

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... It is very sad when there are those in the church of Jesus Christ who suffer from loneliness and isolation. The whole church bears the responsibility and shame for this. We must always be watchful in the church for those who need to be befriended and encouraged.

See "Christian Fellowship" — page 45

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MEDITATION

Free From Condemnation

Rev. H. Veldman

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1

No condemnation in Christ Jesus — how wonderful!

There is therefore *now* no condemnation in Christ Jesus. These words, "therefore" and "now," indicate the meaning of this Scripture in the light of its context. The word "now" must not be under-

stood temporally, but logically — now, at this moment of the apostle's epistle and reasoning. The word "therefore" means that what now follows is a conclusion, a result of something, a logical conclusion.

According to some, we must connect this text

with the entire preceding part of the epistle, man's hopeless sin and guilt and his redemption by grace through Christ Jesus. And, in a certain sense, one cannot object to this interpretation. Analyzing this text, one will discover that he must refer to all this. Others seek the connection in the conclusion of chapter 7. We would maintain this latter interpretation. First, we would maintain the old exegetical rule: do not go too far upstream; remain as close to the text as possible. Secondly, there is no reason to look beyond verse 25 of chapter 7: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And he begins this song of victory in verse 1, the ground of this victory. And so the connection is plain. In Romans 7:25 the apostle had spoken of victory. Of this victory he now sings in Romans 8. And the ground of this victory is expressed in verse 1.

What a wonderful Scripture this is! In Romans 7:15-17 the apostle gives expression to the fearful struggle of the Christian: the evil he hates he does and the good which he would he practices not. That we now have the victory over this fearful power of sin is only because of Jesus Christ, our Lord, as we also read in this particular word of God.

* * * * *

The apostle expresses himself negatively here: no condemnation. He does this for the sake of emphasis.

Condemnation is a legal idea. It means, first of all, that we are judged by the Judge of all the earth, the living God. The Lord alone may judge because He is alone the Judge of all the earth, the Potentate of potentates. And He alone can judge because He is God — He alone can read and know the hearts and minds of men. And when He judges He never caters to man, never perverts the judgment; He always judges righteously, and only therefore in the light of Himself and man's relation and attitude toward Him. Secondly, the word means that we are judged guilty. The Lord judges us to be in conflict with His law. A robber or murderer may be sorry that he violated the law, but he is never sorry for God's sake. He is sorry only for his own sake. This is the sorrow of the world (II Cor. 7:10). God judges only in the light of Himself. And it means, thirdly and finally, that the Lord also enforces this verdict of guilt. A worldly judge may declare a person guilty and then pervert justice. But God always enforces His judgment and executes it, immediately — the Lord never postpones or delays it.

The opposite of condemnation, positively, is justification. Justification is that official decree or verdict of the Judge of all the earth, declaring us to be in perfect harmony with His law, that He sees no guilt in us and declaring us to be heirs of everlasting life and glory.

No condemnation — how fundamental!

God alone is the living God. He is the Potentate of potentates, the Judge of all the earth. In His hand He carries the entire universe; His is all the power and the glory; He alone rules and exercises absolute dominion. He alone is God and there is none besides Him.

Hence, this judgment of God is fundamental because it is absolute and final. There is no appeal from His verdict because there is no judge either next to Him or above Him. Neither is there any power to oppose or annul His judgment. His judgment stands and it can never be frustrated or changed. What the Lord therefore declares of you and of me is final; it determines our lot, even forever, as is also stated in Romans 8:33-34: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

* * * * *

The negative language of the text must not escape us. We read: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We do not read here, positively, of justification but, negatively, of condemnation. Why does the apostle express himself thus? This emphasizes the amazing character of our salvation. Imagine: no condemnation!

How amazing!

Amazing, first of all, because of what we are. Are we not conceived and born dead in sins and trespasses? Is it not true of us, according to Romans 8:15-17, that we do the evil we hate, and practice not the good we would? We do only the evil and never the good! How, then, can the Lord judge concerning us that He sees no evil in us? We ourselves are aware of this evil. And the Lord does not see it, the Judge of all the earth? Secondly, is not the Lord the righteous Judge of all the earth? His judgment is surely always just and true. He is not a man who perverts judgment. Is it, then, not an amazing thing that, judging us, He declares of us that He sees no sin in us, when we ourselves see so much of it, and He certainly sees so much more? Thirdly, how amazing is this judgment because God is always executing us! Is it not true that we die every day and all the day long? And, remember: the Lord is doing this! We are not dying accidentally. We die every day because His hand rests upon us. How, then, can God say that we do not deserve death, are entitled to everlasting life and glory, while at the same time causing us to die all the day long?

* * * * *

However transcending all human understanding, this justification of God's people is real. Christ Jesus is the Head of His people. He is this Head

judicially. This means that He represents us, represents us in death and in life. As such He is responsible for all our sins and trespasses, and His merits belong to us, even as Adam was the representative head of the whole human race and his sin was imputed and charged to us. This Christ is also our Head organically. And this means that He is the Head and we are His body. In Him is all our life and salvation and we live out of Him. He is the Vine and we are the branches who live out of the Vine.

Indeed, this is the basis for our "no condemnation." The apostle is emphasizing this. We read here: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." And we feel instinctively that the expression, in Christ Jesus, gives us the reason, the ground for this amazing truth. Only as in Christ Jesus we are justified by and before God. This is eternally true: in God's eternal counsel we are His body, covered by His blood and clothed with His righteousness, so that it is actually true that God sees no guilt in us because there is none. Then, this is true upon the cross of Calvary. Christ is our Head and we were in Him. He suffered and died for our sins and paid our debt; when He died we died and when He was buried we were buried. This is clearly held before us in Romans 6:3-4. In His suffering and death our old man of sin was condemned so that it may never again reign over us. Indeed, we glory in the cross of Christ, provided that we do not destroy that cross by presenting it in a universal, head for head, sense of the word. And, thirdly, this is true now in principle and presently in perfection forever. O, it is true now only in principle. We are perfect now, but only as we are united with Christ and live out of Him. What is born of God cannot sin, it is holy; but only that is holy and perfect that is born of God. Presently, however, this earthly house of our tabernacle will be dissolved, this old man of sin will be destroyed forever, and as God has known us eternally, we shall appear in the new heavens and upon the new earth. Then the righteous in Christ will shine forth in all their glory and perfection, even as God has sovereignly known us in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world.

* * * * *

No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

This does not mean, cannot mean that our conduct as not after the flesh but after the Spirit is the ground of our justification. Indeed, this word of God does not say this. We do not read that there is no condemnation for us because we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. We do read, however,

that there is no condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. How impossible this would be! How contrary to all the teachings of Holy Writ! How Scriptural is the truth that we are righteous before God not because of our works but by grace. Indeed, by grace we are saved, through faith, and not of works lest any man should boast. No condemnation for us because we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit? If this were true then surely our many sins would condemn us! Then our sins would surely rise up against us and demand of the Judge of all the earth our condemnation. On the other hand, however, our justification rests only upon and in Christ.

What, then, does this expression mean? First, only God's people for whom Christ died and rose again will (in principle) walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Indeed, this, we understand, does not apply to every sinner, that Christ died for every man, and that every man can by his own free will decide to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. This expression simply designates those of whom it is true that there is no condemnation. But this emphasizes, then, how we experience this blessed, incomprehensible truth, how this blessed assurance is consciously known by me, only in the measure that we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. We are righteous only in Christ Jesus and therefore experience this blessedness only as we walk in Christ Jesus.

Our sins rise up against us day by day.

The evil we hate we do and the good we would we practice not.

In Christ Jesus there is no condemnation.

Let us glory, then, only in the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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

Correction, Please, *Clarion*!

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Clarion is the magazine of the Liberated in Canada, officially known as the Canadian Reformed Churches. In the past it has sometimes misrepresented the position of our Protestant Reformed Churches, even as the magazine of the Liberated in the Netherlands, *De Reformatie*, has done so, especially with respect to our covenant view. But I have seldom seen such a distorted and confused picture of our history and our doctrinal position as appeared in *Clarion* in the August 10 issue from the pen of the Rev. W. Pouwelse. As I read it, I thought to myself, "Any similarity between this and the Protestant Reformed Churches is strictly coincidental." While I have little hope, in the light of past experience, that my request will be heeded, I nevertheless want to set the record straight and to request *Clarion* to make correction, preferably by taking over this editorial.

Editor Pouwelse is writing about the Liberation which took place in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKN) in 1944, a movement in which the late Dr. K. Schilder played a leading part. This year marks the 40th Anniversary of that event. And quite naturally the Liberated churches in the Netherlands and the Canadian Reformed Churches on this side of the Atlantic are paying attention to this anniversary. In this connection Mr. Pouwelse writes on "Backgrounds of the Liberation," an article in which he attempts to trace American and Canadian backgrounds as well as Dutch backgrounds. That there were such backgrounds is an undeniable fact; they arose out of the contact between our churches and the Liberated in Canada (prior to the formation of their denomination), and especially out of the history and stance of our churches since 1924. It should not be overlooked, however, that as far as the Canadian Liberated were concerned, the "signals" were called from the Netherlands by such leading lights as the late Dr. Schilder and the late Prof. B. Holwerda and others.

So much by way of introduction.

If the Rev. Pouwelse wants to write about "backgrounds," however, he should go to the primary sources for this information. I am afraid he has de-

pendent too much on the book *Inheritance Preserved*, by the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene.

The first distortion appears when Kalamazoo 1924 is referred to. The distortion is twofold. In the preaching Dr. Abraham Kuyper's theory of presumptive regeneration is discussed at length; and this is important. But then Mr. Pouwelse simply continues: "The theory of Dr. A. Kuyper crept in also in the Christian Reformed Churches in America. In 1924, the Synod of Kalamazoo made a statement, consisting of three points. They are therefore oftentimes called the 'Three Points of Kalamazoo.'" And while later reference is made to "common grace," this statement in its context leaves the impression that Kalamazoo 1924 is related to Kuyper's presumptive regeneration, something with which it had nothing whatsoever to do. What is worse, however, is the fact that in citing the Three Points no reference whatsoever is made to "het puntje van het Eerste Punt" (the real point of the First Point), namely, the general, well-meant offer of grace and salvation. And this has everything to do with the difference between the Protestant Reformed and the Liberated. This is true, in the first place, because the spiritual father of the doctrine of the general offer was none other than Prof. W. Heyns, the man who also defined the covenant in terms of a general, conditional promise. It is true, in the second place, because this Prof. Heyns was the very American theologian who was quoted in support of the Liberated covenant view on the front page of one of the first issues of *De Reformatie* to reach us after World War II.

This leads to the next distortion:

However, in 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches changed their direction, and again the influence of the theory of Dr. A. Kuyper crept in. This time not in the first place with respect to his "common grace" concept but now more specifically his doctrine about "presumptive regeneration."

In 1950 the Protestant Reformed Churches drew up the so-called "Declaration of Principles."

Here you have a fundamental distortion. I get the impression that the Rev. Pouwelse has never read

the Declaration of Principles, but simply depends on the distortion of the Declaration in the Rev. Van Oene's *Inheritance Preserved*. For anyone who reads the Declaration and who knows anything at all about Protestant Reformed history will recognize immediately that the Declaration of Principles does not represent a change of direction. On the contrary, it just exactly represents a holding to our original direction. That original direction involved the denial of the general, conditional offer of salvation — fundamentally the same as the general, conditional promise of the covenant (both are Heynsian). That original direction is maintained in the Declaration of Principles. In fact, in its very opening paragraphs the Declaration *proceeds* from our (original) repudiation of the Three Points of Common Grace. This is simply an undeniable fact. If the Rev. Pouwelse does not possess our Declaration of Principles, he may write me, and I will send him a copy, so that he can see for himself.

This leads in turn to the worst distortion of the entire article, again evidently partly due to the fact that Mr. Pouwelse depends on the Rev. Van Oene's book. This is what he writes:

Again we quote a summary of this "Declaration of Principles" from the Rev. Van Oene's book.

"1. The Protestant Reformed Churches reject the errors of the Three Points of Kalamazoo and maintain that the grace of God is only for the elect."

"2. They teach that the promise of God is unconditionally only for the elect."

"3. They reject the doctrine that the promise of the covenant is for all who were baptized."

What was the meaning of this "Declaration?" At the one hand they rejected the theory of "common grace." But at the same time they introduced in points two and three a theory of two kinds of "covenants." One for the elect and one for "all who are baptized." They introduced two types of promises. Some "unconditionally" only for the elect and some other (apparently conditionally) for "all baptized."

I stand amazed! Two kinds of covenants? Two types of promises? An unconditional promise for the elect only and a conditional promise for all who are baptized? What sort of nonsense is that? And how does the Rev. Pouwelse "deduce" this even from the very distorted and partial presentation of the Declaration of Principles by the Rev. Van Oene? Again: I stand amazed! Flabbergasted! I have been teaching Protestant Reformed dogmatics for a good many years, but I never heard this notion before. And I lived through and participated in the entire history of the Declaration of Principles, have read and discussed and defended that document many times; but I never found the slightest hint of these ideas in it. The Protestant Reformed Churches

are violently opposed to any idea of a promise for all and a conditional promise.

Then follows another distortion: the old accusation of presupposed regeneration:

According to these points the sacrament of baptism does not sign and seal the covenant of God and His indubitable promises. The *real* covenant was only for the *elect* and people could not do anything else than "presume" and "hope" that the child to be baptized belonged to the elect.

And a little later the writer adds: "In this way the Canadian Reformed Churches were born. There was no choice. The Protestant Reformed Churches had gone back to the doctrine of Dr. Kuyper and had officially accepted the theory of the 'presumptive regeneration.'"

Now here is a marvelous thing!

According to the Rev. Pouwelse the Protestant Reformed Churches in adopting the Declaration of Principles adopted the Kuyperian theory of presumptive regeneration.

And yet what does that very Declaration say? And now I quote it from pp. 125, 126 of our Church Order:

"III. Seeing then that this is the clear teaching of our confession,

A. We repudiate:

1. The teaching:

a. That the promise of the covenant is conditional and for all that are baptized.

b. That we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true."

I can only conclude that the Rev. Pouwelse had never yet read the Declaration of Principles. But then he should not presume to tell his readers what that Declaration teaches. That is not responsible journalism, and it is not honest.

The final distortion is a distortion of historical fact. The Rev. Pouwelse writes:

In 1951 the "Declaration of Principles" caused a conflict in the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches were established. What was left from the Protestant Reformed Churches went back to the Christian Reformed Churches in 1960.

Mirabile dictu!

The only conclusion one can draw from this paragraph is that because of the conflict about the Declaration the Liberated immigrants left us and joined in the formation of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Thereupon all that was left of the PRC joined the Christian Reformed Church. Ergo: from

1960 forward there were no more Protestant Reformed Churches.

But the facts are these:

1. There was indeed a conflict about the Declaration of Principles from 1951 to 1953.
2. It was not the Declaration as such, however, that occasioned the split in our denomination.
3. Rather, the Rev. H. De Wolf (and some of the elders of First Church) were disciplined on account of De Wolf's heretical statements. They then committed schism rather than submit to discipline.
4. Thereupon many throughout the denomination took sides with De Wolf and likewise committed schism.
5. This De Wolf group was doctrinally in agree-

ment with the Liberated in Canada and the Netherlands.

6. For some mysterious reason, however, they did not join forces with those who are now the Canadian Reformed; but they melted away into the Christian Reformed Church.

7. The Protestant Reformed Churches continued to exist, to maintain their historic position, and to the best of my knowledge are alive and well today.

Mr. Pouwelse states near the end of his article, "History can teach us a lesson"

Indeed it can!

But first make certain it is history, not distortion.

Otherwise you will surely learn wrong lessons!

The Standard Bearer and Polemics

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Text of an address delivered at the
Annual Reformed Free Publishing Association
meeting September 20, 1984.

Through the years the *Standard Bearer* has had more than its share of negative criticism. This has come mainly from outside of Protestant Reformed circles. It has come from those who are opposed to us and our distinctively Reformed position. These people just plain hate us and the cause we represent, and so they criticise both us and our paper. This criticism is often harsh and bitter. I have heard, for example, the *Standard Bearer* called The Slander Bearer. If these people do not criticise us they ignore our paper and have nothing to do with us. I am not all that concerned about this.

What does concern me and it ought to concern you is the criticism I hear from our own people. Some of us are quite vocal and openly critical of our magazine. Some refuse to read parts of it and a few refuse to read it at all. The main criticism appears to be that the *Standard Bearer* is far too negative. Why must we always be pointing out error? Why must we always be harping about heresy? And more especially why must we be concentrating our attention on the errors of others, especially the Christian Reformed Church. This is more than ample reason to consider the subject: "The *Standard Bearer* and

Polemics." Ought we change the emphasis of our magazine? Are the criticisms valid?

Polemics is the refuting of error. It involves controversy. Polemics is the exposing of error in doctrine or in practice. It is refuting those errors. Polemics is the refutation of error by means of Scripture and the Confessions of the church. Polemics is never *mere* controversy. It is never arguing for the sake of argument nor is it a matter of mere logical debate. Certainly Polemics is not playing games nor engaging in mental exercises. Positively, Polemics is the exposing of error in the light of Scripture and the Confessions. In Polemics we refute error by showing precisely how it conflicts with Scripture as expressed in our Reformed Creeds. Polemics is really an exercise of faith, faith in God in Christ as revealed in Holy Scripture.

Polemics is for the sake of the truth and glory of God. The church never engages in Polemics merely in a negative way. Error must be exposed and refuted in the light of God's Word. God's people must know why this or that doctrine and practice is in conflict with Scripture. But they must know this

in order that they may know and grow in the knowledge of the truth. Polemics is necessary for the defense and maintenance of the truth.

The truth is reality over against error or the lie. God is The Truth. God in all of His perfection, God the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, God the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, God our Father for Jesus sake, God is The Truth, the reality over against the lie. God is the God of all truth. Christ is The Truth. Christ as the revelation of the God of our salvation, the only begotten Son of the Father, is full of grace and truth. This is why Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the light." Christ is the perfect revelation of the truth over against the lie. The truth is found in Jesus and nowhere else. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth Who was poured out into the church by the exalted Christ. The Holy Spirit comforts, guides, preserves us by leading us into all the truth. The truth is revealed in Holy Scripture. Inspired by the Holy Spirit the infallible Word of God reveals the truth of God in Christ. That truth in Scripture is summed and set forth in our Confessions, the three Forms of Unity. And we confess: "as taught here in this Christian Church," in the Protestant Reformed Churches by God's grace. That truth must be defended and maintained over against the lie. Error in doctrine or life must be exposed and refuted in order that the truth may flourish. This is precisely the way our Confessions were born. They were formulated over against heresy. And it is in this way that the church grows in its knowledge of the truth.

The deepest reason for Polemics, therefore, is the glory of God. Error is always an attack against God. God's Name, God's glory are inseparably connected with the truth. God is the God of all truth. When the truth is attacked or denied, God is attacked or denied. This is the deepest issue at stake in Polemics. All error is a denial of God in all of His sovereignty, might, and glory. Deny Genesis 1 and you deny the Creator God. Deny the first Adam and you deny the last Adam. That is true of all of Scripture. What is more, false doctrine always leads to ungodly living, a transgressing of God's law. II Peter 2:1ff makes plain that the damnable heresies of the false teachers lead to pernicious ways of the false teachers and their followers. For this reason we must refute the lie wherever and whenever it appears. In this way the truth is defended and maintained. In this way we grow in the knowledge of the truth. In this way God's Name is praised and we live a new, godly life. This, in brief, is what Polemics is all about.

Ought the *Standard Bearer* to be engaged in Polemics? To answer this question we must notice that Scripture calls the church to this task. This in

large measure was the task of the prophets of the Old Testament. They were called to make known the will of God to God's people. They spoke of the promise and they directed the faith and hope of God's people to the coming Christ. They instructed God's people in the truth of God's Word. Always the prophets proclaimed the truth over against the lie. They warned the people of their sins and backsliding, of their idolatry and apostasy. The prophets spoke of the impending judgments of God on account of their sins. More often than not they were severely persecuted for this. Think for example of Jeremiah in the dungeon or Elijah under the juniper tree.

The same is true of the ministry of Jesus. Jesus engaged in Polemics. Contrary to popular thinking about Jesus, He in the sharpest of terms denounced, exposed, and refuted error in doctrine and life. Jesus taught the disciples and the people the truth to be sure. But Jesus did that over against the lie. Jesus had no time for the self-righteousness, work-righteousness doctrine of the Pharisees. He never hesitated to show the error and evil of this false doctrine from the Scriptures. A large percentage of His recorded sermons are directed against false teachers and their heresies. Entire sermons of Jesus are devoted to this, such as the one recorded in Matthew 23.

The same is true of the Apostles. They never tire of calling the people of God to the task. We must fight the good fight of faith by putting on the whole armor of God. We must avoid vain and profane babblings and follow after the truth. We must reject false doctrines and heresies and flee from the very appearance of evil. The whole of Jude and two thirds of II Peter are polemical. II Peter 2 warns of the certain coming of the false teachers into the church. These false teachers work privily. They are never out in the open. They bring into the church damnable heresies, and many follow their pernicious ways by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of. The false teachers are compared to Balaam, the false prophet who was rebuked for his error by his dumb ass. They are compared to dogs who return to their own vomit and to washed sows who return to the mire. II Peter 3 warns of the scoffers who denied the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is admonished to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ lest she fall from her steadfastness and be led away with the error of the wicked.

For this reason too, both the Church Order and the Ordination Forms and the Formula of Subscription make clear that Professors, ministers, and elders must expound and defend the truth over against all heresies repugnant thereto. This belongs

to the calling of office bearers. If they fail to do this, they are unfaithful, false teachers.

Yes, the *Standard Bearer* ought to engage in Polemics. This was the reason historically for the existence of Reformed Free Publishing Association. Our Protestant Reformed fathers needed the freedom to expose the error of Common Grace. All through the years the *Standard Bearer* has faithfully and vigorously defended the faith against heresy. This must continue. This must not be done merely in a negative fashion. Errors must be exposed and refuted and we must not hesitate to do that. But we must do it in the way of the positive development of the truth. We must do it so that our readers grow in the grace and knowledge of God in Christ. We

must do it so that the church's understanding of the truth increases. We must fight the good fight of faith also by means of the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. We must not allow negative criticism to deter us.

The issue is crucial. A professor from another Seminary lamented recently: "We have a generation of theological illiterates." Let us pray that that never be said of us or our children. Let us be faithful and courageous in the defense of the faith. Let us be faithful lest it be said of us: "God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Let us be faithful lest we become the means by which the Name of God is blasphemed.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Our Order of Worship

Prof. H. Hanko

In our discussion of singing in congregational worship, we have yet to discuss the doxologies which are a common part of the worship service.

While there is no specific injunction in Scripture to include such doxologies in the worship service, it is clear that such songs of praise are often found in Scripture both in the Old Testament and in the New. Not only are many of the Psalms and songs recorded in the Old Testament specific songs of praise, but there are similar passages in the New Testament, such as Romans 11:33-36, 16:27, II Corinthians 1:3, Ephesians 1:3ff., I Timothy 1:17, and several which can be found in the book of Revelation.

Most of our congregations begin the worship service with the doxology, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." There are just two remarks which can be made in connection with this practice. The first is that, while this doxology is not a direct versification of Scripture, it nevertheless is a very appropriate song with which to begin the worship. It is a confession on the part of the congregation that all the blessings which the church receives come only from God. There is a kind of expectation in this doxology, therefore; for even the blessings which the congregation needs to worship can come from God alone, and the church confesses this. But

the doxology expresses also the tone of the entire worship service, for worship is, above all, praise. And at the very outset the congregation expresses why it has come together. It calls upon the whole church, upon God's entire creation, and upon the saints and angels in heaven to join with her in praising God. In the second place, our churches have not always begun the worship with such a doxology. This practice is of comparatively recent origin. I remember the time, when I was younger, that very few, if any, of our congregations began with a doxology. There is no rule here, and the people of God have freedom in this matter. Yet it seems to me entirely appropriate to do so, although, if a choice had to be made between a doxology at the beginning or the end of the worship, the most appropriate place would be at the end.

A variety of doxologies is used at the end of the worship service. The most common are the two doxologies found in our *Psalter*, Nos. 196 & 197, both versifications of a part of Psalm 72. It has, however, become increasingly common to end the worship service with a different song, "May the Grace of Christ Our Savior . . ." Sometimes this is sung to the tune of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus . . ." and sometimes it is sung to a *Psalter* tune. This cannot really be considered a doxology.

It is rather a prayer imploring God's blessing upon the congregation as it leaves the sanctuary. Personally, I am not very much in favor of the use of this song. There are especially two reasons for this. It seems to me eminently appropriate to end the worship with a song of praise. The congregation has just heard proclaimed the glorious truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has heard of the salvation by grace, of the great love and mercy of God Who has delivered His saints from the power of sin and death, and of the great inheritance which God has prepared for those who love Him. What then could be more appropriate than that the congregation lift up its voice in praise to God Who alone is worthy of all praise? It is the really proper way to end the worship. But the song, "May the Grace of Christ Our Savior . . ." is also somewhat redundant. It is redundant because the congregation has opportunity in its congregational prayers to beseech God's blessing upon His people, God's grace, love, and favor. It has opportunity then to seek from God the blessedness of the communion of saints. To do so again at the conclusion of the service is repetitious. This same repetition is evident from the fact that this song expresses essentially the same thing as the final benediction. While different benedictions are used, the most common is: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with you. Amen." It is clear that this is very similar to the words of this song:

May the grace of Christ our Savior
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favor
Rest upon us from above.
Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess in sweet communion
Joys which earth cannot afford.

There is one more remark we shall make concerning these doxologies, and that has to do with the time they are sung.

When the doxology, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow . . ." is sung at the beginning of the worship service, it seems better to have it follow upon the vatum and benediction. While here too there are no hard and fast rules, it nevertheless remains a fact that it is more in keeping with our doctrine to preserve this order. I refer to the fact that we believe in the truth of sovereign grace. And, as applied to the worship service, this means that our speech to God is always a response to God's speech to us. God says, according to Psalm 27:8, "Seek ye My face"; and our hearts respond, "Thy face Lord will we seek." The order here is important. It is not only the order of command and obedience to that command; it is also the divine order of sovereign grace. God's word, "Seek ye My face," is the

sovereign power within us by which we are able to say, "Thy face Lord will we seek." This divine order ought to be preserved in the worship service. God speaks first, always, in the work of salvation. Our speech is the response to His voice. The doxology ought also to express this. God says, "Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ." God speaks through the benediction: "Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the operation of the Holy Spirit." The congregation hears the voice of Jehovah God, receives this Word of God by faith, and responds in praise: "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

There is also a question of order at the end of the worship. Some of our congregations have adopted the order of ending the worship service with the benediction and the doxology — in that order. They have done this in order to make it possible for the minister to move to the rear of the auditorium so that he will be in a position to greet the members of the congregation and any visitors who are present at the worship. But this is a practical consideration which tends to spoil the proper order of worship. The worship service ought to end with the benediction, not the doxology. There is here too a beautiful divine order which we ought not hastily to abandon. The congregation is ready to depart from the presence of God to return to her life and calling in the world. The Sabbath is like an oasis in the wilderness of this present life. We sing with the Psalmist, after all, "We wander in a desert land, where all the streams are dry." In this desert land we cannot survive spiritually. And so the Lord our gracious God provides for us the oasis of the Sabbath where we may escape the heat of the desert, the barrenness of this present life, and rest under the shadow of the wings of our God. In this oasis, Jehovah gives us the true spiritual bread which is Christ Jesus our Lord, and calls us to drink the living waters of His Spirit, the cooling streams of the blessings of His salvation. Refreshed and strengthened, we are now able to proceed on our pilgrim's journey for another week, until once again, we stagger, exhausted, into the rest of another Sabbath. Leaving God's house on this Sabbath, there is no better way to depart than to hear ringing in our ears the voice of our God Who commands His blessing upon us as we leave, a blessing which He assures us will be ours until we meet again in His house. There is an appropriateness about ending the service with a benediction which cannot be gainsaid. The order then is natural and entirely proper. We end our worship with a doxology.

Blest be the Lord, our fathers' God
Eternal King of kings,

Who only is omnipotent,
 Performing wondrous things.
 Blest be His great and glorious Name
 Forevermore, Amen,
 And let His glory fill the earth
 From shore to shore. Amen.

Then follows God's Word of benediction, and the people of God depart.

* * * * *

This brings us to the matter of offerings. We will have time only to begin our discussion of this element in the worship services in this issue of *The Standard Bearer*.

That offerings were an essential part of the worship in both the Old and the New Testament churches is clear from all of Scripture.

There are churches who do not agree with this, apparently. There are some churches who take no offerings during the worship service, but send out a committee to all the members of the congregation once or twice a year to exact from them a pledge for the amount they intend to give for the coming year or half-year. The people who have pledged can make their promised payments in any way they choose. There are other churches who put a box somewhere in the church building into which the people can drop their money. It is also not uncommon for some churches to take collections only for the Benevolent Fund during the worship, while money for other causes is collected in various other ways.

But Scripture makes clear that offerings belong to the worship.

In the Old Testament, at the time when the tabernacle was built, we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of

Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass . . . And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus 25:1-9). You recall how the people gave willingly and in great abundance: "And they (the wise men who were responsible for the construction of the tabernacle) spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much" (Exodus 36:5-7).

There were also certain laws given by God which provided for the support of the priests and Levites who ministered in the sanctuary so that they could devote their time to this service. When, in later years, the temple was in need of repairs and money had to be gathered to finance these repairs, a chest was made with a hole bored in the top into which the people could put their gifts. We read of this in II Kings 22:3-9 and II Chronicles 24:8-14. This practice was apparently continued in the days of Jesus (Mark 12:41-44).

There are also a few texts in the New Testament which indicate that offerings were to be a part of the worship service. But we must wait with a further discussion of this matter until our next article.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Unmistakable Unbelief

Rev. John A. Heys

As the saying goes, "An apple does not fall far from the tree." You can, therefore, find the tree without travelling a great distance and without putting forth a great deal of effort. Or, to use the words of Scripture and apply them, as Scripture does, to man, "Train up a child in the way that he should

go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The behavior of a young man will reveal how his parents did or did not bring him up from childhood. The qualifying words "did or did not" is due to the fact that the parents may have been very faithful in striving to train the child in

the fear of God's name, and may have set a very good example, but the child not having been born again was not and could not be trained to walk in God's ways and by faith, and was trained by the world round about him. He still, when old, walked in the way he was trained, but it was not in the way his faithful parents strove to direct his feet.

It comes as no surprise then to find, as we did, Esther having a shameful, unvarnished fatalistic outlook when peril stared her in the face. Her failure to use God's name, to show any trust in Him, and her failure to ask the Jews to pray to Him for her as she, as it were, takes her life in her hands, and performs a deed that is fraught with peril, is all due to the training that Mordecai gave her. He was not her blood-father, but he, as her uncle, did bring her up from childhood in the ways of unbelief and sin.

That this is the case is evident from the fact that he approaches her in his deep sorrow without the slightest manifestation of faith in God. He showed deep sorrow. He went for help. But he did not turn to the living God, or suggest to Esther that she do so. He spoke to her in a way void of all faith in God. And she responded in a way that was not even faintly tinged with the color of faith. The apple fell right under the tree. In the way she was trained from her early days in infancy she walked.

Now it is quite understandable that Mordecai would feel so bad and wear sackcloth and ashes. Not only did he face certain death, as far as he could see as an unbeliever, but the whole nation was slated for death and extinction. The Jews were marked as a people about to be wiped off the face of this earth. Why, even the apostle Paul could write in Romans 9:1-3 that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, and that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for their sake. And especially since this destruction of the Jews came because of his refusal to keep the king's command to recognize and show respect to his right-hand man, Mordecai had reason to be in deep sorrow.

But the tragedy of it all, and that which again shows that he had no faith and spiritual life, is that he shows no sorrow for sin! And therefore it is not difficult to understand that Esther likewise shows no sorrow for sin, or even recognizes the fact that God just might be sending this sword of Haman and the king as punishment upon the sin of the Jews, and particularly the sins of despising the promised land, of refusing to go back there and join those who rebuilt the temple and Jerusalem, and instead staying there so they could enjoy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Godly sorrow worketh repentance, we are told in II Corinthians 7:10. Not one word, or the slightest suggestion of such sorrow do you find anywhere in the whole book of Esther. Sorrow? Yes, deep sorrow. Sorrow over sin? No, not even over the sins of other people. It is easier to hate the sins of others and to love your own, than to hate your own sins and actually be miserable over them. Did you ever lose any sleep lately because of your sins? You did about other matters in your life. You cried because of the loss of a loved one through the cold hand of death. But did you ever weep so deeply and were you troubled so much about sins you committed? Indeed, there is much room in our lives as well for spiritual sensitivity!

But consider once, that all the misery in the world is here because of the entrance of sin. God's curse is on the earth. And all the sorrows in the world should bring us at once to the throne of grace. In all our woes we ought to think of God, Who alone can and will deliver His people from it all so fully that He will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and give us an everlasting song to sing. But does misery and fear do that? Do we at once look to the everlasting hills from whence cometh all our help? Or is it a much delayed afterthought? Such was not even the case with Mordecai and Esther. And they differed so greatly from men of faith whose trust in God is displayed upon the pages of Holy Writ.

This is the way in which a child of God faces his perils. Hezekiah in II Chronicles 32:7 and 8 declares, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitudes that are with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles." Where do you find even a faint suggestion of such a faith in Mordecai? He speaks of another place from whence help will come, but not of another Person. And he had such an opportunity to speak to his daughter of that divine Person and to seek to strengthen her faith in Him.

Or, to defend Mordecai, you might explain that place as heaven where God dwells, and say that he speaks figuratively, and mentions heaven for Him Who dwells in heaven. Let us assume that he means from heaven comes our help and not from the earth or anyone on the earth. Even then note that he tells his daughter on earth to defend her and his people; and if that does not work, then heaven will have to help. What kind of faith is that? We will try it without heaven's help; and if we fail we will as a last resort turn to the God in heaven Whom we have deliberately ignored. And then he

said, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Once again God is ignored. He does not say, "Who knoweth whether God has brought thee to this kingdom for such a time as this." He knows only too well that, as far as they are concerned, she came to the kingdom for the satisfaction of their flesh. He reveals that as far as their intent was concerned she did not seek that position and power for the sake of God's church in the Old Testament dispensation. Had they done so, he would have said, "Esther, remember you came to the kingdom that God's people might be helped. Do not now fail to do the kind of work for which we sought and obtained this position." God is not in all their thoughts, He is not in any of them; and their speech reveals it very clearly.

We want, the Lord willing, to come back to that later, but even after God does give them that deliverance there is not one word of thanks to Him! Daniel said to the king, after being brought up out of the lion's den, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lion's mouths, and they have not hurt me" (Daniel 6:22). But what we read in Esther 9:28 is that the Jews — with Mordecai now their representative sitting at the king's right hand, elevated above all the other rulers, and this with tremendous power and opportunity to direct the Jews in all their affairs — appointed a time of the year, "And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city . . ." Then strikingly enough we read, "Then Esther the queen . . . and Mordecai the Jew wrote with all authority to confirm this second letter." And what was in the letter? In Esther 9:22 we read, "That they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." Where do you read, "And thanks unto the Lord our God?" Verse 18 says that they made it a day of feasting and of gladness. Verse 19 says in addition, "And a good day, and of sending portions one to another." What God did is ignored, because it is not looked upon as His work. Faith sees Him. Unbelief looks the other way, speaks of evolution, luck — and sad to say so many of us do that too — or, because man cannot get away from the truth that there is a God." For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). They will speak of a King Providence, or even Mother Nature, and cater to those who today so wickedly say that God, although He uses the masculine pronoun and article, is feminine!

Even his going to Esther for help was an act of unbelief. Indeed we must make use of all the

means that God provides. We may not be careless and act as though He is not a God of means. He feeds us with bread and by means of it nourishes and keeps us alive. Hezekiah was ordered to lay a lump of figs on his boil for his recovery from his illness. But it must be with the prayer that God will use the means which we employ. As stated before, we must go first to God. He must use the means, or the results will not be what we seek. Did Mordecai do that? Had he gone home and prayed before seeking Esther's help, and not made an open show with sackcloth and ashes, and with howling in the streets, where no one could actually help him, we would have a different picture and some hope for a little faith. Had we simply read, without the name of God being used, that he went home to pray and then sought Esther's help, we could not be so emphatic about his utter lack of any trust in God. But as it now stands, we read something into Scripture that God did not put there, if we are going to defend either Esther or Mordecai as believing children of God. By their fruits ye shall know them, Jesus said. God led the author of this book, whoever he may be, to set forth this incident in such a way that we would see that there is not one spark of faith in God in either one of these two main characters. What is here is unmistakable unbelief.

Any why does God use unbelievers like this for the good of His church? He certainly does not need them. He could have saved His people without one man's help. He did that in Egypt. He sent ten terrible plagues upon the enemy without the mind and ingenuity of a single man. What is more, He spared the Israelites of the last seven plagues. He could have done that here. He could have decimated the enemy here by terrible plagues. He did not need another nation of men to come and take over and make new rules which would not call for the death of all the Jews. He could have instilled such fear in the hearts of the king and his servants that would cause them to change the law of the Medes and the Persians that otherwise "altereth not." That is not too hard for Him.

But, in the first place, it sovereignly pleased Him to do it this way for the glory of His own name. He had promised the Messiah in the line of Abraham and David. And He will in the future get Him honor by the praise of those who see His mighty hand and loving faithfulness. And yet there is more to be said. He uses unbelievers that you and I (and all His elect children in these last days) may have written and preserved for us and our children His way of using the chaff to serve the wheat. He shows us that, although it does not always look that way, He is working all things together for our good. This book is here to cheer us and to assure us in the dreadful days ahead that He has perfect control

over all creation; and the very enemies who seek our destruction serve — be it unconsciously and

unwillingly, as in this book — the church of God's love.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures (XV)

Rev. G. Lubbers

"The Church-Age" In Premillennialism

It is important that a few words be written in this series on the positive teaching of the prophetic Scriptures concerning the *church* of Jesus Christ. In doing so we are defending the faith of the Fathers; we are contending for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth; we are, therefore, set for a defense of the Gospel. The sword of the Spirit we are called to wield in Christ's Name. Our weapons are not fleshly but they are spiritual, in order to bring every thought unto the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4).

It is imperative that in this study our hearing be mingled with faith, as well as our writing and reading.

We are engaged in defending an Article of our undoubted Christian Faith: *I believe an holy catholic church!* And this is inclusive of the article, "The communion of saints." And we must, we repeat it knowingly, we must be good workmen toward God, rightly dividing the word of truth; we must not be put to shame by the Lord Who is the God of truth by Whom we swear.

Admittedly, the truth of the Scripture concerning the church, Biblical and Reformed Ecclesiology, stands in the focal-point of this study concerning the so-called church-age of Premillennialism. John F. Walvoord in his *The Rapture Question* admits this explicitly. He writes a chapter on "The Promise Of His Coming" in which he treats such questions as the doctrine of the "Tribulation." He also treats the "doctrine of the church" in relation to the "Rapture Question."

The definition "that the church is an all-inclusive term that is synonym with the term *elect* and *saints*" premillennialism rejects. The confessional truth that the "saints of the past, present and future ages are included in the church" is categorically

denied by dispensationalism of every hue and color.

There is a certain logic of error in the denial that all the elect are the church of all ages, past, present, and future. The true confession concerning the holy Catholic Church stands as a bulwark of defense against the teaching of the Premillennially conceived "rapture"; particularly against those who call themselves Pre-Tribulationist confessors of the "rapture", that is, those who argue for the "rapture" to take place before the great "Tribulation" of the seven years, holding the position that the raptured saints will not need to pass through that tribulation.

This is somewhat of a shibboleth with Pre-Tribulationists in contrast with the Post-Tribulation Premillennialists.

Be this all as it may, the fact is that the Confession concerning the Holy Catholic Church is sacrificed on the altar of a rapture theory, an unBiblical teaching concerning a Jewish Millennium.

This we hope to show conclusively in this study.

It is the contention (!) of dispensationalism that the *concept* church, as confessed in all churches, must give way for the view and the structures of Premillennial thought. According to this latter view there is no "church" in the Old Testament Dispensation. In the Old Testament we find only the "kingdom of Israel," that is, of the "Jews," while in the New Testament we are dealing with a certain church in a church-age, which is somehow simply a period of time, when the kingdom must wait to be given to the Jewish nation, and the promises to them as proclaimed by the prophets to be fulfilled to them.

Those who speak of a "church" within a church-age deny the Catholicity of the church, that is, they deny that "the Son of God gathers a church elect unto everlasting life" from the beginning of the

world to the end of time!

After a period of two years of study and exegesis I am profoundly convinced that the teaching of Premillennialism is to be denominated as being *heresy*! It is false teaching. It is a leaven which eats as a canker into the fabric of the structural truths of Scriptural teaching, and it is not really conducive to godliness, but genders many word-battles. But edification is not achieved.

Furthermore, we are convinced, and we intend to show this from good, sound exegesis, that a mere study of the etymology of terms such as the Hebrew *Qahal* (assembly = congregation) and other related Hebrew verbs and nouns is not decisive for the implication of their meaning. And the translation of the Hebrew noun with the Greek *ecclesia* too needs some careful study of this term in its immediate and broader contexts in Scripture. What we need is solid exegesis and interpretation of the Scriptures in the light of Scripture, and we must be certain that our teaching is according to the sound words of the evangelical doctrine, the pattern of sound words to which we have been delivered (Rom. 6:17). The Greek in Romans 6:17 requires that we translate not as does the KJV "delivered to us," but "to which we have been delivered." This is correct in the Holland Version, as well as other English translations. The great covenant word of God is and was, "I am the Lord thy God," and also "ye are My people." Such is the framework of all the words of God to Israel in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

It is interesting to notice the studied way in which the term *ecclesia* in both the Old and New Testament is made to signify merely an "assembly." That the church is the "body" of Christ is then not mentioned at all. Even in Ephesians 1:22, 23 the term *ecclesia* is translated simply by the term "assembly." We shall come back to this later and show exegetically that this is selling the term *ecclesia* short of the meaning which Paul had in mind in this grand section of the Epistle to the Ephesians. A year ago I purchased an "Interlinear Greek-English New Testament" with Lexica and Synonyms, authored by G.R. Berry. I have received great benefit from the use of this book; however, I am not deceived by the Dispensational flavor and bias of the book as to the translation of certain keywords. There is an avowed purpose to render the Greek *ecclesia* by the English term "assembly." The KJV translates this noun some 112 times by "church" and 3 times it is rendered "assembly." These latter times are used in Acts 19:32, 39, 41 of the gathering, the mob against Paul in Ephesus, and of the legal town counsel. This shows that the Westminster and Anglican fathers knew now to distin-

guish the linguistic usage of *ecclesia*. Never do they translate *ecclesia* by any other term than *church*! In contrast with this, the aforesaid Interlinear translation never uses the word church but only assembly!

In this madness there is method!

This is a denial of an Article of our Christian Faith.

It is a repudiation of what we so beautifully confess with all the saints of the ages, and which the Heidelberg Catechism so clearly and succinctly states in the following words:

"Ques. What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?

"Answer: That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of world, gathers, defends and preserves to himself by His Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and of which I am and always shall remain a living member." (Question and Answer 54)

Of what should this be a warning to us? Are we here dealing merely with a quibbling about words, some shadow-boxing and fencing?

Not at all!

It is a matter of the greatest importance, both theologically and spiritually. It is the question of our glad assurance that we are not merely members of some local assembly of a given group of people, but whether we are living members of those ingrafted into Christ as the true Vine, the planting of the heavenly husbandman, our Father in heaven (John 15:1-15), and whether we are abiding in Him and bear much fruit to the glory of God's everlasting and sovereign grace.

Hence, we insist that also this truth of the "Church of Christ" is *necessary* for a Christian to believe as an integral part of the revealed promise of God to the fathers and which was fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ for us the children of these fathers (Acts 13:32, 33). The very truth of the Gospel is at stake. The Locus of Ecclesiology is not a mere appendage of the body of Christian truth. It is the building which Christ builds upon the chief cornerstone. In truth, the doctrine of the church is the very "rock of offense" for Premillennialism in all of its Dispensational ramifications.

Those who deny the "church" in the Old Testament deny the *one* "promise" of God fulfilled in Christ. Consequently they also deny that there is but *one* Gospel of God, as this is defined in Question 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism. (Read from your own *Psalter* until you have memorized it!)

Which are the four elements pointed out by our Reformed fathers? They are the following:

a. First of all revealed by God Himself in paradise (Gen. 3:15).

b. Afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets (Gen. 22:17, 18; 28:14; Rom. 1:2; John 4:46).

c. Represented by sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law (Heb. 10:7, 8).

d. Lastly, fulfilled by God's only begotten Son (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 13:8).

It is Scofield who rather speaks of "four forms" of the Gospel in the pattern of Dispensation-error. Attend to the following which may be found verbatim in notes under Revelation 14:6, page 1343 of the Scofieldian "Bible."

As might be expected Scofield, first of all, singles out what he calls the *gospel of the Kingdom*. And according to Scofield this "gospel" is the "good news that God purposes to set up on earth, in fulfilment of the Davidic Covenant (II Sam. 7:16ff) a kingdom

political, spiritual, Israelitish, universal, over which God's Son, David's heir, shall be king for one thousand years, the manifestation of the righteousness of God in human affairs."

Of this gospel Scofield posits two different teachings, preachings.

The first is during the time of John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles. This preaching ended when the Jews rejected their King. And this means that the gospel of the kingdom of heaven is not being preached at all during the entire time which is erroneously called the "church-age."

The second time of preaching of this "kingdom" is after the church-age has ended, and, therefore, during the time of the "seven years." It will be immediately before the coming of the King of glory to establish His earthly reign with natural Israel, in which establishment the saints of the church-age shall not share.

(will be continued)

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Preservation and Perseverance (5)

Rev. H. Veldman

In our preceding article we presented the Arminian grounds for their conception that we are preserved because we persevere. In the Arminian scheme of things MAN is always first. Salvation is either of God or of man; it is dependent upon God and determined by God or it is dependent upon man and determined by man. It is either conditional or unconditional and sovereign. A third possibility is inconceivable. And we also noted that Arminianism, Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, paganism all have this in common: the work of man is elevated to that position of prominence whereby he controls and determines his own salvation. "Saved by works," is the slogan of every religion which is not anchored in the unchangeable sovereignty of the alone living God. To be sure, these heresies will tell you that all salvation is solely by the grace of God, but it is the will of the sinner which determines when and how long this grace of God will operate in that sinner.

Now we concluded our preceding article with the observation that these arguments or grounds of

the Arminians are not difficult to refute, and that it is somewhat strange for these remonstrants to quote such passages from Holy Writ as they quote in the Fifth Point of their Remonstrance and then say in the Fifth Point that it must still be determined from Scripture whether one who once had life in Christ can fall away into sin and destruction. One thing is sure: how uncertain they may be concerning the perseverance of the saints, they surely reject the position of the Word of God that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. However, be all this as it may, the grounds of the Arminians are surely easily refuted.

First, in connection with the Scriptural examples of those who have become unfaithful, the word of God as recorded in I John 2:19 surely applies, and we quote: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us." This passage speaks for itself.

Secondly, in connection with the passage of Hebrews 6:4-8 we may say the following. On the one hand, to be "renewed again unto repentance" does not mean that they had been renewed unto repentance in the past, but it does mean that they had been renewed according to their confession. On the other hand, that they tasted the good word of God, etc., must not be understood in the spiritual sense of the word, but naturally and intellectually. And this is verified in the verses 7-8 which speak of herbs and thorns and briers — hence, these people who fall away are thorns and briers, not herbs, and thorns and briers never were herbs.

Thirdly, the Arminians quote John 15:1-4, and we quote: "I am the true vine and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." These branches that are in Christ, do not bear fruit, and are taken away, must not be understood as being in Christ personally, spiritually, and individually. This is impossible in the light of Scripture which teaches us that Christ abides in us forever. But these branches were in Christ organically. This means that they were in Christ in their generations. Hence, they were in this organism whereof Christ is the true vine in past generations. And that they will be taken away means that they will be removed from this organism.

Finally, as far as the Scriptural admonitions are concerned, the Christian warrior is assured before the battle that he will win, and the runner is assured before the race that he will gain the prize. Does this mean that the warrior is assured that he will win without fighting and the runner is assured of the prize without running? This, we understand, is unadulterated nonsense.

Over against this Arminian view we now present the Reformed and Scriptural view. In the first place, this presentation of the people of God is rooted in divine election. We read in Ephesians 1:3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." And in Romans 8:29-30 we have the well-known passage: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that

He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." That God, according to Romans 8:29, foreknew His own does not mean, we understand, that He foreknew them as the Arminians would have us believe, a divine foreknowledge based upon foreseen faith. This would be in direct conflict with what we read in Ephesians 1:4, that God chose us, not because we were holy, but in order that we should be holy. This divine foreknowledge is a knowledge of divine love, which is sovereign and therefore always precedes His people in the Lord's eternal will and counsel. And, in connection with this decree of election, our preservation is sure, on the one hand, because God's counsel shall stand, as we read in Isaiah 46:10: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." And, on the other hand, our preservation is sure, as rooted in divine election, because we read in Hebrews 6:17: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Notice, we read here that God's counsel is immutable. And now, to show more abundantly this immutability of His counsel, the Lord confirms it by an oath. The Lord, shall we say, will take no chances. He will not extend to men an offer which would imply that the salvation of a sinner depends upon his will. He confirms it by an oath, will assume full responsibility for the salvation of His elect own.

Secondly, this preservation is rooted in particular atonement. We read in John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Mind you, this is the Father's will, the Father's mandate. Did the Father mandate the Christ to save the whole world, head for head, every soul? Indeed not! He commissioned the Christ to lose nothing of all which He had given Him. And in John 10:15 we read: "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep." And if you inquire into the identity of these sheep, then the Saviour declares later in this tenth chapter of John that they are those who have been given Him by the Father. And, mind you, these sheep shall be preserved. Of this there cannot possibly be any doubt. According to John 6:37 they shall come unto Christ. We read: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Moreover, they shall never perish; and this we read in John 10:28: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,

neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." And finally, Jesus will raise them up at the last day, according to John 6:40: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." This same thought is also expressed in John 6:44. Indeed, how certain is the preservation of Christ's sheep!

Thirdly, this preservation of the saints is assured because the Holy Spirit will abide with them forever. Does it not strike our readers how simple and clear these passages are in the Word of our God? We read this in John 14:16: "And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you forever." This "another" Comforter is the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the divine Trinity, but then as the Spirit of Christ. This implies that there is another Comforter besides the Holy Spirit. This other Comforter is our Lord Jesus Christ. He represents us in heaven before the throne of God. He prays and intercedes for us before the Father. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter in our hearts. He intercedes and prays for us with groanings, sighs that cannot be uttered, according to Romans 8:26-27. Our Intercessor in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, is familiar with these prayers, these sighs of the Holy Spirit within us, and conveys them to His Father. And the Father, the Triune God, knowing (approvingly) the mind of the Spirit, hearkens to these prayers of the Holy Spirit and of the Lord Jesus Christ because, although we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit is acquainted with all our weaknesses and infirmities, and He knows what is good for us and what we need. This Spirit, we read, will abide with us forever. Of this there cannot possibly be any doubt.

Fourthly, the preservation of the saints is sure because God's covenant is firm and sure, and it is confirmed with an oath. Beautifully this is set forth by the inspired writer in Hebrews 6:16-18: "For

men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." What are these two immutable things? Obviously, one of them is God's counsel. The text speaks of the immutability of God's counsel. The other immutable thing is God's oath-bound promise, God cannot lie. That is impossible. He is the God of eternal, unchangeable truth. God, because He would shew more abundantly the unchangeableness of His counsel, confirms it by an oath, takes no "chances," will take upon Himself the salvation of His own, swears by Himself to save all His own, His sheep, the heirs of the promise, even unto the very end. What a mighty Scripture this is! And the Lord does this that we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. The child of God now takes his position between these two immutable things. He looks, on the one hand, to God's unchangeable counsel, and, on the other hand, he sets his eye upon the Lord's oath-bound promise. And he knows that his preservation is sure. Then we also read in Hebrews 13:20-21: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." What a mighty word of consolation also this Word of God is! To God be all the glory for ever and ever. And the inspired writer concludes this Scripture with the solemn Amen, which means that thus it shall be. Of this there cannot possibly be any doubt.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Nicene Creed

Rev. James Slopsema

Article 8 (cont'd)

We have already learned that originally this 8th article of the Nicene Creed was very short. In 325 the Council of Nicea simply confessed, "And I

believe in the Holy Ghost." In 381 the Council of Constantinople added to this article so that it read, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, Who is Lord and

Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the prophets." All that was added by Constantinople was designed to establish the true divinity of the Holy Spirit. Finally, one more addition was made by the Synod of Toledo in 589. This addition was the famous "filioque" clause, which is Latin for "and the Son." This was inserted by the Latin or western church after the phrase "who proceedeth from the Father," so that the church confessed a double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.

Having already discussed the confession of the early church that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life, we now turn our attention to the proclamation of the Council of Constantinople that the Holy Spirit "proceeded from the Father."

This particular expression is taken from John 15:26, where Jesus instructs His disciples, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of Me."

It's rather significant that the early church did not give an exact quote of the expression found in John 15:26. In the original Greek of this passage we read that the Spirit proceeds *para* (from the side or vicinity of) the Father. In the Nicene Creed we read that the Holy Spirit proceeds *ek* (from, or out of) the Father. Now the meaning in both instances is essentially the same. However, the early church fathers changed the *para* of John 15:26 to *ek* in their confession to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is God just as truly as is the Son.

In Article 2 of this same creed the church confessed that Jesus Christ is "very God of (*ek* - from, out of) very God." The meaning of that expression is that Jesus is truly God. As God He finds His source in One Who also is truly God. The "very God" in Whom the Son finds His source is, of course, God the Father. And the point of this expression is that the Son is out of the Father in such a way that He is truly God with the Father.

Now to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is also truly God with the Father and the Son, the Council of Constantinople confessed that the Spirit also is *ek* (out of) the Father. Even as the Son is *ek* (out of) the Father and thus truly God, so also is the Holy Spirit.

However, it is not sufficient to leave the matter here. For the Son and the Spirit are not *ek* (out of) the Father in the same sense.

The Son is *ek* (out of) the Father by reason of eternal generation. Eternally the first person of the Godhead generates the second person so that the first person is the Father and the second person is

His eternal Son Who bears His image.

The third person of the Godhead, however, is not another Son. There is only one Son in the Godhead. The third person of the Godhead is the Spirit. As the name "Spirit" indicates, He is the One Whom the Father "breathes forth." Hence, the Scriptures speak of the fact that the Spirit "proceeds" from the Father. And this the early church confessed also in this article of the Nicene Creed to distinguish the Spirit from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is truly God.

In summary, the church confessed at the Council of Constantinople that the Son is generated *ek* (out of) the Father whereas the Holy Spirit proceeds *ek* (out of) the Father. But because both are *ek* (out of) the Father, they both are truly God with the Father.

In 589 the Synod of Toledo added another phrase to this part of the church's confession. This is the "filioque" clause which means "and the Son." Through this addition, which was accepted only by the western or Latin branch of the church, the church confessed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*.

That the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as the Father is certainly Biblical. The procession of the Spirit as such is mentioned only once in the Scriptures. This is in John 15:26, to which we called attention above: "But when the Comforter is come, Whom I (i.e., Jesus) will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He will testify of Me." Now it certainly must be granted that the Holy Spirit in this passage is said to proceed from the Father with no mention being made of the Son. However, even in this passage there is indication that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. For it is Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, Who will send the Holy Spirit from the Father to the church. Besides, in Romans 8:9 the Holy Spirit is mentioned in one breath as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And in Galatians 4:16 the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God's Son: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." All this certainly indicates that the Spirit also proceeds from the Son as well as the Father.

This additional thought that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son is quite significant. Its significance is to be found in the fact that it contradicts any idea of subordination within the Godhead.

The early church fathers who gathered at the Council of Constantinople in 381 were exclusively from the eastern or Greek branch of the church.

And it becomes clear from some of their writings that they definitely maintained a subordination within the Godhead. They taught that the Father is higher in rank and importance than the Son and the Spirit. And the Son, in turn, is also higher than the Spirit.

The formulation of the Council of Constantinople by these same men tended also to promote this subordination idea. For Constantinople in this 8th article of the Nicene Creed confessed only that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. This suggested that the Father is the sole source of the Godhead. The Son is generated from the Father and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. All things in the Godhead find their source therefore in the Father. And so room is certainly left for the idea that the Father is in some way superior to the Son and the Spirit.

In all fairness, to the fathers of Constantinople, however, it must also be remembered that it was not their intent to deny the procession of the Spirit from the Son. This will become evident if we bear in mind especially two things. In the first place, the primary intent of the fathers of Constantinople in formulating this particular article as they did was to oppose the error of the Arians and the Macedonians, followers of Macedonius, who were Semi-Arians. Both the Arians and the Macedonians maintained that the Holy Spirit was merely a creature, created by the Son. Over against this error the fathers of Constantinople sought to establish that the Spirit proceeds directly from the Father, even as the Son is begotten directly from the Father, and thus is truly God with the Son. To emphasize this, they confessed the procession of the Spirit from the Father without even mentioning procession from the Son. In the second place, it must also be born in mind that whereas some of the eastern or Greek church fathers did specifically repudiate the procession of the Spirit from the Son, many did not. In fact, some definitely maintained a double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.

In the western or Latin branch of the church, however, a different spirit prevailed. All ideas of subordination within the Godhead were repudiated. The Latin church clearly saw the equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Godhead. Not one is above the other in rank or importance; all three are equal, for all partake equally of the divine nature.

In harmony with this equality in the Godhead, the Latin church, due by and large to the efforts of Augustine, also acknowledged a double procession of the Spirit. The significance of this is obvious. The Spirit proceeds not just from the Father but also from the Son. The Father is not the sole source or fountain of the Godhead. For the Father and the Son together are the source of the Spirit. They both are active in the breathing forth of the third person of the Godhead. This definitely tends to rule out all ideas of subordination, at least on the part of the Son and the Father. It speaks rather of equality, an equality that can not be limited to the Father and the Son, but must also extend to the Holy Spirit.

To this double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son the Latin church gave expression in the Synod of Toledo in 589 by adding the famous "filioque" clause to this 8th article.

The eastern or Greek branch of the church, which today is known as the Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church, never accepted this addition. Even today she denies the double procession of the Spirit. She clings to the formulation of the Nicene Creed as set forth by the Council of Constantinople, confessing only that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. And in harmony with that she has persisted down through the ages to maintain a certain subordination within the Godhead among the three persons of the trinity. The fruit of this has been sad. Whenever the church departs from the truth of Scripture, that departure works as a leaven to destroy the church. And this is what happened with the eastern, Greek branch of the church. Clinging to the error of subordination in the Godhead, she soon died spiritually and is dead even today.

The western or Latin branch of the church, however, having embraced the truth of the equality within the Godhead continued to flourish. It is true that the Latin church, known to us as the Roman Catholic Church, died a horrible death due to other errors that eventually crept in. Nevertheless, the church of Christ revived through the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century and continues to live today. And she continues to live on the basis of the all-important truth that God is triune, three persons in one being, and that these three are co-eternal, co-essential, and thus co-equal.

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IN HIS FEAR

Christian Fellowship

Pastor Arie den Hartog

Friendliness is a virtue that should be manifest by the grace of God in our lives as Christians. Christians should be known above all others as people who are warm and friendly. In this also we must reflect the blessed glories of our God. We know our God to be a covenant God, a truth that is very dear to us. As Reformed Christians we know that the covenant of God is the wonderful personal relationship of friendship that God has with His people. The Lord the covenant God takes His people into His own life and fellowship and communion. This is more than an abstract doctrine for the Christian. It is a wonderful, blessed reality which we experience through the Word and Spirit of God as we live in daily communion with our God. As Christians we must seek to reflect in a creaturely way the beautiful reality of God's friendship to others. It is disgraceful and dishonoring to God when Christians show themselves to be unfriendly, rude, and even obnoxious to their neighbors.

Christian friendship is rooted in Christ Jesus. That means that Christian friends have fellowship and communion together in the love and truth of Christ Jesus. In that love they have a fervent personal concern one for another. They know each other's problems and trials and difficulties and really care about them. Christian friends help each other in their needs and struggles, they seek to promote each other's welfare as Christians. Christian friends have a common love for the truth. They admonish and exhort each other in that truth. They walk together according to that truth. Christian friends seek to walk together in sanctification and holiness. They are radically different from the so-called friends of the world who are partners in wickedness. Christian friends delight in each other's company and fellowship. In this they bring great blessing to each other.

There is according to the Bible an evil friendship. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. The Christian may not find his friends among the world. There is something seriously wrong with the Christian who is constantly found in the company of the ungodly. The Christian may not have fellow-

ship with the people of the world in their wickedness. It will be natural for the Christian if he lives godly that the world will hate him. There are no exceptions to that. The Christian does not go to the world's parties and dances and movies. He feels entirely out of place there. The things that are done there are abhorrent to him. The Christian does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful. For his delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law he meditates day and night.

True Christian friendship is not unprincipled and compromising. There are of course those who would be the friends of all men. They will go to great lengths to be the friends of all, even to the point of compromising the truth of Christ Jesus and partaking of the evil practices of ungodly men. This is Christ-denying friendship. The Bible teaches us that we are not to have company with those who obey not the truth and those who walk disorderly.

Friends can have a great influence upon each other. Or perhaps we should say friends will inevitably have a great influence upon each other. This is perhaps more true for young people but it is also true for mature adults, perhaps more than we realize. The old adage that a man is known by the company he keeps has a lot of truth to it. Worldly and evil friends surely will have an evil influence upon our lives. When we are found in their company there will be great temptation and pressure to compromise, at first perhaps in small ways but finally even in major things. Good Christian friends on the other hand have a sanctifying influence upon each other. They are a great support and encouragement to each other as far as the truth and sanctification is concerned. Solomon states: "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). Thank the Lord for the good influence of friends upon our life. Thank the Lord for their encouragement and support in our life. True friends can exhort and admonish one another in love without fear of offending. In this manner they can bring correction and change in our life. How needful it is for all of us constantly

to be corrected and changed.

Friendship can serve a wonderful purpose in the church of Jesus Christ. The church should be a warm communion of friendship. The world should stand amazed at our church when they behold how we love one another. In the world men are impersonal, careless, and unconcerned about each other. How sad when the members of the church are that way to each other. Though a city may be populated with millions, many of those millions are often miserably lonely and destitute. Christian friendship must first of all be evident among the members of the church. Otherwise, of course, showing such friendship to outsiders will be evident of hypocrisy. It is very sad when there are those in the church of Jesus Christ who suffer from loneliness and isolation. The whole church bears the responsibility and shame for this. We must always be watchful in the church for those who might need to be befriended and encouraged. The homes of the members of the church should be centers of Christian hospitality for other members of our church. Some of the members of the church enjoy rich and wonderful blessings of the Lord in their homes. Others may not have such great blessings. We must always be ready to share of the rich abundance which the Lord has given to us with others.

The church must also be the place where strangers can find the blessedness of Christian friendship. It must not be an exclusive society where things such as tradition and national origin are a hindrance to outsiders coming in. We need to work very hard at making our church a place where outsiders feel welcome, a place where they receive genuine Christian love. No, this alone will never make the church of Jesus Christ. No amount of friendliness and concern will make up for a void in the preaching of the truth of Christ Jesus. Love and the truth are always inseparably related. True Christian fellowship and friendship is not possible where there is the darkness of sin and apostasy. Nevertheless, the wonderful truth that we possess as a church must be shared in meekness and love with the stranger that may come into our midst. The Lord is pleased to add unto His church when such a spirit reigns among her members. How much can be done to make visitors to our church feel welcome in our midst!

Christian friendship can also be the basis for personal evangelism. Again, never will the church be gathered by friendship alone. It is gathered only through the power of the preaching of the gospel. True Christian friendship is the fruit of the gospel of Christ Jesus in the lives of His saints. God is pleased to use the virtues and good works of His saints to bring others under the hearing of the

gospel. Many churches expend great efforts to distribute tracts and handbills and to advertise programs of the church. Often this is done in commendable zeal and love for the Lord. But sometimes this is just too impersonal to be very effective. Dr. J.I. Packer in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* makes some very worthwhile comments.

And the remind us, second, that personal evangelism needs normally to be founded on friendship. You are not usually justified in choosing the subject of conversation with another till you have already begun to give yourself to him in friendship and established a relationship with him in which he feels that you respect him, and are interested in him, and are treating him as a human being, and not just as some kind of 'case.' With some people you may establish such a relationship in five minutes, whereas with others it may take months. But the principle remains the same. The right to talk intimately to another person about the Lord Jesus Christ has to be earned, and you earn it by convincing him that you are his friend, and really care about him. And therefore the indiscriminate buttonholing, the intrusive barging in to the privacy of other people's souls, the thick-skinned insistence on expounding the things of God to reluctant strangers who are longing to get away — these modes of behavior, in which strong and loquacious personalities have sometimes indulged in the name of personal evangelism, should be written off as a travesty of personal evangelism. Impersonal evangelism would be a better name for them! In fact rudeness of this sort dishonours God; moreover, it creates resentment, and prejudices people against Christ whose professed followers act so objectionably. The truth is that real personal evangelism is very costly, just because it demands of us a really personal relationship with the other man. We have to give ourselves in honest friendship to people, if ever our relationship with them is to reach the point at which we are justified in choosing to talk to them about Christ, and can speak to them about their own spiritual needs without being either discourteous or offensive. If you wish to do personal evangelism, then — and I hope you do; you ought to — pray for the gift of friendship. A genuine friendliness is in any case a prime mark of the man who is learning to love his neighbor as himself.

We must learn to show ourselves as genuine Christian friends to our neighbors, to our working colleagues and to our relatives outside of our church. On this basis we can invite and exhort them to come to the house of the Lord with us to hear of the wonderful truth which the Lord has given to our church.

The writer of the book of Hebrews begins the thirteenth chapter with the beautiful and significant exhortation: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:1 & 2).

Christian friendship is central to what according to the Lord Jesus shall be found in the truly righteous children of God in the day of judgment. The righteous children of God are described as those concerning whom Jesus says, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in,

naked and ye clothed me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me . . . Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:35, 36, 40). These are called the blessed of the Father who shall inherit the kingdom of heaven prepared for them.

Book Review

STUDIES IN PAUL'S EPISTLES, by Frederic L. Godet; Kregel Publications, 1984; 345 pp., \$11.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko).

Godet, well-known especially for his commentaries on Romans and I Corinthians, also wrote a book which serves as an excellent introduction to the epistles of Paul. Kregel has recently reprinted this book and we are grateful to Kregel for this, since the book has been available only in old and used editions.

Godet lived from 1812-1900 and did his work mostly in Switzerland, where he was an influential evangelical scholar and a firm defender of the orthodox faith. His commentaries have been used extensively since their writing and have proved helpful and worthwhile.

In this book, the author gives an historical introduction to each epistle of Paul and places it within the work of the apostle and within the circumstances under which each epistle was written. The author has included, not a detailed exposition of the text, but a general survey of the contents of the epistles. Although Godet does not enter in detail into the question of the authorship of Hebrews, he apparently assumes that it was Paul and includes a section on this book.

We highly recommend this book to our readers. It will be a great help in understanding Paul's epistles and will be of assistance to ministers as a book on "Introduction" to this section of the New Testament.

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Report of Classis West

September 19, 1984

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Doon, Iowa on September 5, 6, 1984. Nine ministers and fifteen elders represented the churches of the West. Elders R. Brands (Loveland), J. Lenting (South Holland), H. Molenkamp (Edmonton), and R. Streyle (Doon) were delegated to

Classis for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription. Rev. R. Cammenga, president of the previous Classis, opened the meeting of Classis by speaking to the delegates from Luke 14:7-11: "... For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Classis heard from its Board of Trustees that Classis has now come into possession of the bulk of a sizable inheritance willed to Classis by a member of one of the churches in the West. Classis appointed the Council of South Holland as a committee of Classis to advise Classis on the use of this gift. The Council is to consider suggestions concerning the use of the estate already made by many of the Consistories.

Having taken note of the organization of the new church in Grandville, MI, Classis instructed its Stated Clerk to welcome our new sister into the family of churches.

Rev. M. Kamps was chosen church visitor to replace Rev. J. Kortering, who has accepted a call into Classis East.

Classis gave classical appointments to Loveland and Lynden according to the following schedule:
Loveland: Sept. 9, 16 - Bekkering; Sept. 30, Oct. 7, 14 - Kamps; Oct. 28, Nov. 4, 11 - Koole; Nov. 18, 25, Dec. 2 - Moore; [Dec. 16, 23, 30 - seminarian or emeritus minister]; Jan. 13, 20, 27 - Kuiper; Feb. 10, 17, 24 - Smith; March 10, 17, 24 - Miersma. *Lynden:* [Sept. 30 - Nov. 4 - C. Hanko]; Nov. 18, 25, Dec. 2 - Miersma; [Dec. 16, 23, 30 - seminarian or emeritus minister]; Jan. 13, 20, 27 - Slopesma; Feb. 10, 17 - Engelsma; March 10, 17, 24 - Lanting.

Most of Classis' time was taken up in judging on two appeals against a Consistory in closed session.

Classis will meet next, the Lord willing, in Randolph, WI on March 6, 1985.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

Report of Classis East

September 12, 1984

Classis East met in regular session on September 12, 1984 at the Holland Protestant Reformed Church. Each church was represented by two delegates. Present also were the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West. Rev. M. De Vries chaired this meeting of Classis.

Certainly the highlight of the meeting was the examination of Pastor-elect Kenneth Hanko who had accepted the call to work as home missionary in the Bluebell, Pennsylvania area. His examination was approved, and by the time of this publication he will have been ordained in the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

The other main item of business was the treatment of a protest submitted by a consistory against a decision taken by the May 9th Classis. Classis reiterated the advice given by the May Classis.

Faith Church requested classical appointments

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and the congregation of the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, Michigan, expresses their sympathy to our Elder, Mr. Thomas Knott, the wife, and the family of MR. ARTHUR KNOTT, whom the Lord took to Himself on September 20, 1984.

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." (Psalm 145:18).

Rev. B. Gritters, Pres.
Sid Meidema, Clerk

and the following schedule was adopted:
September 23 - R. Miersma; September 30 - J. Kortering; October 7 - M. Joostens; October 14 - C. Haak; October 21 - B. Gritters; November 4 - R. Flikkema; November 11 - M. De Vries; November 18 - B. Woudenberg; December 2 - G. Van Baren; December 9 - J. Kortering; December 16 - M. Joostens; December 30 - C. Haak; January 6 - B. Gritters; January 13 - R. Flikkema.

Expenses of the Classis amounted to \$1356.77. Classis will meet next on January 9, 1985 at Southeast Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Congregation and the Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan, extends its christian sympathy to our brother office bearer, Elder Peter Knott and his family, in the loss of his brother, MR. ARTHUR KNOTT, on September 20, 1984. May they experience the grace of God in the time of their sorrow.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and the Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan, extends its christian sympathy to our brother office bearer, Elder Peter Zandstra and his family, in the loss of their grand daughter, PATRICIA ZANDSTRA, aged 3½ months, on September 25, 1984. May they experience the grace of God in the time of their sorrow.