman—said when Jesus spoke of suffering and dying for our sins, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee" (Matthew 16:22). And if God's ways were not higher than our ways, where would our salvation be? That cross was no accident for sure. But neither is any event in our lives. We cannot keep track of every little detail.

But so much higher is God's way and are His thoughts that the minutest detail is all planned so that all does work together for good to those that love God.

Jacob, who crossed his hands, as directed by God, to give the richer blessing to Ephraim, the younger grandson, will himself face a situation shortly thereafter wherein he will have to submit to God's way and to His thoughts. Realizing that he was dying he called his twelve sons to him to bless them. And in the course of pronouncing the blessings, in God's name he will have to say things about his sons that no earthly father relishes expressing.

In especially two instances Jacob could rejoice in what he had to say about Judah and Joseph. The Messiah would come in Judah's seed; and Joseph's seed shall know great growth and prosperity. But what he had to say about his first three sons, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi was by no means flattering or what a father would like to have to say about his children. Their sin and violence were presented without varnish or disguise. He spelled it out in no uncertain terms and called a spade a spade. He expressed God's thoughts and not simply his own, and gave no biased and partial father defence of which his own flesh and blood had done, and of what his own flesh and blood had done, and of flesh color God's thoughts and way with his sons.

In that light too we may and must look at the order in which he spoke of his sons. The first four are the first four sons born to him of Leah. We have no problem there. Understandably Jacob would have liked to list Joseph first, even as he gave him that princely coat. But he is speaking God's word here, and therefore God's thoughts. And being directed by God he, after following the natural expected order, departs from it to mention his ninth and tenth sons before Dan, his fifth son. What is more, he mentions Zebulon, the tenth son, before Issachar, the ninth son. It is true that these also are Leah's sons, but why this order? Then, too, Dan who was born of Rachel's handmaid is mentioned seventh while he was actually Jacob's fifth son, and Naphtali, who was Jacob's sixth son, is mentioned tenth. Asher, who was Jacob's eighth son, is listed ninth. Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah's sons, Dan and Naphtali, though Jacob's fifth and sixth sons are listed seventh and tenth.

What shall we say of all this? Well, certainly, if we have learned the truth in regard to the crossing of the hands of Jacob by God's direction, we shall say that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. We need not strive to find some hidden order in this list that does not follow the chronological order, or on the surface show a logical order. Be assured that it is logical, for it is the product of God's thoughts and not Jacob's. And God's

thoughts are always logical—and simplistic in the sense that they are always logical and never illogical—and He has His purpose in all that which He decrees.

A more profitable question would be to ask whether we can rightly call all this a case of Jacob blessing his sons. What is recorded about Judah and Joseph will unequivocally receive a Yes vote. Zebulon, as an haven for ships, Gad who shall in the end overcome, Asher who shall be fat and yield royal dainties, Naphtali, in as far as he will speak goodly words will receive qualified Yes votes together with Benjamin, who will divide the spoil. But Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, who will become a servant, and Dan, whose prediction causes Jacob to cry out that he waits for God's salvation, would seem to pose a big question mark behind the statement that Jacob blesses his twelve sons.

And yet, in two ways, and sometimes in one of two ways, we may call this blessing them. We may note that Hebrews 11:20 states that by faith Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob concerning things to come. Esau blessed? When Romans 9:13 presents him as one whom God hates? And when Psalm 1:1, 2 tells us that they only are blessed whose delight is in the law of the Lord and meditate in it day and night?

Consider that the word bless means to speak well of someone or something. And since Jacob is speaking God's word, it is the truth and in that sense well. What Jacob has said is well spoken, and what Isaac said about Esau was well spoken, for these patriarchs said exactly what God gave them to say. They spoke the unadulterated truth of God's higher thoughts.

However, we ought also to bear in mind that it is a blessing to call the child of God's attention to his sin and evil nature. Rebukes, expositions of sins and sinful natures for the purpose of bringing to consciousness of sin, sorrow, and repentance are most certainly blessings. To hide from one, to let one go on in one's sins is not a blessing by any stretch of the imagination. Take heed to what Solomon in his wisdom, and speaking for God, Whose thoughts are higher than ours, wrote in Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

If your children are walking in sin, bless them by uncovering that sin so that they may find mercy in the way of confession and forsaking. Let them walk in sin just because they are your flesh and blood and your fleshly heart goes out to them and you really are not interested in their receiving a blessing. Be sure that your children will not prosper in sin. Bless them with the truth and an uncovering of their sins that they may grow in spiritual sensitivity to loathe and flee from sin.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

More on the Union Issue

In a court case reported also earlier in this column, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling which supported a woman who refused to join a union and refused to pay dues to that union. The Grand Rapids' *Press* gave this report in its issue of December 15, 1982:

A Michigan woman who refused to pay union dues because of her religious beliefs must be rehired even though the union has a closed shop contract, according to a federal appeals court.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court Tuesday, ruling that Doris McDaniel was illegally fired from her job with Essex International's wire products division in Berrien Springs, Mich.

McDaniel said her Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches members not to belong to labor unions or support them financially. She was fired on Dec. 28, 1972, after refusing to pay union dues under the closed-shop agreement where she worked.

A three-judge appellate panel ruled unanimously Tuesday that Essex International and the International Association of Machinists should have tried to work out an arrangement with McDaniel, of Mount Pleasant, Mich. The union insisted she be fired.

The court said the firing violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination because of religious beliefs.

"No expenditures for overtime or additional wages would have been involved," the court said. "Nor was there any issue of seniority.... There was no evidence that any other employee would be adversely affected if McDaniel had been permitted to retain her job without joining the union or paying union dues."

It was the second time the case came before the 6th Circuit.

The union rejected McDaniel's offer to pay her share of the union's collective bargaining costs and donate the rest of her union dues to a non-religious charity. The union said she should pay normal union dues and fees.

The appellate court said Title XVII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employers from firing someone because of their religious beliefs.

"The prohibitions of the act apply equally to unions, which are forbidden to interfere with employment opportunities because of a person's religion or 'to cause or attempt to cause an employer to discriminate against an individual,' " the court stated.

The account appears very clear. One can not be forced to join a union contrary to his religious convictions—nor may he be fired nor may an employer refuse to hire one on the ground of his refusal to join a union on religious principles. The case for members of our churches would be even stronger than that of the woman mentioned in the article. The Seventh Day Adventists do indeed oppose union membership and the financial support of the same—yet do not maintain that church membership is absolutely incompatible with union membership. One can be a member of the Seventh Day Adventists while belonging to the union. Our churches do not allow this. Therefore, it would appear that our own members would have even a stronger argument against belonging to a union than did the woman mentioned above.

So often the law of the land is used against the Christian. I am convinced that we ought to use the law properly where we can in order that our own lives might be made a bit easier. We have a law which does not allow religious (and other) discrimination. We have a court ruling which specifically applies that law to the matter of union membership and religious conviction. Then, why can not one or more of our members test this for themselves? Let us see once if one can begin work in a closed shop without joining a union because of religious conviction. Let us see if any employer refuses to hire because one can not belong to the union. And let us, as fellow saints, be ready to support such effort when it is properly done.

It seems to me also that no one ought to lose his job because of refusal to work on Sunday. That too would be a matter of religious conviction. One ought not just submit to that which is contrary to the laws of the land.

*Take time to
read and study the
Standard Bearer*

How Absurd Is Evolution

Two other quotes from the *Grand Rapids' Press*, both found in the issue of December 11, 1982, treat the matter of evolution and creationism. One article reports of an attempt to stop the teaching of creationism in Hudsonville Public Schools. The ACLU is involved:

The Michigan chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has demanded copies of any materials issued by the Hudsonville School District regarding its position on the teaching of creationism and evolution.

If the materials substantiate that the school district is teaching creationism in its classrooms, a complaint will be filed with the Michigan Attorney General's office....

In November the West Shore chapter of the ACLU demanded that the Hudsonville schools terminate the teaching of creationism in its 10th grade biology classes or face legal action.

The school board refused to act on the demand and Superintendent Jack Musser said that until someone can prove the district is violating the Constitution in presenting both theories, the practice will continue....

"...The boards' 'policy' is simply that we agree both (evolution and creationism) should be presented."

A resolution adopted by the state Board of Education in March states that it is "opposed to the teaching, in public educational institutions, of any course in religion which is outside of the realm of a secular program of education."

The resolution specifically singles out creationism and orders any school district attempting "to indoctrinate toward any particular belief or disbelief (to) cease and desist such teaching."

Simon said it's up to the Department of Education to stop Hudsonville if the district is teaching creationism in its classrooms.

"If no action is taken there, we are fully prepared to challenge in court any religious instruction in our public schools," Simon added....

Of great interest was another article in this same issue of the *Press* which presented the views of two British scientists that Darwinian evolution is simply absurd and impossible. These, of course, do not hold to the Scriptural creation account, yet insist that life on this planet could only come through the effort of some outside direction.

An eminent British scientist has mounted a new assault on the Darwinian evolutionary theory, saying the possibility of it being true are "so utter minuscule" as to be absurd.

Modern developments in micro-biology have "made it overwhelmingly clear that the truth is quite

otherwise," says Sir Fred Hoyle, internationally recognized astronomer and mathematician.

He directly challenges both the Darwinian concept of gradual evolution of different life forms from common origins, and also that the first living cells developed by random processes in some primordial ooze.

The chances of that happening are not sensibly "different from zero," he says.

Hoyle, 67, with numerous honors in his field, makes the case in collaboration with Chandra Wickramasinghe, also a British scientist, in a new book, "Evolution from Space," published by Simon and Schuster.

They say biomolecules are now known to be so enormously complex that "quite explicit instructions" were necessary for their assembly and that other means than "natural selection" were required for life's development.

"The requisite information came from an 'intelligence,' the beckoning specter," they conclude, calling it a series of questionmarks, or God. "The new evidence points clearly and decisively to a cosmic origin of life."

In making their case, they array findings of microbiology, mathematics, computer technology and the fossil record against the Darwin theory, declaring it has been undercut by new knowledge.

They say that paleontologists for years have recognized that "the slow evolutionary connections required by the theory did not happen" but it hasn't made much impression on general opinion.

The chances of random chemical shufflings in some primordial soup producing the complex basic enzymes of life are only one to 10 to the 40,000th power, or one followed by 40,000 zeros, the two scientists calculate.

In effect, they say, the chances are nil, so "outrageously small" it would be incredible "even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup." They add:

"Darwinian evolution is most unlikely to get even one polypeptide (chain of essential life substances) right, let alone the thousands on which living cells depend for survival.

"This situation is well known to geneticists and yet nobody seems to blow the whistle decisively on the theory. If Darwinism were not considered socially desirable...it would of course be otherwise."

...For some, it may not "matter too much that belief in Darwinism is at variance with the truth," the authors say, but "it does matter that students of biology are taught the same incorrect history" of life's development.

...They say that Darwinism depends on "mutations" or "garbling" of genetic inheritance, which is almost always harmful, as a means to program evolution to more complex forms, and add:

"Every competent space mathematician would assure you that such a Darwinian idea had no chance of working.... Every computer expert will in fact assure you that throwing random mistakes into a computer is no way to improve it...."

These scientists continue by stating their "vastly more logical theory—that life stemmed from micro-genetic fragments from outer space, 'exactly the

right size to ride on the light waves of stars,' arriving at peak intervals, thus explaining the sudden bursts of new life forms shown by the fossil record" Their theory is no more Scriptural, of course, than is evolution. Yet these men concede that some outside "force" must have brought life to this earth. Surely then the Scriptural account is not so "unscientific" as it is often made to be. And imagine the nonsense of forbidding the "unscientific" creation account to be taught in a biology class while insisting that evolution is the only "scientific" account. But that is the foolishness of man!

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

I Thessalonians — Pastoral Care for an Infant Church (conclusion)

Rev. J. Kortering

We must now examine the letter itself to see how it is that the inspired apostle expresses his care for the church at Thessalonica which had so recently come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

1. The salutation (1:1). In this verse Paul extends his greetings along with Silas' and Timothy's to the church at Thessalonica. He greets them with the usual apostolic blessing.

2. He expresses thanks to God for the church (1:2-10). In doing this, Paul mentions this fact not only (1:2), but recalls the reasons for this thankfulness. The church at Thessalonica believed the gospel and expressed this faith by works of love and patience (1:3). This was a demonstration of the power of the gospel whereby Paul had come to know that they were elect of God (1:4, 5). This convinced Paul that his labor among them had not been in vain for they had become followers of the Lord, having received the word (1:6), and had even become examples to the believers throughout the whole region (1:7, 8). This faith of the Thessalonians was so powerful, it caused them to forsake the world of idolatry and to believe in Jesus' resurrection from the dead and His coming again in judgment (1:9, 10).

3. Paul presents the defense of his ministry among the Thessalonians as his answer to the opposition generated by his enemies (2:1-12). He reminds them that he was not a coward, for after he was shamefully treated at Philippi, he still came to Thessalonica and boldly preached to them there in

the face of contention (2:1, 2). The gospel that he preached was given them as a sacred trust from God and therefore he declared it to them not in deceit, nor corrupted it in any way so as to please men, but rather in sincerity for God Who trieth the heart is his witness (2:3-5). He then makes two significant points. First, while laboring with them, he did not require them to pay for his livelihood. Instead he worked at tent-making, even though it meant he had to work night and day. They should appreciate that this meant personal sacrifice on his part (2:6, 8, 9). Secondly, his method of labor was gentle and loving, as a nurse cherisheth her children (2:7), as a father comforts his children (2:11), while he maintained a good example, so that they could look to him for guidance (2:10, 12).

4. He reminds them of the effect the gospel had upon them (2:13-16). He rejoices with thanksgiving that they received the gospel, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God (2:13). By receiving the word, they joined the Christians in Judea who suffered at the hands of the Jews (2:14). He rehearses, further, that the Jews in Judea had killed the prophets, even THE prophet. Now, they forbid the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, and in this way filled up the guilt of their sins, making themselves worthy of the wrath of God (2:15-17).

5. In this next section, Paul discloses his personal concern for the welfare of the church there, and he tells how he seeks their good (2:17-3:13). Even after he endangered his life by going to Thessalonica, Paul still desired to return to them for spiritual

fellowship, but was hindered by Satan (2:17-20). Instead, Paul sent Timothy to comfort them (3:1, 2). He further explains that persecutions are divinely appointed and believers are to expect them. Nevertheless, he was much concerned to know how they withstood the tempter (3:3-5). Upon Timothy's return and assurance that they were faithful, Paul is comforted and rejoices before God with thanksgiving (3:6-9). He reaffirms his desire to return to them and to strengthen them in their faith by a personal visit (3:10). In the meanwhile, he commits this desire to God in prayer and asks God to make them increase in love toward each other and to strengthen their faith until the Lord returns (3:11-13).

6. The apostle Paul explicitly instructs them concerning sexual purity (4:1-8). He presents this teaching as a commandment of God which they already know, since he had told them before (4:1, 2). The purpose of this teaching is their sanctification through abstaining from fornication (4:3). This includes a husband possessing his vessel (his wife) in holiness and not in the concupiscence (passions) of lust as the Gentiles do. This is an obvious reference to heathendom from which they were converted (4:4, 5). In addition, one may not defraud his brother (commit adultery secretly), because the Lord is the avenger. All such sins are contrary to God's will, for He has called us to holiness by His Holy Spirit (4:6-8).

7. We are to work to provide for our daily needs (4:9-12). He gives this instruction in the setting of brotherly love (4:9, 10). Labor is a private matter (be quiet, do your own business). By doing this they will be a good example to outsiders and also have sufficient material needs for themselves (4:11, 12).

8. He now instructs them concerning those in their midst who had died and of whom they were afraid that they would be left out in the coming of the Lord (4:13-18). There is sorrow when a loved one dies, yet in that sorrow there is hope (4:13). Christ died and rose again, even so all who have died in Christ shall arise (4:14). The order is important. Negatively, the living saints will not prevent (precede) the ones who have died. Positively, Christ will first raise up those who have died in Him; then the living ones will be translated immediately, "caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." This will be public and well announced, for the Lord will come with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God (4:15-18).

9. Paul gives specific instruction about the return of Christ and the correct way to watch for Him (5:1-11). He will come suddenly, unexpectedly, as a thief in the night (5:1, 2). Those who are in darkness will think He will not come, and they will be

complacent in their evil ways (drunken); but He will suddenly appear and destroy them (5:3, 7). As the children of the light, we should not sleep, but watch, be sober, look for His coming as a soldier prepared for battle (5:4-6, 8). The motive of this watch is that when Christ comes, we will receive our full salvation in Him; that is, we will live together with Him. This is reason to comfort and to edify one another (5:9-11).

10. In conclusion, Paul exhorts them on a variety of subjects (5:12-22). They are to esteem very highly those office bearers who labor in their behalf (5:12, 13). They are to warn the unruly that they not render evil for evil, but, contrariwise, they are to comfort and uphold all the rest no matter what their degree of spiritual growth (5:14, 15). It is their privilege to rejoice, pray without ceasing, quench not the spirit, despise not prophesyings, hold fast that which is good, and finally abstain not only from evil, but also the very appearance of evil (5:16-22).

11. Once again he offers a prayer to the faithful God for their sanctification, including their whole spirit, soul, and body to be preserved blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus (5:23, 24).

12. He expresses final requests (5:25-27). These include a request that they pray for him (5:25), greet each other with a holy kiss (5:26), read this epistle to all the brethren (5:27).

13. He blesses them with the usual, "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." (5:28).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What was the city of Thessalonica like when Paul arrived there on his second missionary journey?

2. Give a brief review of Paul's missionary labors in organizing the Thessalonian church. (See Acts 17 and references in the letter itself.)

3. What prompted the uprising of the Jews against Paul as he labored in Thessalonica? Give some details of this history.

4. Do we derive from I Thessalonians 2:9 and II Thessalonians 3:8 that there is a time when a minister may labor with his hands to support himself financially while he preaches the gospel?

5. Demonstrate from this letter that the church at Thessalonica, though young in faith, was a good example of Christian conduct. How do we account for this sudden change? (See I Thess. 1:2-10.)

6. How does Paul show bravery and diligence to preach the gospel when he was determined to return to Thessalonica? What lesson is there in this for us?

7. What lesson can a preacher learn from this

letter in how to engage in pastoral care in a congregation that is young in Christian faith?

8. Review the problems that were evident in the church at Thessalonica and show how Paul deals with each of them?

9. Show from this letter that Paul expresses warmth and love for the church. How did Paul also show this to them in very deed?

10. In 4:9-11 of this letter we are urged to work

to provide for our daily bread. What abuses might Paul have in mind that he intended to correct?

11. Show that Paul's teaching concerning "our being caught in the air to meet the Lord" (4:13-18) cannot possibly refer to a rapture as the premillennialist teaches.

12. Give some specific suggestions concerning that which we can and should do as we watch for Christ's return.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Nicene Creed

Rev. James Slopsema

Article 1 I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

It is quite obvious that the formulation of this article as well as the next article is based on I Corinthians 8:6: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him." Notice the similarity. The apostle Paul writing to the church of Corinth states, "there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things." Article 1 of the Creed confesses faith in "one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." Then the Creed, following the pattern of Paul in I Corinthians 8:6, proceeds in Article 2 to confess faith in "one Lord Jesus Christ...by Whom all things were made."

In general, Article 1 teaches that there is but one God. This is certainly the idea of the first part of the article, "I believe in one God." This one God is in turn further identified. He is the Father. He is also the Almighty One. In our English rendition of the creed, "Almighty" is used as an adjective describing "Father." The English speaks of the "Father Almighty." The idea of the Greek in which this creed was originally composed is somewhat different. There we read of the Father Who is also the Almighty One. And, finally, this one God is identified as the Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

We turn our attention first to the confession of the early church that there is but one God. This certainly is the teaching of the Scriptures. This truth is implied for example in the first commandment of the law, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." The reason for this commandment is very simple:

there are no other gods. Jehovah is God alone. Therefore man is to honor and recognize no other as God. This truth is also taught in Deuteronomy 6:4; "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." Solomon in turn pleaded with God to maintain the cause of His people, "that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (I Kings 8:60). The New Testament Scriptures also teach this same truth. Paul writes to Timothy, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ" (I Timothy 2:5). There is also the passage upon which the very wording of this article is based: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him" (I Cor. 8:6).

It was necessary for the early church to emphasize and maintain this truth. It had to be maintained first over against the paganism that flourished at that time.

Wherever the apostle Paul went on his missionary journeys he came across idolatry. The Gentiles recognized and worshipped many gods. That was true for example in Athens. Visiting this city on his second missionary journey Paul observed that Athens was "wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). Images representing all the idol gods of the Athenians abounded. There was even the altar to the unknown god. This kind of thing existed in every locality. Each locality had a number of idol gods, each with its own rank and importance. There was a god for every area of life, for every need of man.

In spite of the rapid growth of the church in the first two centuries after Christ, paganism continued to flourish throughout the Roman world. The Roman government tolerated any religion as long as it did not contradict or in any way undermine

the rule of Rome. The one exception to this was the Christian religion. This was indeed ironical. There was no religion that promoted fidelity to the state more than the Christian religion. The Christian church taught her members that they must be in subjection to the higher powers (Romans 13:1). The Christians were model citizens. Nevertheless their religion was not tolerated. The Christian religion was outlawed. The saints were time and again persecuted by the Roman government. Many of God's people at this time even suffered martyrdom.

In the year A.D. 313 all this was changed. Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, supposedly was converted to the Christian faith. We question the true character of Constantine's conversion because there never was much evidence of true faith in his personal life. Furthermore, there is much evidence to substantiate the contention that his conversion to Christianity was for political reasons. Be that as it may, the result of it all was the Edict of Toleration in A.D. 313. As the name indicates, this edict allowed the existence of the Christian church. Christianity was placed on an equal footing with all the other religions of the empire. In the years that followed the Christian religion was even promoted and made the state religion of the Roman Empire. It became mandatory to belong to the church. In spite of all this, paganism did not die out until the sixteenth century.

This all means that in A.D. 325, when the church sought to confess her faith through the Nicene Creed, paganism was still flourishing. Hence, the church very deliberately confessed faith in but one God. Over against all idolatry the Christian confessed, "I believe in one God."

This truth that there is but one God was also confessed by the early church against the errors of Gnosticism. Gnosticism was an admixture of Greek philosophy, pagan idolatry, and Christianity. Gnosticism taught that God is an impersonal force beyond the scope of man's comprehension or ability to know. From this unknowable God however emanates or issues forth a series of aeons or spiritual beings. These aeons have divine characteristics. Altogether these aeons comprise the *pleroma* or fullness of divine power and attributes. Over against this spirit world of perfection and light is the *kenoma*, the world of matter which is eternal (i.e., without beginning) and intrinsically evil. The Gnostics also spoke of the *Demiurge* or World maker. This *Demiurge* was created by a fallen aeon from the spirit world. This *Demiurge* in turn has formed from the evil matter of the *kenoma* the present visible world over which he also rules. The present world is therefore intrinsically evil. According to Gnosticism, the *Demiurge* or World maker is Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament Jews, who imag-

ines himself to be the only God. Jesus in turn is an aeon, in fact the highest aeon, emanating from the unknowable God. For the salvation of the world he has taken upon himself the appearance of man. Obviously he did not assume the actual flesh of man for that is intrinsically evil. Hence, he took only the form of man. The Holy Spirit in turn is also another aeon, subordinate to Jesus.

There is more to this philosophy of Gnosticism. This is sufficient for our purposes now. It is quite obvious that Gnosticism was essentially polytheistic, acknowledging many gods. Gnosticism speaks of many aeons or spiritual beings that comprise the *pleroma* or fullness of divine power and attributes. The aeons were essentially gods.

Gnosticism was a force to be reckoned with even during the time of the Apostles. The apostle John for example speaks in his epistles of those that deny that Jesus is come in the flesh (I John 4:3, II John 7). This was the Gnostic idea that Jesus, the highest aeon, took only the form of a man. This idea John thoroughly condemns. Those who taught this were deceivers, antichrists. Such like the saints were not to bid godspeed or even receive into their homes (II John 7:10). Gnosticism reached its zenith around the middle of the second century and for a while threatened the very existence of the church. By the time the Nicene Creed was written this heresy was on the decline. But it was still a force to be reckoned with. And so also against this form of polytheism the early Christian church confessed her faith in one God.

This same truth that there is only one God is also taught in our Reformed Creeds. It is expressed, for example, in the Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 8 Q. 25. There the Catechism asks, "Since there is but one only divine essence, why speakest thou of Father, Son and Holy Ghost?" The answer is, "Because God hath so revealed Himself in His word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God." This truth is also set forth in the Belgic Confession, Article 1: "We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God...."

It is necessary for the church to confess this truth even today. Idolatry abounds today even as in the Bible times and in the early years of the Christian church. In its most crude form, idolatry is to be found today in those countries that are still pagan. This is especially true of many countries in Africa and southeast Asia. There images of all kinds are honored and worshipped as gods. Those who worship these images embrace many such gods. But idolatry also abounds in our own country and in the so-called Christian world. The Heidelberg Catechism defines idolatry as placing our trust in

any object other than the one true God, Who has manifest Himself in His Word (L.D. 34 Q. 95.) From that viewpoint there are many idols today before which men bow. There is, for example, the idol god of money. How often do not men place their trust in riches rather than in the promises of the living God? This is to deny the true God and to make money one's god. In like manner anything can become one's idol god. All that is required is that one place his trust in it, find his security in it. Thus, entertainment, friends, government, insurance, and a host of other things are and become the idol gods of men.

Idolatry of this kind characterizes fallen man. He is nothing but an idolator. The reason is very simple. Man has been created with a sense of dependence. He has a need for some higher being in which he can place his trust and find his security. He must have a god. But the natural man refuses to acknowledge the one only true God, the God that alone can provide him with all he needs. This is not

because God has failed to reveal Himself sufficiently. The fault is man's who has blinded himself in his unbelief. As a result, unbelieving man has but one thing to do. He must invent his own gods. This he has done throughout all history. However, the gods he invents are powerless to help him. They provide very little security for man as he faces the harsh realities of life and the harsher realities of death. Hence, man has become polytheistic. He invents many gods. And in the multitude of his gods he hopes to find peace and safety.

Over against this folly of unbelief is the calling of the church of Jesus Christ to confess her faith in the one only true God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. This faith she must confess in her creeds, in her preaching as it goes to the uttermost parts of the earth, and in the lives and conduct of her members as they live day by day in total dependence on God alone.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

God's Providence and Sin (3)

Rev. H. Veldman

Having God's providence and sin now clearly before us, we face the question: what is the connection as such between them, according to Scripture, without as yet discussing how they are actually related to one another. And then we would remark, in the first place, that the child of God surely demands a scriptural explanation of this phenomenon of God's sovereign providence and sin. His soul cries for this explanation. He cannot ignore it or brush it aside. He cannot adopt the attitude of the stoic or the American Indian and simply harden himself against all affliction and suffering, the results of sin in the midst of the world. That stoic or Indian may appear calm outwardly but inwardly he seethes and rebels. Neither can he be indifferent with respect to all these sufferings of our present time, assume the attitude that we may just as well take the bitter with the sweet. Our Lord Jesus Christ was surely not such a stoic and neither was He indifferent, resigned to the fact that He might as well realize that the bitter must be taken with the sweet. It is certainly not pleasing in God's sight that, when He afflicts us, we react indifferently, react as if this mighty hand of God does not affect us.

Indeed, the child of God craves and demands an explanation of this phenomenon, God's providence

and sin. I must have an explanation, first of all, because of the fact of the power of sin. It is simply a fact that we must contend with this power of sin within us. Is there any child of God who is not aware of this awesome power of sin within him? How vividly this fearful struggle is held before us in the seventh chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans! How wretched he knows himself and how he longs to be delivered out of the body of this death! But we must also deal with the power of sin in the world round about us. That wicked world hates God and His church. And seemingly they may proceed unmolested in their wickedness. Seemingly that wicked world may afflict and torment the church of God to their hearts' content. And then the psalmist in Psalm 73 asks whether there be any knowledge with the Most High. Now it is surely for the child of God of the greatest significance to know whether God is God or whether that world rages against the Lord as having power in itself, and that therefore the cause of God's righteousness must remain in doubt even unto the end. It is surely for him of the greatest significance to know whether God is truly God and He alone.

Secondly, however, the problem of God's providence and sin demands an explanation because of

the living God. This explanation is of even greater importance than that which involves the reality, as such, of the power of sin. Indeed, my soul cries for this explanation because of God Who is the God of my salvation. I am sure that we can understand this. He is the alone living God. He declares the end from the beginning and His counsel shall stand. And this counsel is even as God is: all-comprehensive, eternal, unchangeable, efficacious, and independent. However, this God Who alone is God is *my* God. Him I love, the eternal, only true God. My soul must have an explanation of the fact of sin because of Him Who is my God. Does the Lord delight in iniquity? But is He not good? Or, does sin exist independently of the eternal Jehovah? But can there possibly be anything that exists independently of Him? Is there an evil in the city and the Lord has not done it? (Amos 3:6). Or, if God be sovereign, the only Ruler of heaven and earth, how must we explain that the world may continue in its mad iniquity? To answer that the Lord permits these things to happen does not satisfy, and this for the simple reason that God does not merely permit anything to happen—fact is, He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Or, to answer that the Lord does this iniquity would be in conflict with His adorable holiness, righteousness, and perfection. But, to give sin a place independent of the Lord would be a denial of His sovereignty. And because my soul thirsts after the living God, because I desire that God remain God, I must have an answer to the question concerning sin in connection with His divine providence. The text, "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things," must surely be applied also to the reality of sin and iniquity. In other words, also the fact of sin must impart comfort to the child of God.

In answer to this very urgent question, it must be maintained, first of all, that God is really God in all the operation of His providence. We cannot emphasize too strongly that this must be understood in the absolute sense of the word. It is not only true that the Lord supports all things, but also that He is absolutely sovereign in His government over all things. We must surely maintain that there is nothing more certain than the word of His mouth. When He speaks, it is; when He commands, it stands. All things take place through that almighty Word of the Lord. And we may say that, generally speaking, there is agreement with regard to this truth. The Scriptures state very plainly, so plainly that they really tolerate no dispute, that even all the hairs of our head are numbered, and that a sparrow does not fall from the housetop without the will of our heavenly Father.

Secondly, however, we must also understand that the reality of sin takes place through the provi-

dence of God. Concerning this truth Scripture leaves no doubt either. The Word of God speaks very plainly also to this effect. Do we not read in the Scriptures that God forms the light and creates the darkness, yea, that He makes peace and creates evil, as in Isaiah 45:7? Joseph is brought into Egypt through the abominations of his brothers; but when these brothers finally appear before him in Egypt, and they fear that he will avenge himself upon them and seek reprisals against them for the evil they committed against him, he declares to them very plainly that the Lord had turned all their evil thoughts unto good. Repeatedly we read in the Word of God that the Lord hardens the hearts of men. He hardens Pharaoh's heart and even proclaims unto Moses that He will work in Pharaoh's heart unto that end—indeed, Scripture employs a language in this connection which we otherwise would never dare to take upon our lips. The king's heart, we read in Proverbs 21:1, is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; He turneth it whithersoever He wills. Was it not the Lord Who caused David to count the people? We read in 2 Samuel 24:1: "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." And, mind you, David sinned in this numbering of the people. We all know how Shimei cursed David when he fled from before the face of Absalom; yet David himself declares that this cursing by Shimei was of the Lord. Godless hands nailed the Lord Jesus Christ to the accursed tree; nevertheless, He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). We will have opportunity later to call attention to this particular Word of God. Upon the question whether sin is independent of God, or whether this power of evil occurs also through the providence of God, so that the Lord from moment unto moment is realizing His counsel, there can be but one answer, without a single moment of hesitation: there is no evil in the city which the Lord does not perform (Amos 3:6). Of this there cannot possibly be any doubt. The Word of God surely declares that there is only one God, and that this God is God alone, and that He performs all His good pleasure. We can never stress this truth too emphatically. The Scriptures allow no compromise in this matter. God, God alone, also now and throughout the ages, is the Cause, the supreme Cause of the existence of all things. We must not hesitate to say this. Every curse, every evil thought, every rebellion of sinful man, is of the Lord alone, sovereignly, not only from eternity, but He is ever working it from moment unto moment. Can we possibly doubt this? Is God not the alone living God? Does He not, according to Isaiah 46:19, declare the end from the beginning, and from an-

cient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure? Do we not read here that the Lord declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done? Is not this a truly marvellous thing? Who but God is able to do this? O, do not say that the Lord merely knows all about these things. The Arminian will concede to you that the Lord knows about the sinner's unbelief. He claims to believe in a divine election and reprobation based upon foreseen faith and unbelief. But this Word of God in Isaiah 46:10 not only declares emphatically that the Lord knows all things, it also states that He will *do* all His pleasure and that therefore His counsel shall stand. Indeed, we may not and shall not separate sin from the providence of the Lord. He is absolutely sovereign; He is in absolute control. And sin is no exception to this. Concerning this we need not doubt as far as the testimony of Holy Writ is concerned.

However, confessing this truth of God's Word, this connection between the providence of God and sin, we become seemingly involved in an irreconcilable conflict with the holiness and righteousness of God. We cannot escape the word of God in Job 34:10: "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity." Or, turning to Habakkuk 1:13 we read: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." And the apostle John writes so uncompromisingly in his epistle, chapter 1, that He is a Light in Whom is no darkness at all. And, is not our God a consuming fire? Hence, the Lord God and sin must surely be

viewed as excluding one another. There is in God nothing that resembles iniquity, as we also read in James 1:13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." The Lord is truly a Light; He *is* Light, the overflowing fountain of all good. How now is it to be harmonized with our God, Who never beholds iniquity, that sin is nevertheless never to be explained as independent of Jehovah, Who has formed the wicked, note well, the wicked unto the day of evil? Indeed, we must and surely can say something about this. Yes, we must say something about this. This we can and must do in the light of the testimony of the Word of God. And we have already called attention to the fact that my soul cries for an answer, and that because of the power of sin but also and primarily because of the living God. We must understand that God and sin surely exclude each other. If we fail to maintain this we lose God. And we cannot afford to lose God. He is the thrice Holy One of Israel! With this truth our salvation stands or falls. We can expect no good from a God who loves sin and iniquity. As stated previously, we cannot fathom this problem, understand it intellectually. And we do not propose to offer such an explanation. God is the divine and sovereign Potter and we are but the clay, and how presumptuous it would be for clay to fathom and understand the eternal and infinite Potter! But we can say something about it. This we can do because the Scriptures lead us in this. And we must never fail to take God at His Word. Only, we must believe *all* that the Lord has revealed to us in His Word.

SPECIAL FEATURE

The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses of the Protestant Reformed Churches and Possible Remedies (2)

Rev. R. Flikkema

In the previous article the first part of a lecture given to the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League was printed. In that article the speaker emphasized what the strengths of our churches are. He ended that article by emphasizing that those strengths must ever remain our strengths. Here follows the conclusion of that lecture.

We must ever insist that those strengths remain the strengths of our churches. We must do so first

of all over against an ungodly world and over against an increasingly apostate ecclesiastical world that tells us that those strengths must not be our strengths. Today as never before the church is being bombarded with the devil's tool, worldliness. And it is eating away at the church of Jesus Christ like a cancer—so much so that the church today has forgotten about its distinctively Reformed heritage. It has tossed out of the window

the precious time-honored truths of the Word of God. It has dispersed with the preaching, or, if not that, it has so watered down the preaching that you can not tell that it is preaching. It has made elders and discipline a laughingstock. God's people can do just about anything that they have a mind to do, without any fear that they will be called to task. Covenant homes and schools are that in name only. Covenant youth are not being instructed. That is what is happening in the church today. And as a result of all of that, the church today has given itself over to worldimindedness: to the pursuit of sinful pleasures, to the social gospel, to making this world a better place in which to live. And God's people are being destroyed. God said long ago through the mouth of the prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"; and that is happening. But the point is, we must be on our guard that that never happens to us. If it does, we will not have any more strengths left! Evidently when this topic was formulated, the committee felt that we have as Protestant Reformed Churches, both strengths and weaknesses. But I submit to you, if we allow what I have just been talking about to happen to us, we will not have strengths and weaknesses. We will have only weaknesses! And if we have only weaknesses we have nothing left!

And that brings me to the question, namely, how is it that these strengths are our strengths! And in what way is it that these strengths will remain our strengths? Is that due to ourselves? Is it the case that we are the ones responsible for the fact that we are Protestant Reformed Churches? Is it the case that the distinctively Reformed heritage that we have and the precious truths of the Word of God that we do have is a matter of our doing? Is it the case that the preaching of the Word which we have, faithful ministers of the Word that we have, a faithful seminary, and sound pulpits from Sabbath day to Sabbath day,—is all of that a result of what we have done? Is it the case that our elders and deacons function in their office as they do—dispensing the mercies of Christ, standing upon the watchtowers of Mt. Zion, calling sinners to repentance—is a result of their own skill and expertise? Or the fact that we have covenant families, godly parents and children, covenant schools and teachers wherein the covenant seed is instructed, is that a matter in which we may boast?

Inevitably in the history of the church, and particularly I refer to the history of the children of Israel, when Israel thought so, God took their strengths away from them so that all that remained were weaknesses. When Israel tried to stand in its own strength, boasted in what it had accomplished, when it forgot about God, then sudden destruction came upon Israel. Just read the history of Israel re-

corded in the Old Testament. When Israel forgot that their strength was altogether rooted in God's everlasting strength, God sent heathen nations to chastize Israel. Our chairman read tonight from Isaiah 26. You read in verse 16 of that chapter, "Lord, in trouble have they (that is, Israel) visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them." God chastened Israel. And why? Because Israel had forgotten that their strength was not in themselves; it was not in horses and chariots that they possessed. They had forgotten that their strength was not to be found in the heathen nations round about them or even the idol gods of the heathen nations round about them. They had forgotten that their strength was to be found only in the Lord Jehovah. You read in verse 4 of that chapter, "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." They forgot to sing the beautiful words of *Psalter number 298*:

My steadfast heart O God, will sound Thy praise
abroad with tuneful string; The dawn shall hear my
song. Thy praise I will prolong, And where Thy
people throng, Thanksgiving bring.

Thy truth and tender love are high as heaven above;
Thy help we crave. Be Thou exalted high above the
lofty sky; Lest Thy beloved die, O hear and save.

God's word shall surely stand; His Name through
every land shall be adored; Lord, who shall lead our
host? Thy aid we covet most, in Thee is all our boast,
strong in the Lord.

They forgot, and Because they forgot, God chastened them.

And the same thing will happen to us, if we dare to think that our strengths are the result of ourselves—what we have done. If we think that those strengths are in the absolute sense *our* strengths, forgetting that they are not ours but the Lord Jehovah's strengths, we might just as well close the doors of our churches and go home because there is nothing left but the chastening of the Lord. The point that I am trying to make is that our strengths are all due to the Lord Jehovah. The fact that we are Protestant Reformed Churches; that we have the distinctively Reformed heritage that we do; that we have the precious truths of God's Word, the preaching, discipline, covenant homes and covenant schools, is all due to this blessed truth: "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

OUR WEAKNESSES

In so far as we understand and remember that we are strong; in so far as that truth permeates our churches, our preaching and our covenant homes; in so far as we teach that truth to our children, we are strong. But in so far as we forget that truth, we are weak.

And weak we as Protestant Reformed Churches are becoming. Notice, I said we are *becoming* weak. I did not say we are weak because we are not weak. But we are becoming weak. Weakness and weaknesses are a process. That does not happen overnight. But rather, that takes place over a period of time. And I am convinced that that process is occurring in our churches. There are increasingly appearing flaws, cracks if you will, in the walls of our strong city. And I submit to you that we had better recognize that there are.

What are those flaws and cracks? They have to do exactly with a certain lack of enthusiasm, appreciation, and zeal for our strengths and the Lord Jehovah in Whom is all our strength. Oh yes, we have as I said our heritage, the truth, the preaching, discipline, covenant homes and schools. And too, we even recognize them to be our strengths, and even more, recognize that those strengths come from God. But our weaknesses are to be found exactly in a certain non-appreciation, or rather I should say, a lack of an all-encompassing appreciation for them. And by an all-encompassing appreciation I mean that there is nothing else in all the world that means more to us than our strengths and the Lord Jehovah Who is our strength. And that all-encompassing appreciation would be in having our whole life as churches characterized by the following words found in Isaiah 26:8, "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee"; verse 9: "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early"; verse 12: "Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us"; verse 13: "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." And that all-encompassing appreciation would be to sing, not merely with our mouths, but from our hearts with conviction and enthusiastic zealous appreciation for what God has done for us:

Thy truth and tender love are high as heaven above; *Thy help we crave*. Be thou exalted high above the lofty sky; lest Thy beloved die, O hear and save.

God's word shall surely stand; His name through every land shall be *adored*; Lord, who shall lead our host? *Thy aid we covet most*; In Thee is all our boast, strong in the Lord.

But for some reason that all-encompassing enthusiasm is not there as it should be. Again, I do not say that it is not there at all. But it is not there as it *should be*. Instead we are increasingly becoming enthusiastic about other things, earthly things! If this is not true, you explain to me why we can talk for hours about money, for example, about our homes,

about our cars; why we can talk for hours about sports—the national sports teams, and yes, even about our sports program in our own Christian schools. You explain that once. Explain to me why parents and young people—and it is indeed not just young people, but parents too—go to movies and partake of all sorts of other things that have no place in the life of the church of Jesus Christ. You explain to me why even our young children can talk for hours about television programs that they watch. But when it comes to talking about that which we ought to talk about, we have very little time and very few words to say about that. You explain that to me!

And do not say that such has always been the case—that things were that way years ago too. Maybe that is true. I am not in a position either to affirm or deny that. As I said in my introduction, I am young and did not live years ago. But, frankly, I am sick and tired of hearing as a defense for how things are today that things were just as bad years ago, so that we need not worry, for things turned out all right years ago, and things will turn out all right today. I for one will not tolerate such reasoning! And you may not either!

There are cracks in the walls that are ever becoming larger. They consist in a lack of an all-encompassing enthusiastic appreciation for the strengths that Jehovah has given us. I wish that were not so. It grieves me to say that is so. But say it I do.

THE CERTAIN REMEDY

Well, then, the question is: what must be done about that? What is the solution, the remedy if you will, to those weaknesses? For, that something must be done, that some solution, remedy, must be found and applied is certain. Notice, I speak of *remedy* in the singular. The theme given me for this lecture speaks of *remedies* in the plural. I choose to speak not of remedies but remedy. And further, I choose to speak not of *possible* remedies but of a *certain* remedy. What is that certain remedy?

The answer to that question is not so difficult. Negatively, the answer to that question is that we not deny the reality of those weaknesses and say that they do not exist. It is not to close our eyes to them and hope that they will somehow go away of themselves. That is not the answer. If your child is sick, you do not say he is not sick. You do not say maybe he will get better of himself. If there are cracks in your walls, you do not say there are no cracks. You do not say those cracks will go away of themselves. I assure you they won't! They will only get bigger. But rather, when your child gets sick, you give him medicine. When there are cracks in your walls, you endeavor to get rid of them. So too

with our weaknesses. We endeavor to get rid of them.

How? What is the remedy? It is this: by saying with the prophet of old, "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And not just say it but mean it; live by it in our covenant homes, teach it to our covenant children. That is the very simple remedy. But that which is not so very simple, but rather very difficult, is putting that remedy into practice. That is the difficult part.

Are you willing to put that remedy into practice? Are our homes and churches willing to put that remedy into practice? Only you and I and our churches can answer that question. But answer it we must. If our answer is no, we will be destroyed. If our answer is yes, we shall certainly be blessed. Hear then the Word of God, and with that I conclude, "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." May God so grant it, is my prayer.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter IV

THE PATTERN OF SOUND DOCTRINE

In this chapter we will begin to consider that there is a most intimate and necessary relationship between having good, biblical hermeneutics, as we noticed in the teaching of Jesus after and before His suffering and death, and adhering to the pattern of sound doctrine, and the pattern of sound words of truth. Without the former, the latter is nonexistent; this is as true as it is clear that day follows night.

Such will be the burden of this chapter!

When we speak of the pattern of sound doctrine we are not, first of all, interested in counting words and syllables; nor are we interested in an "isolated passage" of Scripture such as we find in Daniel 9:27 or Revelation 20:2 and 7, but we are interested in the *total message* of Scripture, the Gospel of God, as this can be and is pointed out by Scripture itself. We are profoundly concerned, when we ask after the "form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:17b), as to what the Holy Spirit would have us understand by these words. And then we must read this statement in the light of the immediate context, and in connection with the truth of Scripture which is being revealed to us in a given passage. We must have good, sound exegesis! We must and may not put our own content and meaning into the terms!

There are various passages in the New Testament where the term "form," "pattern" occurs. And these are all employed by Paul in his letters to the churches as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

It is in the Epistle to the Romans that Paul shows

us something of this "pattern" or "form" of "doctrine." We refer, first of all, to what he writes in Romans 6:17b. He is here speaking to the "called in Jesus Christ, to all that be in Rome..." (Rom. 1:6-7). He speaks as one who is a debtor, by virtue of his apostolic office, both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both for the Jew and the Greek (Rom. 1:14-16). And Paul writes the great truth of the promise that Abraham is not merely the father of those who are of the circumcision, but he is the father of all who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4:12). The sign and seal of the righteousness of Abraham's faith makes a distinction between Jew and Jew, and designates that only they are heirs who walk as did father Abraham. Thus spoke Jesus to the Jews in John 8:39: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

And the doctrine to which we have been delivered, whether believers, Jew or Greek, is that God has saved all His own by one man, Jesus Christ. The entire human race died and perished in one man, Adam, and the entire church is saved by one man, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-20). And so marvelous is that grace that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Rom. 5:20). And now we are no more under law but under grace! And grace makes us cry out against the accusation that "we sin more that grace abound," with the exalted "God forbid!" We are no more slaves of sin, but we are free-born sons of Sarah, born from Jerusalem, which is above (Rom. 6:2, 14; Gal. 4:23, 5:1).

Such is the pattern of "sin and grace" to which

we have been delivered. We have now no other *willing choice* but to serve the Lord, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the Spirit. We are delivered, given over into a new bondage of liberty to serve God, as sons and daughters of the living God.

Now this does not yet indicate that especially Premillennial Dispensationalism has discarded this "pattern or form of sound doctrine." Our purpose here is to demonstrate clearly that when we speak of a pattern of sound doctrine, it must be quite clear that we are rightly dividing the word of truth, and rightly setting forth the doctrine itself, so that we see in it a consistent Gospel-pattern.

When we say "Gospel-pattern," we insist that this means that we will find this "pattern" in all of the Old Testament prophecies, from Genesis to Malachi, and that we will find this same pattern, only now far more clearly and gloriously, set forth in all the New Testament Scriptures.

Both the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament *were delivered to this form of doctrine*. It is not something "new" in the sense that this form of doctrine did not obtain for the true children of Abraham in the Old Testament. This is abundantly evident from Romans 3:21 where we read that this "righteousness of God without law," as now manifested in the Gospel, was witnessed and testified of by the law and the prophets, that is, in all the Old Testament Scriptures (Rom. 1:2; Heb. 1:1, 2).

Such is the basic keynote in the foreword, covenant-word, of Exodus 20:1: "I am the Lord thy God. Who have brought you forth from the land of Egypt," the house of spiritual bondage!

But let us press on.

There is a certain form of the heavenly tabernacle of God with man all through the Scriptures. Moses is shown this "pattern" on the holy mount at the time of the law-giving. The Builder and Maker of the heavenly temple shows Moses exactly how to fashion the temple, its furniture, as the house where God dwells with His people in covenant fellowship. All is "according to the pattern which I shewed thee on the mount." Moses is reminded expressly by the Lord concerning this "pattern"; Moses must follow this pattern very exactly and meticulously. This is true of the entire structure of the tabernacle, its rooms, its furniture, as an earthly picture of heavenly realities (Heb. 9:9).

This meticulous following of the instructions of Jehovah concerning the pattern of the heavenly is also followed in the building and construction of the temple by Solomon (I Chron. 28:11, 12, 18, 19). And, to be sure, in the picture of the temple shown

in the heavenly vision to Ezekiel, the matter and truth of the exactitude of the pattern of the heavenly is underscored. In Ezekiel 43:1-12 we have a beautiful and instructive Word of God for the "house of Israel" in the captivity of Babylon. Truly, the temple is destroyed, the walls are broken down, and the city lies in ruins. But God is going to rebuild a temple of the pattern of the perfection of holiness. It will be filled with "the glory of the LORD" (verses 4, 5). And all shall be "most holy" (verse 12).

Yes, notice this *pattern* of the temple!

It is not the pattern of a mere earthly tabernacle of Moses, nor of the Solomonic temple as planned by David; but it will be the "place where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and My holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredoms, nor by the carcasses (dead bodies) of their kings in their high places."

And then Israel must be shown these things concerning that glorious future temple. It is the temple which Jesus built as the great temple-Builder (John 2:19; Hebrews 3:5, 6). Yes, that temple shown to Ezekiel in the vision is the perfected church in glory, in which Christ shall be glorified in the saints (II Thess. 1:10a).

Such is the pattern of the temple!

Such is the "law of this house" (Ezekiel 43:12b).

And the entire church, the Israel of God must see this house; and, seeing it, they must confess their sin in the obedience of the Gospel. They will then need to "measure the pattern"! All is exactitude in God's holy temple. It is the holy God coming to dwell with His people in everlasting covenant; the tabernacle of God shall be with man.

And now we must pause here just a bit, and reflect on the import of this for the preaching of the Word, and for good Hermeneutics which lies at the basis of sound preaching and exposition of the Scriptures. The question is then not, first and uppermost, concerning a merely literal interpretation of certain words, names, and phrases as this pertains to historic Israel in the prophecies, but it is really the basic question of the form of doctrine as this is rooted in the great pattern which God shewed Moses on the Mount at Horeb.

It is to understand that this "tabernacle" is really a picture of God dwelling with His people in all the glory of grace, so that Israel will not die. That is why, when Moses will ascend to the top of the mount with Joshua, he first receives the Theophany of the living God, at the occasion when he read the "words of the LORD, and all the judgments" to

the people. Yes, then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said "behold, the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exodus 24:8).

And then we read something amazingly wonderful. It is the wonder of grace at the time of the law-giving. We read, "And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet as it were paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness, and upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: they also saw God and did eat and drink" (Exodus 24:10, 11).

Do you see the pattern here of the heavenly?

It is the pattern of grace, sovereign grace in the blood. God did not, according to His awful glory, cause them to perish who saw God through the blood of the covenant! (Exodus 19:21).

That is the pattern of sound doctrine. Such is the form of doctrine to which we have been delivered, whether in the Old Testament shadows in hope, or

in the New Testament in Christ's blood. Yes, Jesus thus interpreted all the Scriptures to the travelers to Emmaus on the evening of the resurrection day. It was thus from Moses and all the Scriptures that Jesus expounded unto them the things concerning Himself!

Everywhere the "pattern" is this: the Christ must suffer all these things and enter into His glory. And Jesus can ask the question: Must the Christ not suffer all these things according to the Scriptures?

And such opening of the Scriptures makes the hearts of the saints burn within them in holy joy and peace (Luke 24:32).

Truly, all this calls for hewing to the line in exact preaching according to the pattern of sound words (II Tim. 1:13).

Unto this we have been delivered.

Let us "measure the pattern," and let all the house of Israel know that God has made this Jesus, crucified, both Lord and Christ (Ezekiel 43:10; Acts 2:36).

Book Reviews

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA, Vol. II, E - J; G.W. Bromiley, General Editor; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1175 pp. (cloth), \$35.00. [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

This is the second volume of Eerdmans' new edition of "ISBE." It is attractively published, well bound, and—though \$35.00 is quite a chunk of money—not expensive, considering the size and scope of a volume like this.

The claim that this new edition is fully revised is not mere propaganda or window-dressing. I compared this new volume with the second volume of the old edition and found the claim to be entirely true. Editors, contributors, and even subjects treated are in many, many instances new. Your library will be improved by the addition of the new "ISBE."

To be sure, this does not mean that you can swallow "hook, line, and sinker" everything that this or any other encyclopedia tells you. A look at the names of some of the contributors will warn you, "Approach with caution." Thus, for example, when James Daane writes on "Infallibility," your Reformed antennae will send you signals. But this, after all, is true of any encyclopedia, be it secular or religious. As soon as it enters the area of explanation and interpretation, in distinction from the area

of facts, the reader must also begin to make his own critical evaluation.

Recommended: for ministers, seminarians, school libraries, and anyone who can afford a good Bible encyclopedia for his library.

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, Earl Schipper; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 151 pp. (paper), \$3.45. [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

This paperback is part of Baker's Contemporary Discussion Series. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions and a bibliographic guide designed to kindle further study and discussion. The format of the book, therefore, is helpful. The factual contents of the book, as it treats Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam, are also helpful and, as far as I could judge after brief perusal, accurate—though rather brief and condensed.

My objection—and it is a fundamental criticism of the book—is to its viewpoint. The author, who is teacher of religion at Grand Rapids Christian High School, rejects the position that all non-Christian religions are "completely immersed in the blackness of total depravity." As might be expected, his appeal in this connection is to "general" revelation, to common grace, and even to influences of special revelation. As a result, we must have "our minds

open to the insights and moral values held by people of other religions," and "we may view non-Christian religions as human response to God's revelation, even though disobedient and misdirected as a whole perspective."

Mr. Schipper is, of course, not the first to take this approach to false religions. You can find the same approach in many a "Reformed" theologian

who holds to the theory of common grace and who misconstrues what is often referred to as "general" revelation.

My judgment is, however, that it is precisely this approach which makes the book worthless as a reliable guide in studying and evaluating the religions treated in this book.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Mrs. William Kooiker in the death of her sister. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Ps. 103:17)

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Mrs. Henry J. Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to our fellow office-bearer, deacon Gerald Brummel, in the death of his father, GERRIT BRUMMEL. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose," (Rom. 8:28).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Bert Van Maanen, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Andy Brummel in the passing of his father, MR. GERRIT BRUMMEL.

"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm 73:26).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Board of the Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota, wishes to express their sympathy to our principal, Mr. Peter Brummel, in the loss of his father, MR. GERRIT BRUMMEL.

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

Wm. Buys, Pres.
Ron Brands, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!! TEACHER NEEDED

The Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota, is in need of a principal responsible for teaching the upper grades.

Contact Al Brummel, 251 Maple St., Edgerton, MN 56128 or Harlan Buys, RR 2, Edgerton, MN 56128.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of SouthEast Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Feenstra in the passing of his mother, MRS. HENRY MEULENBERG.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2).

Rev. Carl Haak, Pres.
Judy Kuiper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, CA, expresses Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearer, Elder Larry Huisken and to his family in the death of his mother, MRS. MINNIE HUISKEN.

It is our prayer that they may find comfort in God's Word.

"Cast thy burdens upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22).

Rev. K. Koole, Pres.
C. Van Meeteren, Clerk.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, wishes to express sincere Christian sympathy to one of its members, Bernie Menninga, in the passing of his wife, NETTIE.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21).

Rev. G. Lanting, Pres.
Catherine Vander Wiel, Sec'y.

FULL-TIME TEACHER NEEDED!

Covenant Christian High School is accepting applications for one full-time teacher for the 1983-1984 academic year. Areas for which applicants can apply are Bible, Business, Church History, Contemporary Religions, German, and History. Send letter of application to Mr. David Ondersma, Chairman of Education Committee, 6761 Brookwood Dr., Grandville, MI. 49418.

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on January 12, 1983 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids. Rev. M. Joostens chaired this meeting. Each church was represented by two delegates.

There were several serious matters before the classis which required classis to labor into the

evening hours. First, a brother brought three protests to the classis, the first two of which were against prior decisions of classis and the third a protest of his censure. Classis decided that the first two protests were illegally before classis on the grounds of Articles 31 and 76 of the Church Order respectively. Classis rejected the appeal of the brother re

his censure on the ground that the brother holds to the heresies of fatalism and antihomianism, and thus also upheld the grounds for censure given by the consistory. Secondly, a brother brought an appeal against a consistory. This matter was judged not to be settled in the consistory according to Article 30 of the Church Order.

Southwest Church brought an overture to synod concerning student aid to seminary and pre-seminary students. The council of Southwest proposed the establishment of free-will offerings throughout the churches to supplement the aid given by synod through its Student Aid Committee. The money would be handled by the synodical Student Aid Committee. In this way also, it was urged, the various congregational student aid committees could be eliminated. Classis sent the overture to synod without its approval on the ground that it is the duty of the synod to support our students according to Article 19 of the Church Order.

Classis also dealt with and approved three requests from consistories for the increase of censure to the second step.

The following synodical delegates were elected: MINISTERS: *Primi*: R. Flikkema, C. Haak, M. Joostens, G. Van Baren; *Secundi*: W. Bruinsma, M. De Vries, R. Hanko, R. Miersma; ELDERS: *Primi*: D. Engelsma, F. Hanko, E. Ophoff, Sr., G. Van Overloop; *Secundi*: G. Bouwkamp, C. Kuiper, D. Lotterman, R. Teitsma.

In other voting, Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. J.A. Heys were elected to serve as church visitors with Rev. H. Veldman as alternate. Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. M. DeVries were elected to serve three-year terms as *primus* and *secundus* delegates *ad examina* respectively. Rev. M. Joostens was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee.

In money matters, Classis approved and forwarded to synod subsidy requests for 1984 from Covenant for \$15,750 and from Kalamazoo for \$9,000. Expenses for this classis amounted to \$428.37.

The next meeting of classis will be on May 11, 1983 at Hudsonville.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon. J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

January 15, 1983

In the near future you should begin to see advertisements for a "Child Development Conference" under the theme, "Bringing up Children in an Increasingly Evil World." The Kalamazoo committee has formed the basic outline for the day's activities. The desire of the group from Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church is to include parents, teachers, ministers, and young people on panels that will discuss the proper spiritual development of our covenant children in more concrete situations through various phases of life. Time will be allowed for audience participation. This looks to be a very worthwhile day in which we can be strengthened in our understanding of an important fact of covenantal living.

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church has recently made changes in their order of worship. The reasons given for a moment of silent prayer are these: "It will give recognition to the need for the corporate body of Christ (minister, elders, deacons, and members) to pray together for God's blessing

on the service" and "It will teach our members to pray personally before the worship service." The reasons for the consistory greeting the congregation as they exit from the auditorium are that "This will give better expression to an orderly conclusion for the worship service"; "It will give an opportunity to the office bearers to express greetings to the congregation and thus express the true love for one another in Christ"; "Opportunity will be given to welcome visitors who are present for worship"; and "The elders will be better able to supervise the attendance of members at the worship services." May God bless these changes.

If you wanted to call Rev. & Mrs. Heys in New Zealand at 8:00 PM Wednesday, their time, from Grand Rapids, you would have to call at 2:00 AM Wednesday, Grand Rapids time. In other words add 18 hours to our time or, if you prefer, subtract 18 hours from New Zealand time. In either case the telephone number 011-64-4-697-856.

DH