

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... And having loved us, even unto the death of the cross, He gave us the gift of faith and united us with Christ. He will not rest until He has completed this work of redemption and salvation, even forever, in the building of God made without hands, eternal in the heavens — only because He loved us first, unto the glory of His mercy and grace. Indeed, to Him be all the praise and all the glory, now and even forevermore.

See "Justified Freely by Christ Jesus"

— page 410

## CONTENTS

Meditation —	
Justified Freely by Christ Jesus .....	410
Editorial —	
Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1984.....	413
Day of Shadows —	
Vicious Vengeance .....	415
From Holy Writ —	
Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures (XIII) ...	418
The Lord Gave the Word —	
Missionary Methods (24) .....	420
Letter From New Zealand .....	422
Question Box —	
Keeping God's Covenant .....	423
Bible Study Guide —	
I John — True Fellowship in Love (1) .....	425
The Strength of Youth —	
A Graduation Speech — Great is the Lord! ....	428
Book Reviews .....	430
News From Our Churches .....	431
Report of Classis East .....	432

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## MEDITATION

## Justified Freely by Christ Jesus

Rev. H. Veldman

*"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

Romans 3:24

All being justified freely and by His grace. This is surely implied in this Word of God. The subject of being justified must be the same as in the preceding verse. We read in verse 23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Verse 24 is a

continuation of verse 23 and the subject must be the same.

Does this mean that the word "all," presupposed in this text as its subject, must therefore refer in



this text to everybody, head for head? That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God does refer to everybody. This, however, does not necessarily imply that the word "all" also has the same meaning in our text. Even as the word "all" in verse 23 is confined to those who have sinned and therefore refers to everybody, so in verse 24 it is necessarily limited to those who have been justified freely by His grace, and this means only the elect. Besides, what Arminian would have the courage to say that everybody has been justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Arminians teach that the possibility of justification has been merited for everybody, but surely not that this justification itself has been earned for all. But, then, as limited to the elect, emphatically all have been justified. Among all the people of God there is no exception. There is absolutely nobody who is justified by works. Everybody is justified only by grace, freely, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

\* \* \* \* \*

The emphasis here must not be laid upon the word "justified." That the emphasis does not fall upon this word here is evident from the fact that this thought was already mentioned in the preceding context, as in the verses 20-22. How wonderful it is to be justified! Apparently, how contrary to whatever we see and hear and experience! How true it is that we can receive this blessed assurance only by faith! As experienced by the child of God, justification is that wonderful gift of God which assures me that I am righteous before God, free forever from the guilt and penalty of sin and an heir of life and glory everlasting. The thought is legal. The law of God declares this of me. In this text the emphasis falls upon the word "freely." This word means: gratuitously, received by us as a free gift. And it is evident, also from the rest of the text, that it is exactly this word upon which our attention must be focused.

Indeed, we are not justified by our works. This was already stated emphatically in the preceding context. According to verse 20 no flesh shall be justified in His sight by the deeds of the law. In verse 21 we read that now the righteousness of God is manifested without the law. And in verse 23 the apostle writes that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. To be justified freely always appears in Scripture as diametrically opposed to a being justified by works. There is absolutely nothing we can do, apart from the gracious favour and redemptive grace in Christ Jesus, nothing we can do of ourselves which in any sense of the word can help us or contribute one solitary thing toward our being justified.

Our justification by works is wholly impossible. No child of the living God ever experiences this.

We can never pay the penalty. This penalty is death. It is eternal death, the death of hell, forever forsaken of God, the conscious bearing of His eternal and infinite wrath. It is also spiritual death, separation from the love of God and the being filled with all enmity against the living God, devoid of all love of God. We are condemned to sin, to the bondage of sin, and to be dead also eternally. Life for us is, therefore, impossible. We must be dead, now and forever.

Besides, we can never make amends for any past iniquity. Let us presuppose a person who sinned only once in his infancy (of course, such a person does not exist). That person can never make amends for that sin. He can never "take time out" to pay for that sin. He cannot work "overtime" for God. Such a "free" moment does not exist for him. We must always love God.

One more observation: we can never meet the divine requirement for an atoning suffering. This requirement is obedience. Suffering is atoning, meritorious, the payment for sin and guilt only when it occurs obediently. The wrath of God must be borne, even in the bottom of hell, as an act of love. And this is impossible by us because we are children of disobedience, and to be such children of disobedience we are condemned by the righteous judgment of God. Indeed, to be justified lies forever out of our reach.

Hence, we are justified freely, through no act or deed of our own. It is bestowed upon us as a free gift, without any of our works.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have been redeemed in and through Christ Jesus — this is the meritorious cause of our justification.

The word "redemption" means: liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. We may use the illustration of an American prisoner of war, whose freedom has been negotiated by our government. The price of his freedom has been paid — he has been redeemed, his freedom has been bought, and this in spite of the fact that he may yet continue in prison. However, his actual freedom, his release out of prison, must now follow.

Redeemed in and through Christ Jesus. Indeed, in Christ Jesus. In the sphere of Christ Jesus, only by Him is this redemption effected. He is Jesus, Jehovah saves, Jehovah with us, Immanuel, the eternal Son of God in our flesh and blood. In that name lies the capability, the power, whereby this redemption is effected. Only Jesus, the living God Himself, in our flesh and blood, the Personal Son of



God, through the everlasting Spirit, could pay this ransom. Jesus is Jehovah saves, or Jehovah is salvation. He is the Christ, and this name means: Anointed. In the name of Christ lies the authorization, the right, of this Man of Sorrows to do what He did. He is *Christ* Jesus, because the Son of God, as in the human nature, was appointed, authorized, delegated, as the eternal Head of Sion, to represent me, to take upon Himself my guilt, to satisfy in my behalf the awesomely eternal justice of the living God.

We have been redeemed in and by Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus bore the eternal and infinite wrath of God for our sins; tasted, consciously and obediently, the awful wrath of God upon sin; bore it, unfathomably, even unto the end; merited for us fellowship with God; destroyed for us the power of sin and of the devil; bought our liberation from sin; and earned life and glory everlasting. Surely our justification is a free gift, realized for us by Christ Jesus, without any works on our part, yea, while we were yet sinners. O, it is not true, as the Arminians would have us believe, that Jesus merely earned for the Father the right to renegotiate with the sinner, to save him provided that he believes and is willing to be saved; to the contrary, Christ Jesus redeemed us upon the cross of Calvary, our redemption has become a fact. In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ we glory, now and forevermore.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are saved, justified freely, by His grace — this grace of God is justification's gratuitous source.

The grace of God — what is it? The concept grace has several connotations in the Word of God. It is generally defined as God's unmerited and undeserved favor to sinners. It cannot be denied that the word has this meaning in Scripture, the Word of God. The grace of God is indeed God's undeserved favor to sinners when viewed from the aspect of the sinner. As such, it appears in Scripture as over against works. This also enables us to understand, when viewing God's grace as undeserved favor, that the thought of a common grace was developed. Are not all things as received by a sinner, such as health, food, sunshine, etc., undeserved as far as the sinner is concerned? However, the curse of God, we read in the Word of God, is in the house of the wicked. The root meaning of grace is beauty, attractiveness. So, the grace of God can and does refer to the effectual, efficacious power of God, removing the filth of sin, rendering a sinner beautiful as God is beautiful. Grace, however, also appears in the Word of God as denoting the favor of God, an attitude or favorable disposition of God to the creature. It is this last thought which is evidently meant in this Word of God. We understand that

the idea of the text is legal, judicial; it concerns our state, our being justified.

Now we are justified freely, by His grace, the grace of God. God was kindly, affectionately disposed toward us. The Lord, the living God entertained eternal thoughts of love toward us. He loved us, sovereignly, from before the foundations of the world. He loved us, unconditionally, in His eternal will and counsel. How this is emphasized in the Word of God! According to Ephesians 1:4, He chose us, not because we were holy but that we should be holy. He did not love us because of anything in us, as the proud heresies of Arminianism and Pelagianism would have us believe. Indeed, we were and we are sinners. There was nothing in us that could possibly attract us to the Lord. We are corrupt, filthy, worthy only of everlasting damnation. If the Lord were to treat us according to what we deserve we could never stand before Him. How true this is! It is experienced by every redeemed and saved child of God! This every child of God surely understands!

God, however, loved us. This, and this alone explains our redemption in Christ Jesus. God loved us for His own Name's sake, eternally, sovereignly, independently, wholly unconditionally. He was moved by eternal bowels of mercy and compassion, sent His Son into the world to redeem us, descended into the depths of hell, while we were sinners who hated Him and resented His coming to save His own. All our hatred of Him simply moved Him to greater manifestations of love and compassion, because all our hatred merely served to reveal our need of His unchangeable mercy. And having loved us, even unto the death of the cross, He gave us the gift of faith and united us with Christ. He will not rest until He has completed this work of redemption and salvation, even forever, in the building of God made without hands, eternal in the heavens — only because He loved us first, unto the glory of His mercy and grace. Indeed, to Him be all the praise and all the glory, now and even forevermore.

Righteous before God.

Redeemed in and through Christ Jesus.

Freely, and only by His grace.

*Take time to read  
and study the  
Standard Bearer*



## EDITORIAL

# Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1984

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

As I begin to write this, Synod has not yet completed its work. However, the usual deadline for the July issue of the *Standard Bearer* will be past before I return home, D.V.; and in order that this issue may reach you on time, I must begin my report while I am still sojourning in northwest Iowa at the home of old Doon friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ed van Egdom.

This year's Synod convened, for a change, in Hull, Iowa, where we were graciously served by the Hull ladies at mealtimes and coffee breaks. At the Tuesday evening pre-Synodical service the Rev. G. van Baren, president of the 1983 Synod, sounded a fitting keynote in his sermon on John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

On Wednesday morning the officers of Synod were elected: Rev. D. Engelsma, president; Rev. G. van Baren, vice-president; Rev. M. Joostens, first clerk; Rev. R. Miersma, second clerk. Our president ran a "tight ship," and Synod operated very efficiently. This efficiency was also due to the work of the four advisory committees among whom the items of the Agenda were divided. Because there were no examinations this year, the advisory committees were able to finish most of their work on Wednesday afternoon and evening, so that Synod was able to treat the advisory reports in order and without interruption. Only a very few items had to be recommitted for further advice; and in most instances there was unanimity or an overwhelmingly favorable vote on the various matters before Synod. It is always pleasant and encouraging when an ecclesiastical assembly operates in this fashion. I believe this was due to the fact that Synod labored in the consciousness that "without Me ye can do nothing."

This report cannot furnish the details of all the various decisions of Synod, only the highlights.

Committee I was assigned all home missions matters. In this connection I call attention to the following:

1. Synod approved the recommendation of the South Holland Council and the Mission Committee that the Birmingham, Alabama field be closed. This was on the grounds that "there does not seem to be a possibility of establishing a congregation in the foreseeable future," and that "no evidence has been given . . . that suggests new contacts expressing interest in us and our work there." This, of course, raises the question of the future labors of Missionary van Overloop. At a later session Synod, upon the advice of South Holland and a subcommittee of the Mission Committee, declared a northwest suburban Chicago area (in the vicinity of Elk Grove Village, some 55 miles from South Holland) a field, and authorized labors by Rev. van Overloop in that area, as requested by several families in the area.

2. Before Synod was also a request from a group in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania (a northwest suburb of Philadelphia) to be organized as a congregation. Three representatives of Blue Bell (Tony van Brakel, Phil Veitch, and Candidate Ken Hanko) appeared as visitors at Synod, were warmly welcomed, and were given the right to address Synod on this matter. Synod decided to declare Blue Bell a field. However, instead of appointing Hope-Walker the calling church, Synod appointed Covenant, of Wyckoff, N.J., which is a two-hour drive from Blue Bell. This will not only make direct contact with the field more efficient, but will also make it possible for the committed families and individuals of Blue Bell to become members of Covenant temporarily.



(under the provisions of Article 39 of the Church Order), and thus to enjoy membership and participation in the sacraments even before being organized. Although this was not the *first* wish of the Blue Bell group, nevertheless they were happy and thankful, and expressed this to Synod. The mission budget for the Blue Bell field will largely be met by generous contributions from the Blue Bell group. Synod also expressed its appreciation and thanks to Candidate Hanko for his faithful labors in Blue Bell since last October.

3. Synod authorized the continuation of the labors in Ripon, California, where, it was reported, there is progress and continued interest. Synod also expressed its concern and love to Rev. Houck and his family in their present afflictions and trials. While I am mentioning the latter fact, let me also mention that Synod sent greetings to Rev. van Overloop and Rev. den Hartog also.

4. I inadvertently omitted from my June 1 editorial mention of Jamaica in connection with the Agenda. Up to the time of Synod the Lord did not give us a missionary in response to First Church's several calls. Synod authorized First to continue calling. In this connection, Synod: 1) maintained its decision of last year that a co-worker for the missionary to Jamaica must be a minister or minister-emeritus. 2) made provision for First Church to send a delegation to Jamaica "for no less than six months so that intensive instruction and missionary work can be accomplished," while we have no missionary in Jamaica. This is in accord with a decision taken in 1982. Synod also mandated First Church to investigate the activities of one of the Jamaican ministers, Rev. Brown, who has been in this country for some months, to take appropriate action, and to report to Synod of 1985. It also reminded the Mission Committee of its mandate of 1983 to investigate the matter of support of Jamaican ministers.

5. Synod decided to continue to help the New Zealand Fellowships as in the past, i.e., through the sending of a minister or minister-emeritus by one of our consistories.

All of these labors, of course, involve a considerable expenditure; and Synod adopted budgets for each of these mission works.

Committee II was assigned matters related to our Theological School, the report of the Foreign Mission Committee, and a few other routine reports. We may mention the following:

1. The report of the Theological School Committee was routine and contained no new proposals. The only action required was approval of the 1985 budget.

2. The Rector's report was also mostly routine.

However, in connection with this report Synod decided to call special attention to our churches' need for new seminary students.

3. There was a lengthy report from the Student Aid Committee concerning a matter of conflict between the Student Aid Constitution and the Agreement signed by the students receiving aid. Synod did not adopt this committee's recommendation, but decided instead to maintain the position of the constitution itself and to bring the Agreement into harmony with the former, thus relaxing considerably the requirement for repayment of aid on the part of students who drop out of school.

4. With regard to the Foreign Mission Committee's Report, the most important decisions were: a) The FMC was authorized to send emissaries to Singapore in the coming year, even though our missionary himself did not feel the need of this. The grounds for this decision were: 1) To encourage our missionary. 2) To keep the FMC in direct contact with the field. 3) To study the matter of the future direction of our work there. b) Synod reaffirmed last year's decision empowering the sending of a second missionary to Singapore if this is necessary.

5. In connection with the Stated Clerk's report we may mention the fact that the new edition of our Church Order is now available (in a looseleaf binding). Copies may be ordered from the Stated Clerk. The price is \$6.00.

Committee III was assigned overtures, a protest, a lengthy report of a Committee on Ecumenical Creeds, an invitation to send observers to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, and the report of the Committee for Contact With Other Churches. I mention the following:

1. Synod rejected an overture to pre-appoint the Synodical advisory committee on the grounds offered by Classis East.

2. Synod rejected an overture to change the method of levying Synodical assessments from an annual method to a monthly method, also on the grounds offered by Classis East.

3. Synod rejected a protest against including the Creed of Chalcedon with the Trinitarian Creeds in future printings of the *Psalter*. This protest came from South Holland with the approval of Classis West. But after due consideration, it was rejected by Synod on grounds offered by the advisory committee.

4. In connection with the report of the Committee on Ecumenical Creeds we mention:

1) Synod approved historical introductions for both the ecumenical creeds and our Three Forms of Unity. These were recommended and prepared by



the committee.

2) Synod adopted the translations of the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Chalcedonian Creed submitted by the committee.

3) Rather than prepare separate printings of these creeds, Synod went on record as favoring a new printing of our *Psalter* in which all these creeds and the historical introductions would be included. Synod also appointed a committee to investigate the feasibility of preparing such a new *Psalter* and to report to the Synod of 1985.

5. Synod declined an invitation to send observers to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and instructed our Contact Committee to communicate the reasons for this decline.

6. With respect to the Contact Committee Report:

1) Most of the items were routine and required little or no action by Synod. On the whole this committee reported little progress in its various contacts.

2) Progress was reported toward a sister church relationship with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, and the committee was instructed to come back to Synod on this subject when both churches are ready for such a relationship.

3) One of the most significant items was a report concerning contact with the Rev. George Hutton and the Bible Presbyterian Church of which he is pastor in North Ireland. Synod authorized the Contact Committee to send Rev. D. Engelsma and a member of the committee "to explore the possibility of establishing sister church relationships." This committee is also to pursue other contacts in the United Kingdom.

Committee IV advises Synod on all financial matters. This includes subsidies, treasurer's report, and the Synodical budget. The latter is one of the most important items for this committee. The committee must take into account all the various budgets which Synod adopts, must consider the balance in our funds, and must then come to a conclusion as to a reasonable assessment figure for the new fiscal year. The committee tries to keep assessments on an even keel, i.e., without large variations. This year there is a modest increase — to \$365.00 per family.

Next year's Synod will meet on *Tuesday* (a "new wrinkle"), June 11, at Hudsonville. Our Synod this year met for four hours on Saturday morning and then finished in another three hours on Monday morning. May the Lord bless the decisions made!

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## DAY OF SHADOWS

# Vicious Vengeance

*Rev. John A. Heys*

As we suggested last time, the servants in the king's gate of Ahasuerus' palace were some kind of court to settle relatively minor matters. In Ruth 4:1 we read of Boaz going to the gate of the city and sitting down there in order to legalize the transaction of transferring the right of the nearest of kin to him, for buying the land of Elimelech, and for marrying Ruth. We now deal with another nation and with an incident in an entirely different age. In the days of Ruth the elders of Israel were called to witness this transfer and to record it. In Esther 3:1-4 there are servants of the king in the gate, men who held some kind of office, probably, as suggested last

time, judges who tried the disputes which the citizens brought to them.

Looking a bit more carefully at their approach to Mordecai we can see that he was being tried by these servants of the king. It was not out of mere curiosity that they questioned him as to why he did not bow and reverence Haman. Note their question: "Why transgresseth thou the king's commandment?" They did not ask, "Why do you not bow and reverence Haman?" They speak of transgressing the king's commandment. They are unbelievers and were not concerned with sin



before God. But they were interested in keeping law and order in the Persian kingdom, and felt loyalty to the king.

This also explains why they did this daily. They wanted a change in him, and asked until they got their answer. If actually now he also was a servant of the king, then they were dealing very charitably with him, giving him a few days' time to change his mind. But when he finally gave his reason, namely, because he was a Jew, they were constrained to take the matter to a higher court, that is, to Haman himself, to see whether the matter would stand.

Let it be pointed out here that they may have known long before this that Mordecai was a Jew. Note that they did not ask him whether he were a Jew or not. They could probably see that in his face. Might not even his name give him away? They asked him why he disobeyed the king's command. And that he told them that he was a Jew then means that this is what he gave them in answer to their question. As I pointed out before, and must be understood, he was not at all ashamed of being a Jew. He considered himself—as we shall see later—a member of a super race, one that one day would rule the whole world.

This in no way conflicts with his command to Esther not to reveal her kindred and people. From Esther 8:1 we learn that it was not till after Haman was hanged that Esther did tell the king what Mordecai was to her, namely, her father. Therefore word to the servants in the king's gate that he was a Jew would in no way hurt Esther, even in the days before the king chose her to be his queen.

But to return to the king's servants, they called Haman's attention to Mordecai's disobedience. And this they did to see whether "Mordecai's matters would stand." They wanted to know whether this would excuse Mordecai or not; whether he did have legal ground for his conduct or should be disciplined for his breaking of the king's command. They did not understand this bitter relation between the Jews and Amalekites. The Amalekites and the Israelites, coming from the same stock, namely, Abraham and Isaac, may have had physical features that were similar. And not knowing the history that lay behind this mutual hatred, they, in order to do their work as the king's servants, brought the matter to Haman himself.

Haman was well aware of the history that lay behind him and Mordecai, as is evident from his decision to have all the Jews killed. He was filled with wrath, not only against Mordecai but against all of Jacob's seed. He saw a way to destroy all the Jews, even as Saul had killed so many Amalekites, with the exception of king Agag whom Samuel killed at God's command. He would seek revenge!

He would avenge that deed of king Saul not only, but of all the victories God has given Israel over his people in the past. Vicious was his vengeance. And devilishly cunning was he in his method. A matter of personal revenge might not have succeeded. He might have been rebuked for being so "touchy." And even then the most he could hope to achieve would be the death sentence for Mordecai. No, he was a clever politician, and so he makes it a case of the king's and the kingdom's good. He never mentioned Mordecai or his disobedience. No, but it is not to "the king's profit"; and they are a people that have a long history of following their own laws, which are so different from those of the king that they forbid keeping the king's commandments. They are known to be a rebellious people that consider themselves to be a super race that will one day rule the whole world. They claim to have promises from their God that this will surely be the case, from sea to sea and including all the nations and peoples of the world.

And here, by the way, is Mordecai's reason for commanding Esther not to reveal her kindred and people. Just remember that Vashti was divorced and cast out of the palace for rebelling. How would a candidate fare for that position who came from a people with diverse laws and customs and who have shown that they would keep no laws of any king but of a Jewish king? That would not be "for the king's profit." No matter how beautiful she might be—Vashti was exceptionally beautiful as well—the men in the kingdom could not risk the possibility of another queen showing too much contempt and hatred, and thereby encouraging their wives to do likewise. After all, would not the women, and do not most women, like to emulate the queen, as well as men like to dress, and talk and behave as their male heroes? No, a Jewish virgin would be much too big a risk. And Mordecai knew that. He wanted that position for Esther for the good of the Jews, but he did not have the church of God among the Jews in mind. And the vile reputation of pride and rebellion, not of that church, but of the carnal seed in that nation, he realized would be a threat to the nation, and destroy Esther's chances of becoming queen.

Although Mordecai was an unbelieving Jew, the attack here is upon all the Jews of that day, and that then includes the elect children of God, His church living in the world in that period of time. Therefore we must go way back in our thoughts and see this as one more evidence of God's promise as soon as sin had entered the world. Here is clear evidence of that enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And behind Haman is Satan plotting and planning to destroy the church, and to



prevent the promised Seed from being born. From the day that this mother promise of Genesis 3:15 was given, namely, that the Seed of the woman would crush (that is the Hebrew word) the head of the serpent, and that the serpent and his seed would crush the heel of the woman's seed, there has been a struggle between Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, the church and the world. And here the serpent sees a promising moment for wiping out the whole seed of the woman, so that the Messiah, who had been promised much more clearly in subsequent prophecies, would not be born, and Satan and his kingdom would not have to fear Him.

Think of the prophecy of Balaam that a star would arise and would "smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth." Or of Isaiah 9:7, that the Prince of Peace would come, not to mention all the promises to David that his son would sit on the throne forever. And think of the many skirmishes between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent recorded throughout Scripture. And now a satanic vengeance appears in Haman's scheme to wipe out all the seed of the woman.

Being a soldier in Satan's army, Haman resorts to the idolatry Satan taught mankind. He casts lots for the "lucky" day for the execution of the right, when given him by the king, to exterminate the Jews. He had gotten permission to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish. It was a total wiping out, a vicious vengeance upon the deeds of one man. And he adds to the grief and fear of the Jews in that almost a year will pass by before the date his lot-casting brought up for him as a choice day for this slaughter. Mind you, that date was picked before he had even brought the matter to the king's attention and had gotten the right to go ahead with his devilish plot. For almost a year the Jews would carry their death along with them every step of the way. This caused untold agony among the Jews and soul-vexing fear. We read of great mourning throughout the kingdom, fasting and weeping.

Even the heathen in Shushan were perplexed. They could not understand this decree at all. They had not found the Jews to be such an impossible people—a bit proud perhaps in some instances, but not a people that was a threat to the kingdom. The unbelieving Jews had stayed there for carnal reasons. They had it good. They made plenty of money and had beautiful homes. Their flesh was satisfied. And, after all, the unbelieving Jew is spiritually one with the unbelieving Gentile. They have the world in common and can get along enjoying the things of the flesh. Many of them depended upon the Jews for their choice foods that they bought in the market from them. And the other

subjugated people could only wonder whether they were next after the slaughter of the Jews. Even though we all know that we must die someday, it does make it harder to know the day and the way. We will carry that with us until the moment comes, and be dying by inches until that moment. How Satan laughed when Haman and Ahasuerus sat down to drink wine after the decision was made, and Haman was granted what he sought.

Yet we do well to remember that God controlled those lots and picked the day. The king's heart is in His hand as the rivers of waters. He turneth it whithersoever He will (Proverbs 21:1). He rules all the rulers of this world. Yea, He Who promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the seed of the serpent rules the devil. He is not ruled by Satan, but Satan not only receives every breath of life from God—and God can stop him any minute simply by withholding his breath of life—he does only that which has eternally been decreed in God's counsel. Here too we may say that "it came to pass" as decreed by our God, and not because Satan momentarily slipped one over on God's people.

Shushan was perplexed, but not God. The Jews were filled with tormenting fear, but not God. Instead of this being a threat to the birth of His Son, and to His atoning death for His people, God planned it as a fulfillment of what He had eternally decreed for the very coming and death of that Son, and so for His church's salvation. He knew not only how the tables will be turned against Haman in a few days, but also how all of Satan's tricks and works will fail to pluck as much as one of His sheep out of His hand.

Vicious vengeance on the part of Satan's brood, yes. But tender mercy for the church on God's part. Satan is always seeking to destroy, but God is always working to bless and glorify His church. As the psalmist writes, "The Lord reigneth; let the nations tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim: let the earth be moved" (Psalm 99:1). And, do not forget, today either, that those cherubim sat on the mercy seat of the ark, and on it the blood of Christ was symbolically poured. On the basis of His cross, all God's works are wrought in tender mercy for His church.

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for the sick or shut-in.*



## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures (XIII)

Rev. G. Lubbers

The so-called Dispensation of the "Kingdom" — the "Seventh Dispensation" (continued).

When Scofield speaks of the Kingdom being "at hand" he refers this to a very vague and conditional realization of the Kingdom of God as promised to David and as foretold in the prophecies. It merely means that there is not going to be some great event intervening, another "dispensation." Evidently this means that the "millennium" is at hand as spoken of by the prophets as he interprets those prophecies. The coming of the "church age" evidently interrupted the coming of the Jewish kingdom, but it did not erase the truth of the words of Jesus that the kingdom is at hand. There is some elasticity in the phrase "at hand." Perhaps Jesus Himself did not quite understand just when the kingdom would come.

However, the truth of the matter is that the term "at hand" means exactly what it says. We repeat that the words "at hand" cannot with good, solid interpretation and sound exegesis be construed to mean "that no known or predicted event will intervene." This cannot be the meaning of the term here in the text, nor is such the meaning of the several passages in which the term "at hand" occurs in the New Testament Scriptures. The term "at hand" is the translation of the Greek verb *eggizoo* — to bring near, to join one thing to another. "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). In Genesis 48:10 the verb is translated in the transitive sense: "and they brought them near to him"; that is, the two sons of Joseph were brought near to their grandfather Jacob to receive his paternal and prophetic blessing concerning their relative greatness in Israel, each representing a tribe amongst the twelve. This does not mean anything else but "near."

A little study of the New Testament is very enlightening and convincing.

Here we are dealing with the intransitive usage of the verb. It does not mean to *bring* near but to *come* near. A very clear case of the usage of the term we find in Mark 14:42. The text here speaks of the imminent arrival of Judas Iscariot with the soldier band to take Jesus into custody and captive in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus has just finished His agonizing prayer in the Garden. He had sweat the great drops of sweat as of blood, bringing the sacrificial high priestly offering for our sins. And now He reaches out in obedience for the accursed tree. And Judas, the son of perdition, is about to give his traitor's kiss. The hour has struck on the clock of God; it is the hour of the power of darkness. And now Jesus tells His disciples to waken from their sleep, for the "hand of the one betraying Me is *at hand*" (Mt. 26:45, 46; Mk. 14:42). Surely here the words "at hand" do not allow for an endless procrastination and postponement of the arrival of Judas and the soldiers and the representatives of the chief priests and elders. Jesus hears the footsteps of the captors. There shall be no more time left.

Yes, we know it, we know it. There are passages in which the term "at hand" seems to allow for something being *very remotely* at hand. I refer to such passages as Romans 13:12. There we read: "the night is *far spent*, but the day is *at hand*." This places us in the breaking of the dawn of day. The day-star is shining and telling us that soon the sun shall rise, and we shall be ushered into the eternal morning of heaven's day and the glory of the ages to come. Soon the weary night of sin and sorrow will be over, and the battle will be won and the victory shall be accorded us by free grace. "Near" in Romans 13:12 is not near by our time reckoning, but by the measuring-rod of the eternal footsteps of God, with Whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day (II Peter 3:8).



Of this we must not be ignorant!

Can one now by analogy, from this usage of the term "at hand" (Rom. 13:12), conclude that in Matthew 3:1-3, which states that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand," it means: in the very distant future, possibly; however, "no known or predicted event will intervene?"

Thus would Scofield have his Bible readers to believe. They must read this passage through the Scofieldian spectacles.

However, we think not — in the first place because the verb "from here" is in the perfect tense (*eeggiken*). And it is noteworthy that this perfect tense is used in each case where it is spoken of the kingdom of heaven being near, as proclaimed by both John the Baptist and by Jesus (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15). And we must remember that in the Greek language the tenses primarily emphasize the degree of the completion of a certain act, viewed from various points in time: present, past, and future. This is important to notice. And then the perfect tense indicates *completed state up till the present time*. We here are dealing with a present perfect tense. "The present perfect tense does not say that an act is just completed. That may be true or not. Here again the meaning of the verb itself and the context is to be carefully observed (*Aktionart*)" (*Short Grammar Of the Greek New Testament*, A.T. Robertson).

In the second place it should be observed carefully that in the broader context in Matthew 3:4 we are told that John began to preach in "those days." These are the days when the Son of God has come into the flesh to be the Savior of the world, of both Jew and Greek, according to the election of grace. And, in the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, the kingdom of God is realized and the throne of David is established in righteousness. It is when the predicted prophet, who is more than a prophet, is to appear before the Lord. He is the voice, crying in the wilderness (Matt. 3:3; Isaiah 40:3). Yes, when the kingdom of heaven comes, then the reconciliation of Jerusalem will be effected. This was the message of hope and peace which was to be proclaimed: ye have received of the hand of the Lord double for all your sins (Isaiah 40:1). Then shall all who are born out of God, Jew or Greek, receive from the fulness of the Word made flesh, grace for grace (John 1:16). Yes, He will reveal God unto us. We will be those who see God face to face one day in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1-3).

And when Jesus came upon earth the kingdom of God had come. All that will ever be seen in the endless heavens of the kingdom of God, as this

kingdom encompasses heaven and earth, is in Him. In Him the kingdom of heaven is nigh. So nigh is that kingdom to the church that Jesus says in Luke 10:9, "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." In this healing of the sick they were by faith to see the *having come* of the kingdom of God. There is a Greek text which reads, "the kingdom of God has come nigh *upon* you." In this kingdom coming the devils are cast out, the lame are caused to walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised to life. And thus the prophecies are being fulfilled as spoken by Isaiah (Isaiah 29:18; 35:4, 5, 6; 42:7). And it is important to notice that Jesus calls this beautiful manifestation of the kingdom of heaven to John's attention in the deepest hour of John's doubts and fears while in the prison, where he dies as did all the prophets who preached the word of God (Matt. 5:12; James 5:10).

Yes, the kingdom in all its saving and world-conquering power had come nigh. It was in a completed state of being fulfilled. And this kingdom was not a Jewish kingdom, an earthly kingdom; it was the kingdom of heaven. Says Jesus to the unbelieving and skeptic Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence" (John 18:38).

And why was Jesus killed by the Jews? Was it because He offered them the earthly kingdom and glory of David and Solomon, and the earthly land from the River Euphrates to Egypt? Had Jesus offered them such a kingdom He would not have died, nor would He have needed to suffer the torments of hell against the wrath of God for many. But the Jews knew that He did not come to establish such a kingdom. Does He not come as predicted in Zechariah 9:9? "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation: lowly and riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 2:10; Isaiah 62:12; Matt. 21:5; John 12:15).

Yes, the kingdom of heaven was nigh in the days when John the Baptist cried in the wilderness; when he prepared the way before Christ, calling men and women to the repentance which Christ came to give to His people in sovereign grace. For this is a repentance of faith which Christ had to merit for us on the Cross, together with all the other gifts of salvation. These we receive even as we were elected in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. 1:3, 4). For when the kingdom of heaven was actually realized in Christ's



death, resurrection, and ascension, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, then God gave that which all the signs of the healing and life-giving of Christ referred to, as the life-giving Spirit. Did not God raise the crucified Christ into the heavenly places "to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins?" (Acts 5:30, 31). And was this same benefit not also for the Gentile believers? (Acts 11:18). Do not the skeptic Jewish believers exclaim, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles given repentance unto life!"

Now we understand that the kingdom of God indeed had come in the days of John the Baptist; that the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and that

the violent took it by force. We then understand that all the prophets prophesied until John. We understand that it is for this reason that none born from women among the prophets, nor from among the priests and kings, were greater than John.

He truly came in the spirit and power of Elias. He is the herald of the morning.

No, the kingdom did not come near in some vague, indefinite sense, so that the postponement of its coming could last till some end-time millennial period. Only by exegetical jugglery can one maintain that indefensible interpretation.

(to be continued)

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

# Missionary Methods (24)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

### (The Views Of Rufus Anderson)

We have seen that Anderson conceived of the missionary's task solely in terms of the preaching of the gospel. The missionary must not attempt to transform heathen culture. He must preach and teach the blessed gospel and baptize those who are gathered into the church by that preaching. With this we are in hearty agreement. The aim of missions, according to Anderson, is the establishment of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating, indigenous churches. To these principles we shall return, D.V., in later articles. For the present we are continuing our discussion of some of the more practical aspects of mission work which we began in the previous article. In that article, the reader will recall, we discussed the question of the missionary's family, his children and their education. Should the missionary marry and have children? Anderson believed the missionary should be married. We agree. Not only is it possible for the missionary to be married and have children on the foreign field, it is desirable. Anderson was convinced it was not good for the missionary to be alone.

The following are some of Anderson's reasons for this conviction. (Bear in mind, Anderson labored in the mid 19th century.) In a document

titled, *An Introductory Essay On the Marriage of Missionaries*, published in 1836, Anderson had this to say: "The reasons which make it proper and expedient for ministers at home to marry, all apply to the case of the missionary. As a man he possesses the same nature, and it is no better for him to be alone than it is for them. Nor are his circumstances better fitted to reconcile him to monastic life. They will rather give strength to that powerful law of nature which is operative alike in all countries and classes of people, producing the family state. It might seem indeed, that the perpetual cheerlessness of his habitation would urge him, as a Christian, to more frequent and intimate communion with his Savior, than is common with married men; but experience has long since demonstrated the cloister not to be the most favorable place for meditation, prayer, and a close walk with God. Indeed there are no reasons in favor of marriage in the minister who remains at home, which do not apply generally to the minister when sent abroad as a missionary. Regarding the wife as a friend, counsellor, companion, the repository of her husband's thoughts and feelings, the partaker of his joys, the sharer of his cares and sorrows, and one who is to lighten his toils, and become his nurse in sickness; the missionary needs such a helper far more than the minister. If he be going to reside among a



savage people not migratory in their habits, he ought then always to be accompanied by a wife. The uncivilized character of the people, instead of being a reason why he should not be married, is in all ordinary cases a conclusive reason why he should be so. His wife, if judiciously chosen, will endure privations and encounter dangers with as much cheerfulness and fortitude as he, and among savages woman is the best earthly protector. No weapon of war should ever be seen in the hands or about the person of the missionary, and no symbol of peace is so significant or so well understood and appreciated by savages, as the presence of wives and children . . . Moreover, in a barbarous or semi-barbarous country it is impossible for the missionary to secure regularity and comfort in his establishment, and such food, clothing, and retirement as habit has made necessary, without female assistance. In supplying his personal wants, he will be subjected to great disadvantages and loss of precious time, and the loneliness and vexations of his situation will waste upon his spirits, curtail his efforts, perhaps shorten his days . . . The desire for the marriage state is part of the original constitution of human nature, and not a perversion of it. The married state is the natural state of man, and the missionary, if a resident in one place and sustained by the presence of a suitable wife, will bear up better against adverse circumstances than one who is unmarried, will be more of a man, a better Christian, a more contented, zealous, faithful, useful missionary . . . The holy and blessed enterprize of protestant missions must not be spoiled by introducing into it the monastic principles of the Romish church." (Rufus Anderson, R. Pierce Beaver, ed.; *To Advance The Gospel*, Eerdmans, pp. 210, 211)

No one can deny that what Anderson wrote is true. Scripture reveals that God intends that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. There are exceptions to this, but this is the general rule. God says, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Anderson's argument is that God did not ordain missionaries as a special class of men to whom the marriage ordinance does not apply. In fact he claims the difficulties and very nature of mission work make it even more important that a missionary be accompanied by a suitable wife. Let us be reminded that this is in the context of the 19th century when missionaries and their wives labored among peoples far more primitive than today. Anderson speaks of savages, barbarous and semi-barbarous peoples and countries. His position is biblical, and the experience of foreign missionaries has also proven him correct.

In that same essay, Anderson listed this as his

second reason why the missionary should have a wife: "The heathen should have an opportunity of seeing christian families. The domestic constitution among them is dreadfully disordered, and yet it is as true there as every where else, that the character of society is formed in the family. (By "domestic constitution" Anderson means marriage and family life, R.D.D.) To rectify it requires example as well as precept. The missionary must be able to illustrate the duties of the family state by means of his own household. Where the wife is a degraded slave having no conception of a better destiny, she will need to be taught everything that goes to constitute the virtuous, useful, praiseworthy wife and mother. And who shall instruct her? In what manner shall the images of domestic order, neatness, comfort, and whatever else sheds beauty and sweetness over domestic life, be imparted to her mind? She must have female teachers, living illustrations. She must see these things exemplified in actual life. And the christian wife, mother, husband, father, family must all be found in all our missions to pagan and Mohammedan countries.." (Anderson, pp. 211, 212)

Who can argue against this point? Scripture in many places instructs ministers to be examples or patterns of godliness to their flocks (Phil. 3:17-21; I Tim. 4:12-16). What better, more effective witness could be left than that of a faithful husband and wife, father and mother and children? The truth of the gospel preached by the missionary must be seen in himself, his wife, and family. This truth has been amply illustrated over the years by the experience of faithful missionaries. Have we not found this to be true in our own limited mission experience? The wives of our missionaries and emissaries have been and still are of invaluable service in both Singapore and Jamaica. The younger women especially seek their advice and instruction. It is not long before they are able to confide in them. They observe in them examples of the virtuous woman. To many in Singapore and Jamaica the wives of our missionaries and emissaries have become as mothers and grandmothers.

Perhaps the greatest problem faced by churches and married missionaries over the years is that of the education of the children of missionaries. It is a problem which our own churches and missionaries are currently facing and with which they wrestle. Our Foreign Mission Committee reports that "Rev. den Hartog and his wife continue to enjoy their labors in Singapore. However one source of deep concern to them is the education of their children especially the foreign language requirements." (Cf. 1984 Agenda for Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, p. 38.) If the Lord should give us a mis-



sionary to labor in Jamaica, this will be a problem of no little proportions. Various solutions have been offered and attempted. Some of the larger missions have provided centrally located boarding schools where children of 12 and older are sent for nine or ten months of each year. (Cf. "Missionary Methods, 23;" *The Standard Bearer*, May 15, 1984.) This would not be possible in either Singapore or Jamaica. It was rather common practice in Anderson's day to send missionary children home, i.e., back to England and the U.S. for their education. Children were tutored by their missionary parents until they were about twelve years of age. At that point they were sent back home to live with relatives or friends so that they could be instructed in the Christian schools. In spite of Anderson's arguments in favor of this practice, it is less than satisfactory at best. (Cf. Anderson, pp. 215, 216.) It would be much better if the missionary and especially his wife would tutor their children if there are no satisfactory schools available on the field. As time goes on and the work expands, teachers ought to be called and prepared to instruct the children of missionaries. In any event, while we

do not wish to minimize the problem, where God calls His church and servants to labor He will also provide the means and the solutions. This must not be viewed as an insurmountable obstacle to foreign mission work.

Anderson concludes his essay with a quotation from an unpublished letter of a married missionary who described what the wife of the missionary ought to be. We think it is to the point. "It is not exegesis, it is not theology, it is not philosophy, it is not divinity, it is not law, it is not precept or command, which the people need; but it is the gospel, the pure gospel, which they want all day long. It is Christianity embodied, acted out, living, breathing. The missionary's wife, as well as himself, should be a sort of moving commentary on the Bible; everything she says or does should remind the hearer or beholder of something in the Bible; her whole life should be altogether a New Testament life. The whole spirit of the New Testament should be inhaled, and the whole spirit of the New Testament should be breathed, in every breath" (Anderson, p. 217).  
(to be continued)

## Letter From New Zealand

### To Our Brothers and Sisters of the Protestant Reformed Churches

At our last Protestant Reformed Fellowship meeting a desire was expressed among the brethren to share some of our feelings of hope and gratitude with likeminded fellow yoke bearers through the pages of the *Standard Bearer*.

Since our last contact in this way was during Rev. Heys' first stay among us, we felt time was overdue for a second installment. Even now the allotted time of Rev. Heys to labor among us is swiftly drawing to a close. We are reminded that we are creatures of time and everything is fleeting. We were also reminded during this stay that God overrules us in our plans and actions, when Rev. Heys was hospitalized and unable to preach the Word of God for some weeks after. We are grateful to our covenant God that former health and strength is again restored to our pastor, enabling him to take stock and utilize to the full those remaining days among us.

Writing on behalf of a body of believers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we feel deeply indebted for all the tokens of goodwill extended to us by the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, culminating in the labor of Rev. Heys among us.

Looking back over the years we feel that God's providence supplied us with this contact. Speaking in behalf of those among us who came from the Netherlands half a lifetime ago and settled in this land, we also believe that God's hand led us here. Being persuaded to seek for truth we met with conflict in those early years. We found ourselves pilgrims and strangers in the earth even among brethren. As it turned out to be, we lost a church, but we found each other at the foot of the cross of our Savior. God allows a church to rise up against us but leaves us our last brother and friend, if we stand for the truth. Even more, He brought to us brethren and sisters from England, Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand to stand with us in the battle of faith.



After all the waves and billows have gone over us we stand in awe and say in our hearts, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes" Psalm 119:71. Our years of isolation in the midst of God's creation in this world also taught us to be humble. Humble in looking to Him for growth and even more for preservation together with our children. The all-wise God allows us time for consolidation to make us more willing and more ready instruments in His hand against the time appointed by Him. The issues of truth and error are

always before us. It is on this point that our hearts yearn for a share in the rich heritage of our fathers in order to be strengthened in the truth, but also to pass it on to our children: "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should rise and declare them to their children" Psalm 78:6.

With Christian greetings from New Zealand,

B. Van Herk  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

## QUESTION BOX

# Keeping God's Covenant

Rev. C. Hanko

We received the following question from one of our readers:

"Within the last year in the *Standard Bearer* there have been two articles about covenant breaking. I have been brought up in the Christian Reformed Church and have heard much about breaking the covenant. Now I am hearing more and more of a "Covenant breaking" in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Would you please write an article for the question box in the *Standard Bearer* that the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ keeps the Covenant? Here are some verses that show that this is true: Psalm 25:10, Exodus 20:6, Psalm 103:17, 18, Deuteronomy 5:10, Psalm 73:23; *Psalter* numbers 278:5 and 281:4."

\* \* \* \* \*

As the writer suggests, there are many passages in Scripture that speak of keeping God's Covenant.

In fact, Scripture lays great emphasis on the fact that God is a Covenant-keeping God. He is Jehovah, the Almighty, Unchangeable, ever faithful Covenant God.

When He establishes His Covenant with Abraham as the father of all believers and with his spiritual seed, He assures Abraham and us:

"I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to

be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7).

There are innumerable passages, both in the Old and New Testaments, that speak of God's faithfulness in keeping covenant with His people in Christ. To mention a few: In Deuteronomy 7:9 we are told:

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations."

And then we have that ever beautiful Psalm, which expresses throughout the wonder and riches of God's faithfulness, beginning in the triumphant note:

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations."

See also verses 2, 5, 8, 24, 33. Paul speaks of God's faithfulness in I Corinthians 1:9:

"God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Notice, God is faithful to us in Christ, having chosen us in Him, as our Covenant Head. He keeps covenant even when it requires the death of His dear Son. He draws us unto Himself by the Spirit of the Son into everlasting communion of life in glory.

In His faithfulness God blesses and preserves His



people in the hour of severest trials (I Cor. 10:13). The writer to the Hebrews encourages the believers:

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised)" (Hebrews 10:23).

See also I Thessalonians 5:24. And John assures us in I John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God works these blessings through Christ, by His Word and Spirit, even as in the Book of Revelation Christ is called "the Faithful Witness" (Rev. 1:5, 3:14). He is Abraham's Seed (Gal. 3:16, 29).

It becomes evident, already in the passages referred to, that God's faithfulness is always associated with His mercy. God keeps covenant with us, not because of any merit or worthiness in us, nor because we keep covenant, but only in His sovereign mercy, based upon His love in Christ Jesus. Our faithfulness is the fruit of His work of grace. We read in Malachi 3:6:

"For I am the Lord (Jehovah) I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee" (Isaiah 54:10).

See also such passages as I Kings 8:23, II Chronicles 6:14, Nehemiah 1:5, Psalm 73:24 and other passages. God's mercies are always in Christ Jesus, based on His atoning death of the cross, wrought in our hearts by His Spirit, through the preaching of the Word.

Therefore it is only Jehovah's faithfulness in mercy toward His people that they keep covenant with Him. God declares in Isaiah 59:21:

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord: My spirit that is upon them, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

Thus we read in Hebrews 8:8-11, which is the fulfillment of the promise in the prophecy of Jeremiah (31:31) on Pentecost:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the

land of Egypt, because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest."

Scripture always connects our keeping covenant with the keeping of His commandments. The books of the law are called "Books of the Covenant" (Ex. 24:7). The two tables of the law are called "the tables of the Covenant" (Deut. 9:9). The principle of the law is that we shall love the Lord our God with our whole being. God shows

"mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments" (Deut. 5:10).

II Samuel 22:22 speaks of "keeping the ways of the Lord." Also our Baptism Form speaks of our part (not as parties, but as our part) in God's Covenant.

"Therefore are we by God through baptism, admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life."

The difference between the old dispensation and the new is that in the old dispensation the members of the church were servants, still under the bondage of the law, looking for its fulfillment in the promised Savior, while in the new dispensation we are sons, walking in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

It is, therefore, only Jehovah's mercy and grace by His Spirit in our hearts, through the means of the preaching of the Word, that we can and do keep God's Covenant. Many passages in Scripture speak of the faithfulness of God's covenant people. Psalm 101:6:

"Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve Me."

In I Corinthians 7:25 Paul speaks of having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Ephesians 1:1 and Colossians 1:2 address the church as the faithful in Christ Jesus. Therefore Jesus can admonish us:



"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

And Paul can say as his pilgrimage draws to a close, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearance" (II Timothy 4:7, 8). This is in harmony with the promise of our Lord, Luke 19:17:

"And He said unto him: Well done, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

Finally, Scripture teaches throughout that God's covenant is His relationship of friendship with the believers and their spiritual seed in the line of continued generations. Rather than refer to the innumerable passages that could be cited, let us take note of the word of the Lord to Abraham in Genesis 18:19:

"For I know him (Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

In the context the Angel of Jehovah with two other angels come to Abraham in the form of a lord with his two servants to sit and eat with him, to commune with him and assure him and Sarah of the birth of the promised seed, Isaac. As the Angel is about to depart, Abraham seems reluctant to have Him leave. He accompanies Him on His way; and then, in the privacy of the two of them, the Angel of Jehovah (which is the Old Testament manifestation of the Christ) informs Abraham of the pending destruction of Sodom. In verses 17 and 18 we read:

"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing

which I do: seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

The Lord says of Abraham, "I know him." This is not a mere acquaintance, a mere knowing about Abraham, or even a foreknowledge of what he will do, in the Arminian sense. Knowing in Scripture usually has a far wider connotation. God knows Abraham according to His sovereign election in love, having chosen him to the unique position as father of all believers. God knows Abraham as redeemed in the promised Christ, so that God worked faith in him, equipping him with His Spirit and Word to walk in fear, in order that he may bring up his children and instruct his servants in the ways of the Lord.

From this follows that God blesses the instruction to Abraham's seed, particularly in Isaac, in Jacob, and in the patriarchs, so that in them it bears fruits of justice and judgment, uprightness of heart, and obedience to God by serving Him.

Thus God realizes His eternal purpose, "that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken to him." This refers back to the covenant promise of Genesis 17:7:

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*"

Still today God continues to realize His promise to Abraham's spiritual seed through the instruction in the covenant home and in the church (Psalm 78:1-6).

The full realization of this covenant faithfulness is attained in heaven, as we read in Revelation 21:3:

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

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## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# I John — True Fellowship in Love (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

The church as well as the individual believer needs to be reminded of the riches of the gospel of truth and its influence for good. All too often, we

take for granted the beauty of true fellowship in the love of God in Jesus Christ. This need is fulfilled as the Holy Spirit moved the apostle John to write his



first epistle.

#### AUTHOR

This epistle is not addressed in the usual manner of writing a letter during New Testament times. We do not read of the author declaring his identity and specifically stating to whom he is writing. Instead, we have a general reference: "This which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us" (I John 1:1-3). This is explained that John had previously written his gospel and now he is reinforcing the message to the same readers. It is also suggested that since John is writing in the capacity of pastor-teacher he is well acquainted with his readers and they with him. Hence the formal identification is lacking.

It is accepted by almost all biblical scholars that John is the author of this brief but significant letter. Since we have presented the details of his life in our study of the Gospel of John, we will not repeat this here. We note in summary that his father was Zebedee and his mother Salome, a sister of the Virgin Mary (Matt. 27:56 and John 19:25). He and his brother James were known as the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17). Jesus predicted that he would become an old man (John 21:21-23). After the death and resurrection of Jesus, John took care of the Virgin Mary as Jesus had instructed him (John 19:26). He remained a leader in the Jerusalem church until the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem in 66-70 A.D. He then labored in Ephesus, which was the center of his ministry to Asia Minor. For a time he was banished to the Isle of Patmos, but returned to Ephesus until his death.

#### OCCASION AND DATE

Preciseness in determining the date of writing is impossible. We can only surmise, from the general reference in the opening verses, that this epistle was written soon after he had written his gospel. This was towards the end of John's life, sometime between A.D. 90 and 100. Having written the Gospel, the Holy Spirit moved John to write the letters as an application of the Gospel to a specific need. The desire to maintain Christian fellowship in the love of God demanded that the saints deal with opposition in a proper way. This meant that the early church had to appreciate the truth and fight for it, as well as acknowledge that the false teachings that were being advanced were a denial of that truth and if accepted would result in the forfeiture of the fellowship which was so precious to them.

The apostle John is combatting a serious error that was influencing the church. In Ephesus, a heretic by the name of Cerinthus was presenting a mixture of pagan philosophy and historic Jewish teachings. We quote from Hendriksen's *Bible Survey* to summarize this error.

A strange heresy was threatening their purity and spiritual progress. It is very difficult to determine its exact nature, but from a close study of the Epistles of John and some of the early fathers we arrive at the conclusion that it was probably a kind of incipient gnosticism. It was probably characterized by most, if not all, of the following features:

(1) spirit-matter dualism: matter is the source of evil; spirit of the good.

(2) docetism: whereas the material body (the flesh) is the source and seat of evil, a real coming-into-the-flesh (or incarnation) is impossible. God is too pure to become united with the human body.

(3) Cerinthianism: whereas a real incarnation is unthinkable, we must distinguish between a heavenly Christ and an earthly Jesus. The former never fully united with the latter but merely descended upon him at his baptism and left him again on the eve of his Passion. Accordingly, the heavenly Christ did not suffer.

(4) Antinomianism (a life that is contrary to God's holy law): whereas soul and body have nothing to do with each other, the soul cannot be held responsible for the deeds of the body; hence, let the body do whatever it pleases. "Sin" is an inherent quality of bodily existence. "I" do not commit sin.

(5) Knowledge, not love, is the highest virtue.

If we keep these points in mind, Hendriksen suggests, it will be very helpful in understanding key passages in this epistle. A few examples will suffice.

(1) In I John 4:2 we read, "Hereby know ye that Spirit of God, every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." This is stated to counter points (1) and (2) above.

(2) In I John 5:5, 6 we read, "And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the *Son of God*? This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; *not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.*" This contradicts point (3) above.

(3) Again in I John 1:8 and 10 we read, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Also, in I John 3:4, 5, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law . . . whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." This is taught as the direct opposite of (4) above.



(4) Finally, in I John 3:13-18 we read, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren . . . But whosoever hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The point he makes here is that the highest virtue is not knowledge *per se* as (5) above, but love, and that before God and ourselves.

Little wonder that John calls the promoters of this heresy "antichrists" (I John 2:18, 19, and 22). Its spiritual roots are in the devil (I John 3:10). Keeping this in mind helps us understand the strong statements that John makes when he deals with the evil that he is exposing. The love of the truth excites John to expose error sharply and pointedly. Here we see a remarkable balance in Christian apologetics. He shows us what is wrong with the heresy, but also what is so right about the truth.

The positive side is emphasized throughout. Already in the beginning of the letter he writes, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (I John 1:3, 4). Consider this: "I write unto you little children because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning; I wrote unto you young men because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you little children because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you fathers because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you young men because ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:12-14). "I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because ye know it and that no lie is of the truth" (I John 2:21). Finally, he adds, "I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13). In one word, we summarize the grand theme of this letter as follows: true fellowship with God and one another is in the love wherewith God has loved us and by which we are able to love one another.

#### THE RECIPIENTS

John did not designate specifically for whom he wrote this letter. This has led to some speculation, but most students of the Bible agree that, in the light of the historical setting, John intended this letter to be read by the Christian churches of Asia Minor, the members being both Jew and Gentile. It

was in this locality that the heretic Cerinthus was living and having his greatest influence. It was in this area that John labored after his flight from Jerusalem. This letter was to be read in the churches of this area and wherever the Holy Spirit directed it.

Since heresy is not new essentially, but only appears in different forms, we do well to receive this letter as addressed to us. The antichrists of our day have done much to deny the historical Jesus (the true incarnation of the Son of God in our flesh). Accompanying this denial is a host of attempts to justify sinful living in the name of such false Christs. Indeed, this is an epistle for our times as well.

#### SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The apostle John wrote with a distinctive style that is easy to discern from other writers. In contrast to Paul, John used simple vocabulary and generally simple sentence structure. This makes for interesting reading not only, but often provokes thought. John comes right to the point and states bluntly what he wants to say. It is very important to read each sentence carefully and place it in its immediate context. Otherwise we might have difficulty with such seeming contradictory statements as, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8) and, "He that committeth sin is of the devil . . . whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9, 10). Many of his teachings ring with challenge: "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loveth the world the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). Or consider, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14). The Holy Spirit literally shakes us from our complacency in order that these words may have a shock effect and bring us to understand that great blessing of having true fellowship in the love of God.

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## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# A Graduation Speech — Great is the Lord!

Rev. Ron Cammenga

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness" (Psalm 48:1).

Dear graduates, parents, grandparents, and friends of our school, Psalm 48:1 is a personal confession of the greatness of the Lord. It is not merely the statement of an objective truth. It is not merely the statement of the doctrine that we call the sovereignty of God. But it is rather the personal, vital confession of God's greatness by the psalmist, not only as he knows God's greatness out of the Bible, but as he has experienced God's greatness in his own life.

This is a fitting text for your graduation. It is fitting tonight that we praise the greatness of God. It is fitting that we praise God's greatness for what He has done for you in the past, all the years of your instruction up to the present. And it is fitting that as we look to the future, our confidence and trust be not in ourselves, but in the greatness of our God.

Great is the Lord! This has been the theme of your entire education. This has been the theme of your education in your homes, by your parents. The one great truth that your parents have sought to set before you is the greatness, the power, the majesty of God. This has been the theme of your education in the church, both in the preaching services and in the catechism classes. As your pastor I have labored to set before you the greatness of the Lord, and in the light of His greatness your calling to worship and fear the Lord. This has also been the theme of your education in the school. This is why we have our own school and why your parents sacrifice so that you may attend our own school. We are concerned that you be taught the greatness of the Lord. Here the public schools fail miserably. Here so many Christian schools are also failing today.

This, now, is what your teachers have taught you. They have not simply taught you science, history, geography, mathematics, and English. But they have taught you the greatness of the Lord in

science and geography. They have taught you the greatness of the Lord, as that greatness is clearly manifest in history. They have taught you the greatness of the Lord in mathematics and in language.

This concern that your teachers had for the greatness of the Lord was reflected in their striving after excellence in your education, and their diligent efforts to give you the very best education possible. Their recognition of the greatness of the Lord was seen in their repeatedly laying before you your calling to labor to the best of your abilities in your studies. The greatness of God simply demanded, both of them and of you, your very best.

Great is *the Lord*. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised," the psalmist exclaims. Clearly the implication of these words is: "Great is the Lord ALONE." Only the Lord, and no one or nothing else is great. Man is not great. It is precisely at this point that so much education goes awry today. The vast majority of education today is built upon the premise of the greatness of man. This is true of the education received by the young people in our own country. Humanism, evolutionism, materialism, and hedonism (the teaching that pleasure is the chief good in life) permeate modern American education. All of these have in common that they proclaim the greatness of man. The greatness of man is also the fundamental principle of all education in the communist countries. God is denied, and the young people in the communist countries are taught the greatness of the state and the greatness of the leaders of the state. This is only another way of teaching the greatness of man.

And always the danger exists that we make ourselves great: our works, our accomplishments, our goals, our name, our honor. We put ourselves forward, and God and the neighbor must serve us.

Over against every denial the child of God confesses the greatness of God. God alone is great. Man is not great. Man is nothing. We are nothing.



Especially is God great and do we know Him to be great as our Savior. It is especially in His work on behalf of our salvation that we see displayed the greatness of God. That's the idea of this passage. "Great is the Lord," the psalmist says. "Lord" here is really "Jehovah": "Great is Jehovah!" Jehovah is the covenant name of God. The psalmist speaks of God, therefore, as the covenant God, the God Who has brought the psalmist himself into His covenant. To be in the covenant is to be saved. Besides, he goes on to refer to the Lord as "our God": "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of *our God*." The psalmist is an Israelite. He knows God to be "our God," the God Who is the God of Israel in a way in which He is not the God of any other people. He is the God of Israel as He is not the God of Egypt or Moab or the Philistines. He is the God Who is Israel's Savior. The psalmist knows God, as Israel's Savior, to be a great God.

Oh, it is the same with the child of God today. There is nothing that so impresses us with God's greatness as His great work in our salvation. In His great work of electing us, in His great work of Himself dying for us, in His great work of causing us to be born in the covenant, in His great work of regenerating us, breaking our hard hearts and bowing our stiff necks in willing obedience to Him — here as nowhere else is the greatness of our God revealed.

It is not enough, however, that we be impressed with the greatness of the Lord. Even the unbeliever, in a way, is impressed with God's greatness. But what is necessary is that we confess the greatness of God. That's the example of the psalmist. He doesn't only know the greatness of God, but he gives expression to that greatness of God: "Great is the Lord!" You and I, similarly, are to make this confession. Besides, the importance of our confession of the greatness of God is brought out in the text itself. Not only does the psalmist declare, "Great is the Lord," but he adds, "and greatly to be praised." Not only *is* God great, but He is greatly to be praised. The idea is that God is to be praised for His greatness. God is to be praised, and especially His greatness is to be praised and confessed by us.

We are to do this always and at all times. By all our words and works we are to be confessing and praising the greatness of God. Our whole life and every area of our life is to be wrapped up in praise of the greatness of God. This is to be true whether you pursue further education or whether you work at a job. This is simply your calling in all of your life to glorify God, which, as you know, is the chief end of man.

In particular must you praise the greatness of God in the church. That's the teaching of the text.

God is great and greatly to be praised "in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness." The city of God was Jerusalem. The mountain of His holiness is a reference to one of the two mountains upon which the city of Jerusalem was built, the mountain upon which the temple stood, Mt. Moriah. Here in Jerusalem, and particularly in the temple, was God to be praised by His people. In New Testament language, Jerusalem and the temple are the church. In the church especially is the New Testament believer greatly to praise the Lord his God.

This is true because it is really only in the church that God's greatness can be known. God's greatness is revealed in Scripture. And it is especially in the church, in the preaching and teaching of the church, that the great God of Scripture is set forth. In the church, therefore, God is greatly to be praised by us. Faithful, living membership in the church that consistently maintains the greatness of God is how we confess and praise the greatness of God. To despise the church, to turn your back on the church, to reject the church is to refuse to praise the greatness of God. I cannot be praising the greatness of God off on my own, in my own little corner, doing my own thing. But to praise the greatness of God it is necessary that I do this in the church, in company with all those others who are to be found praising God's greatness. I urge you tonight, therefore, to be faithful members of the church. I urge you to be young people who confess and praise God's greatness "in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness."

Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord also in His righteousness and in His wrath. The knowledge of God's greatness is sweet. the confession of God's greatness is wonderful. The denial of God's greatness is terrible. The one who knowing the greatness of God nevertheless denies God's greatness finds that greatness of God turned against him. That is an awful thing! The psalmist speaks of that in the following verses of Psalm 48. Not everyone confesses the greatness of God. The psalmist speaks of the kings of the earth who assemble themselves against God. With regard to them he says, "Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail" (vs. 6). And he goes on to say that God breaks them as He breaks the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. All they who deny the greatness of God shall be crushed and destroyed by God's greatness.

May you be motivated tonight to make the confession of the psalmist your own: "Great is the Lord!" May this continue to be your confession in the future. May all of your further education be your quest to know more and more the greatness of



the Lord. Knowing the greatness of the Lord, may you confess and praise and great Lord Himself.

This speech was given at the 1984 graduation exercises of the Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School.

## Book Reviews

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**, by F.F. Bruce; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983; 425 pp., \$13.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko).

Of the writing of many commentaries there is no end. Nevertheless, this commentary by the well-known British New Testament scholar is an excellent book in many respects and well worth the reasonable price for a hardcover volume. While it is somewhat brief, it usually brings out the essential teachings of each verse and does so in a clear and helpful way.

The strengths of the book are: 1) It is written, for the most part, for general readers and not for those who want a more technical examination of the text; any one can use the commentary with profit. 2) It is concise and to the point and leads the reader into the text of Scripture itself. 3) It is generally conservative and is characterized, for the most part, by faithfulness to the Word of God. 4) It has a valuable introduction which includes material on the authorship of the Gospel, the significance of the Gospel for the church for which it was written, and comments on its central message. For all these reasons it would be helpful to anyone studying John.

There are, however, weaknesses. In the first place, the title of the commentary is something of a giveaway. This book of the Bible is not John's Gospel, but, according to Mark 1:1, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel *according to John*. This is not a matter of mere semantics, but a crucial matter which reflects one's conception of the Scriptures. In the second place, John's gospel has often been said to be one of the clearest books on the fundamental truths of absolute predestination and the doctrines of grace. And this is true. But these truths are somewhat toned down in the book, or ignored altogether. For example, in connection with 10:15, no mention is made of particular atonement; in connection with 10:26, the position is taken that those who do not believe show by this that they are not of God's sheep; in connection with 12:36-41, the author rejects as improbable the idea that a pur-

pose of God is involved here: i.e., that they did not believe *in order that* the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, when this is clearly the idea. The author rather speaks of the fact that the text describes a wicked reaction to Jesus' preaching which was an effect, but not the purpose, which was to save. In connection with the incident of Jesus handing the sop to Judas at the last supper, he speaks of Jesus doing this as "a mark of special favor."

No commentary can be a substitute for Scripture study itself; but this commentary can serve as a useful aid, if it, as any commentary, is used carefully.

**YOUR WEALTH IN GOD'S WORLD**, Does the Bible Support the Free Market? by John Jefferson Davis; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1984; 134 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko).

This is a very interesting and helpful book to anyone who is interested in the questions which are constantly coming up in our day concerning the relative merits of a capitalistic economy vs. a socialistic economy, i.e., the relative merits of the American free-enterprise system vs. the state controlled economy of Communist countries. It not only discusses the issues of this controversy as such, but it also discusses such related questions as: Does God oppose the rich and side with the poor? Is it wrong to accumulate possessions? to prepare for the future financially? What obligations do the wealthy have toward the poor? What is the church's role in this respect? Is capitalism more productive, more compassionate, more Biblical, than socialism? What does the Bible have to say about all these things? What does the Bible teach concerning Christian stewardship?

The author, surprisingly (from the viewpoint of the main subject of the book), is Associate Professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts. That he should give attention to such subjects as these is interesting, to say the least.



I found the book to be very good in many respects. The author repeatedly attempts to support his argument from Scripture and goes to great lengths to limit himself carefully to what he believes the Scriptures have to say on these matters. Many times his efforts to do this are successful and he has much helpful material in the book as he delivers his impassioned plea for the free-market system.

Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the argument. The following arguments or suppositions are, to this reviewer, somewhat suspect. 1) He gives insufficient attention to the effect of the fall into sin upon the "dominion mandate" — "Be fruitful and replenish the earth . . . ." Yet, this "dominion mandate" is a basic premise in his entire book. 2) His arguments in large part are based upon Old Testament passages and the connection in them between obedience to God and material prosperity. He makes this connection valid for the New Testament also, although he acknowledges exceptions and admits the New Testament emphasis on spiritual prosperity. But what is forgotten is the fact that this material prosperity promised to Israel in the way of obedience was a prosperity in the land of Canaan, a type of heaven. Hence, he is not adverse to saying temporal blessings follow upon upright behavior or individuals and nations (37). 3) In close connection with this, he fails to make a distinction between the church (as foreshadowed by the nation of Israel) and the world, and simply transfers the Old Testament laws for Israel to the New Testament and to society in general. 4) Finally, while not explicitly post-millennial, the author writes from the viewpoint of the church's calling to influence culture

and so to transform society.

Nevertheless, this book is well worth reading and gives interesting comments on our present economic system, while dispelling many myths which have been created by liberal economists.

**PRACTICAL TRUTHS FROM ELISHA**, by Alfred Edersheim; Kregel Publications, 1982; 326 pages, \$11.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. R. D. Decker)

**PRACTICAL TRUTHS FROM JONAH**, by Joseph S. Exell; Kregel Publications, 1982; 231 pages, \$8.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

These books would be worthy additions to anyone's library. Both are expository in nature and both attempt to apply the Scriptures practically. Both authors are 19th century preachers. Edersheim is the better known of the two, especially for his work, *The Life And Times Of Jesus, the Messiah*.

Exell offers a verse by verse (almost phrase by phrase) exposition of the Book of Jonah. Edersheim expounds the entire history of Elisha. The pastor who wishes to preach a series of sermons on either of these Bible characters would find these books helpful. While one would not agree with some of the exegesis and certainly not with all of the practical applications, both books offer good devotional reading.

## News From Our Churches

May 31, 1984

As of May 20, Rev. Houck was making some, but slow, progress in recovering from his back injury. He is able to walk and sit, but only for very short periods of time. The doctors feel it will be at least a month before he can get back into the work. The field is being served by means of tapes as well as periodic visits by Rev. Koole. Three new, young families with children seem very interested in the truth. Rev. Houck believes they will join the group

very soon.

Rev. Ron VanOverloop, home missionary in Birmingham, has declined the call extended to him by our Loveland congregation.

The Seminary has licensed seminarians Russell Dykstra, Steven Key, and Chuck Terpstra to speak a word of edification in our churches.



There is the need for a teacher in a small, newly begun Christian school in Northern Ireland. Rev. Hutton and members of his congregation support the school and desire, and have asked for, a Protestant Reformed teacher. The teacher would be required to teach five or six grades, about fourteen students, with the help of another teacher provided by the group in Northern Ireland. They are willing to provide a house, fuel, food, and a car for the new teacher. The man to contact in N. Ireland is: Rev. George Hutton, "Claughton," 23 Upper Cairncastle Road, Larne BT40 2EF, Northern Ireland. This position is for the 1984-1985 school year.

Rev. Kortering will have moved to Grandville, MI, D.V., by the time this news is printed. Rev. Kortering will also be installed July 1, with Rev. Flikkema conducting the installation service. DH

### ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

The Board of the newly formed Protestant Reformed Christian School Society of Hudsonville, Michigan, is taking applications at this time for a PRINCIPAL-ADMINISTRATOR with the view for opening our school in September, 1985. Those interested, please send resume to Erv Kortering, Secretary Education Committee, 253 E. 19th St., Holland, Michigan 49423.

## Report of Classis East

May 9, 1984

### Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on May 9 and 10, 1984 at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. This was an unusual session for Classis East for, in recent years, the meetings have tended to be short. This session covered a day and a half. The meeting was chaired by Rev. Bruinsma, with help from Rev. De Vries when Rev. Bruinsma was called away to be with a parishioner in the hospital, and since Rev. Bruinsma was involved in one of the cases before Classis. Each church was represented by two delegates.

Certainly a highlight of the meeting was the peremptory examination of Pastor-elect Barry Gritters who had accepted the call extended to him by Byron Center. Beginning with a sermon on Psalm 103:17 and ending with the practica examination, the examination was heard and approved. Classis, with the consent of the delegates *ad examina* of Classis West, unanimously approved the examination and authorized Byron Center to proceed with the ordination and installation of Pastor-elect Gritters. Expression of thanksgiving to God were rendered by the chairman and in prayer by Rev.

Slopsema for the gift of another undershepherd in our churches.

The second item of business before the Classis was the appeal of a brother re an action taken by his consistory, viz., that of first bringing formal charges against the brother, then dropping them, but still retaining the grounds for their initial action. The second part of the appeal had to do with a consistory's holding of a position independent of other churches. Classis sustained the appellant relative his first point and advised the consistory either to rescind the original decision bringing the charges or to proceed with discipline. Regarding the second point of the appeal, Classis declared that this point falls away if the advice above were to be followed.

The Finance Committee reported and Classis approved expenses of \$948.00. The questions of Article 41 were asked and answered and Classis stood adjourned. Classis will meet next on September 12, 1984 at Holland.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Huiskens  
Stated Clerk