

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . God, Who loved His people eternally for His own Name's sake, suffered the incomprehensible horrors of hell, the horrors of His own fearful indignation, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. God alone saved us, all by Himself, because He is eternally devoted unto Himself, because He demands His own glory, and saves in such a way that He alone will receive all the glory, now and forever. See "God's Way in the Sanctuary"

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THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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

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

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

MEDITATION

God's Way in the Sanctuary

Rev. H. Veldman

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary." Ps. 77:13a

The psalmist, Asaph, is in trouble. Verse 2 speaks of this trouble. The exact nature of this trouble cannot be determined. He probably, because of some sin, did not enjoy the blessed communion and fellowship of the alone blessed God.

The solution of Asaph's difficulty is surely not expressed in the verses 7-9. The thought that the Lord will no longer be gracious and is changeable is maddening and gives no peace. However, confessing his sin he will trust in the fact that God's mercy

is unchangeable, that the Lord will therefore forever be kind to him. Therefore we read in the verses 11-12: "I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings."

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary. Indeed, who is so great a God as our God? The Lord is God that does wondrous things. Wonderful is the Lord in all His works and ways. He is wonderful in all the works of His hands. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. He is God alone. And He is a great God particularly in His work of salvation, revealed in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord.

* * * * *

Thy way, O God.

Generally speaking, Scripture speaks often of our way. This always implies three things. It refers, first of all, to the fact that we are children of time. Time is the inexplicable law for every living creature. Time marches on; it never pauses in its journey from the cradle to the grave. Time, never seen or noticed, is an awesome reality. As children of time we are constantly moving forward. Secondly, our way implies that we are moving forward in a spiritual, ethical direction. We are moral-rational creatures. We always act morally, ethically, either for God or against God. We are never neutral. Thirdly, our way also implies that we are constantly moving toward a definite goal. Inexorably we are on our way, to heaven or hell, to eternal bliss or eternal woe. There is never any neutrality, also as far as the goal is concerned. Our way, therefore, refers to our walk, our life's conduct and manifestation, as including all our spiritual, ethical activity.

The way of the Lord refers, generally, to the Lord's Self-manifestation, His rule and government in all of history, in which the Lord does all things for His Name's sake, to reveal Himself. Specifically, and in this text and psalm, the way of the Lord is His redemptive way, His way of salvation, His Self-manifestation in which He reveals Himself as the mighty Saviour and Deliverer of His people.

God's way, we read, is in the sanctuary. There are two possible interpretations of the expression "in the sanctuary." The first interpretation would explain the expression as referring to the temple, the holy place. The idea is that it is only in the temple where the Lord has revealed Himself that we can understand the way of the Lord. It is only in His light, only when we go to the Lord and inquire of Him concerning His guidance, that the way of the Lord will become clear to us. This reminds us of Psalm 73:17. There the psalmist is the same, Asaph. This, we understand, is true. Another interpretation would read "holiness" here in the place of

"sanctuary." Holiness is the literal meaning of the original word in this text. Sometimes, however, the word refers in Scripture to that which is holy, as, for example, the holy place of the sanctuary. This also explains the translation: in the sanctuary. Literally, however, we may read: Thy way, O God, is in holiness.

We prefer the reading: Thy way, O God, is in holiness. Of course, there is no essential difference between the two translations. The sanctuary was a holy place, devoted exclusively to the service of the Lord. As such, however, it must surely be understood in this scripture. Holiness is that virtue of the living God whereby He is supremely consecrated unto Himself, seeks Himself, and does all things for His own Name's sake. The holiness of God implies that He alone is the God of infinite goodness and perfection and that He is therefore eternally consecrated unto Himself, and as such reveals Himself. And this implies that, as the holy God, He alone does wondrous things, things that arouse our wonder and amazement, hating the wicked and being a terrible God unto them, but also loving His people for His Name's sake and delivering them by His own almighty power and grace, unto His praise and glory, evoking praise and adoration from them whom He has loved, sovereignly, in Christ Jesus.

This is surely in harmony with this psalm. The context directs us to this thought. We read in verse 13b: Who is so great a God as our God? And then the psalmist proceeds to speak of His powers, His fearful deliverance of His people, in the verses that follow. This also explains why we read in this text: Thy way, O God, is in holiness. God is the terrible God, the fearful God, the God worthy of all adoration and service. God and His holiness are inseparably connected and related.

* * * * *

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, or, in holiness.

Obviously, the psalmist refers to Israel's deliverance out of the Egyptian house of bondage. What an awesome, fearful display this was of the alone living and holy God! He had led His own, sovereignly, into that terrible house of bondage. Why should the Lord lead Jacob and his family into Egypt when they were already in the land of Canaan and the Lord intended to give unto them and their seed that land of the promise? It is obvious that the Lord had sovereignly led them into the land of Egypt because He would reveal His mighty power unto Pharaoh and lead His own out of that house of bondage with a mighty arm. The Lord had placed His own into a position out of which they would be unable to deliver themselves. The Egyptian house of bondage was a symbol, a type of the

spiritual bondage of sin, and Israel's deliverance, because of the blood upon the doorposts. It was a divinely willed symbol of the spiritual deliverance out of the bondage of sin and evil. And the Lord had delivered them with a mighty arm, had revealed to Egypt and Israel alike that He is God alone, Who loves and seeks Himself. He had therefore destroyed the wicked oppressor and had saved, for His Name's sake, the people whom He had sovereignly loved and chosen from before the foundations of the world. That the Lord had delivered Israel was not because Israel was a better people than the Egyptians. They were a rebellious people and they were saved only because of the blood. How the scriptures emphasize this truth. This we read in Deuteronomy 7:7, 8: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers." And, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," before either had done any good or evil (Rom. 9:11-13). The Lord is absolutely sovereign.

Today, however, we stand before the fulfillment of all these types and shadows. Calvary is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types and shadows and symbols. What a fearful and awesome display we have at the cross of Calvary of the alone living and holy God! Indeed, as was true in the old dispensation, the Lord had led His own into the fearful house of the bondage of sin and guilt and death. Sin with its subsequent night of sin and corruption and death was surely no accident. The Lord is God alone. Known unto Him are all His works from before the foundations of the world. Christ was crucified and slain according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). The first Adam sinned because he must prepare the way for the second Adam, the Lord out of heaven. Today, in the new dispensation, we stand before the cross of Calvary. Calvary is indeed the fulfillment, the antitype of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. Indeed, how true it is of the cross: Thy way, O God, was in holiness, a fearful display of God's Self-devotion. A misery of sin and guilt, out of which we could never deliver ourselves, was our lot. But God revealed Himself in all the terribleness of His holiness and justice, His mercy and compassion. Indeed, at the cross righteousness and peace have kissed each other. God, because He is holy and hates sin, would never permit it to go unpunished, but He sent His own Son. He would rather taste death itself, the fearful death of His eternal good pleasure, than wink at sin and let it go unpunished. God, Who loved His people eternally for His own Name's sake, suffered the incomprehensible

horrors of hell, the horrors of His own fearful indignation, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. God alone saved us, all by Himself, because He is eternally devoted unto Himself, because He demands His own glory, and saves in such a way that He alone will receive all the glory, now and forever. Indeed, the Lord will never give His glory to another, will never share it with another. His way is in the sanctuary, in holiness, a way in which He is completely devoted and consecrated unto Himself. To God alone must be all the glory. He leads us into a hopeless misery in order that He may save us by His right arm and do it all alone. This is the truth which we as Protestant Reformed Churches have received as a blessed heritage. This is the truth which has been entrusted to our care. May we ever preserve this glorious heritage, and seal it, if need be, with our very lives. God alone is worthy of all adoration and praise.

* * * * *

How comforting this is!

If we are in trouble (and we often are), in the trouble of sin and of affliction because of our affliction in the midst of the world, we surely cannot console ourselves with what we read in the verses 7-9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Will the Lord cast off forever, will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail forevermore? This would be maddening! Besides, how wrong it is of us to accuse the unchangeably faithful God of forgetting His own, of changeableness! Is it not terrible to lay these things to God's charge? Never may or should we blame the Lord.

Let us, however, consider His works. Let us, in faith, ever look upon the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Surely, He Who hath loved us will always continue to love us. He Who hath not spared His own Son will certainly give us all things. Indeed, to Him alone be all the praise and the glory now and forever.

Thy way, O God, is in holiness.

Also Thy way of salvation.

The Lord will save us, even unto the very end.

*Take the time
to read and study
the Standard Bearer!*

EDITORIAL

Persistent Distortion

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Under the title "Covenant and Election" the Rev. W. Pouwelse devotes two more rather lengthy articles (*Clarion*, Feb. 9, 1985 and Feb. 22, 1985) to my charges that he distorts the doctrinal position of the Protestant Reformed Churches and the history of events in the 1950s, especially of the schism of 1953.

In all that he writes, however, the Rev. Pouwelse makes only one forthright correction; and that correction is even open to the possibility of leaving a wrong impression. Perhaps the reader will recall that in my original editorial in which I criticized Mr. Pouwelse's presentation of our doctrinal stance and history, I criticized him for writing the following: "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." I criticized this as being historically inaccurate on several counts. In response to this the Rev. Pouwelse writes, p. 77:

Here Prof. Hoeksema has a real point and we do not hesitate to apologize for a mistake. After the Canadian Reformed Churches had been established, there was a split in what was left of the PRC. The one group merged into the Christian Reformed Church. The other group continued to exist as Protestant Reformed Churches.

Even this is not accurate, of course. First of all, it leaves the impression, intentionally or not, that there was a connection between the establishment of the Canadian Reformed Churches (the Liberated in Canada) and the split in the Protestant Reformed Churches. There was no such connection whatsoever. Secondly, it leaves an incorrect impression in speaking of "what was left of the PRC," as though there was only some kind of remnant of the PRC after the Canadian Reformed Churches were established. But the establishment of the Canadian Reformed Churches had no effect on the Protestant Reformed denomination. The latter was intact until the De Wolf schism took place in the latter half of 1953. Up to that time two small congregations,

Hamilton and Chatham, Ontario — congregations chiefly composed of Liberated immigrants, who were organized on a Protestant Reformed basis, but who dishonestly (I use the word advisedly) maintained their Liberated views — had left the PRC. Their departure had nothing to do historically with the schism of 1953. And it leaves a strange impression to speak of "what was left of the PRC" when those two congregations comprised only some 40 families, at least four of whom did not leave the PRC.

For the rest, the Rev. Pouwelse appears to be very reluctant to admit forthrightly any distortions on his part with respect to our Protestant Reformed position.

In the first place, he does not want to admit at all that the Declaration of Principles did not represent a change of direction on the part of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In supporting his contention that the Declaration does indeed represent such a change of direction, he appeals to the writing of Dr. K. Schilder, especially to one of his last articles, entitled, "*De Kous Is Af* (The Stocking Is Finished)." I remember the article well, as I also remember the late Rev. Hoeksema's reply to that article. Dr. Schilder labored at that time under the misapprehension that our second conference with him had ended with Rev. Hoeksema's calling Dr. Schilder's ideas about the covenant Reformed and that Hoeksema had said, "That is Reformed." But this was not said. What was said was, "*He is Reformed.*" Besides, do not forget that after Dr. Schilder's visit to our churches, the Revs. J. De Jong and B. Kok had visited in the Netherlands and had attempted to sell our churches down the river. They had so convinced the Dutch Committee for Correspondence that our churches were wide open for the Liberated covenant view that they were ready to have full correspondence with us and that the late Prof. Holwerda had advised the immigrants in Chatham to join our churches and to propagate their Liberated views among us. But the fact of the matter is that we had not changed our direction, and that our churches were not wide open for

Liberated views. Meanwhile it was also true that our churches were not wide open for Synodical views any more than for Liberated, while we frowned upon the Synodicals for their hierarchical actions and certainly sympathized with the Liberated because of the ecclesiastical injustice of their treatment.

Take as a concrete example the organization of the Chatham congregation. This was before the Declaration was adopted. Were they organized on the basis that there was nothing distinctively Protestant Reformed binding upon them? By no means. Once they were refused organization because they wanted to be free to hold and propagate their Liberated views. When they were actually organized, the late Rev. Hoeksema told them emphatically three times in the course of his sermon that if they were organized they were bound to our Protestant Reformed view of a particular promise, and that if they did not want to be thus bound, they must not organize! Yet when the Declaration was under consideration, who immediately objected to it? The Consistory of Chatham!

Nor did I suggest, as the Rev. Pouwelse writes, that "everyone who speaks about a change of direction shows that he has never read the *Declaration* and does not know what he is talking about." I wrote the following, and it is true: "For anyone who reads the Declaration and who knows anything at all about Protestant Reformed history will recognize immediately that the Declaration does not represent a change of direction. On the contrary, it just exactly represents a holding to our original direction." That is altogether different, you see. And why is this true? First of all, because the Declaration itself in its very opening paragraphs proceeds *historically*. It goes back to 1924. It speaks of the fact that we maintain our Reformed confessions *over against* and with *repudiation* of the Three Points of 1924. The Declaration simply sets forth black on white what our Protestant Reformed Churches have believed and taught from the very beginning. But if you are acquainted with our history, you will know this, too. The little book, *Believers And Their Seed* was originally published in the Dutch language under the title *De Gelovigen en Hun Zaad*. In this book the Kuyperian view of presupposed regeneration and the Heynsian view of a general, conditional promise are both repudiated. In the same book our Protestant Reformed covenant view is set forth. But when and why was this book first published? It was not something prepared to combat the Liberated covenant theology, although the Dutch version was reprinted in the late 1940s and widely distributed in the Netherlands because it was pertinent at that time.

No, it was originally published in the late 1920s and over against the views of Prof. Heyns, views then prevalent in the Christian Reformed Church. Does the Declaration represent a change of direction, then? Not at all! It was a holding to the original Protestant Reformed course. Anyone who said in the 1950s or who says today that it was a change of direction could not be more wrong!

For the rest, the Rev. Pouwelse has to concede, in the light of what I have written, that his distortions were indeed distortions. He concedes that we officially deny presupposed regeneration. He concedes, too, that the Protestant Reformed do not speak of two kinds of covenants and two kinds of promises. But in effect he takes the position that there is not much difference between our view and that of Dr. Kuyper. Meanwhile, he writes at length about "What is the covenant?" and he thrashes over some old straw about what Dr. Schilder wrote about the term *condition* — something which was answered and criticized years ago by the late Rev. Hoeksema.

For my part I have no desire to continue a discussion of this kind. It appears to me to be utterly futile. From the Netherlands and from Canada we have always gotten the same reaction and the same charges. It appears to me that the Liberated never really want to face the issues. If they would royally admit once that not everyone who disagrees with the Liberated holds to presupposed regeneration (or its equivalent), and if they would take our Declaration of Principles and our covenant theology at face value and at least concede the *possibility* that it is different from either the Kuyperian or the Heynsian view, then I could see at least the possibility of fruitful discussion. I mean this in all seriousness. This was what our churches wanted in the 1950s already, even though we disagreed with the late Dr. Schilder's presentation. At that time all discussion was abruptly ended not by us but by Dr. Schilder and his "The Stocking Is Finished." Since that time others have continually used presupposed regeneration as a "red herring." It would have taken the Rev. Pouwelse less than a page frankly to admit his distortions; but he writes three long articles to becloud the issue.

We on our part will always be ready for frank and open discussion when the Liberated are willing to cease beclouding the issues and get rid of their phobia about presupposed regeneration as far as the Protestant Reformed Churches are concerned.

Until that time comes, however, I refuse all discussion with the Canadian Reformed about the covenant. I will, however, continue, upon occasion, to call attention to their very erroneous and unReformed Heynsian error.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

[The last paragraph dealt with the distinction between the true and the false church and the importance of distinguishing between the two for the work of church reformation.]

60. Concerning Zechariah's Cry: Not By Might Or Power, But By the Spirit Of the Lord. Reformation And Legitimacy.

The purpose of the previous paragraph was to prevent anyone from making a break with his church as church except as a last remedy, and to bind most seriously upon the heart of every child of God that such a break is allowed only when his church has either died or become a false church. Otherwise, never. Earlier than this, never. This is true for the conclusive reason that one's church always remains a manifestation of the body of Christ until it either dies or becomes the false church.

Yet no one ought to think that it is our purpose to plead for a false passivity or an unholy legalism. It is for this reason that we must still say a word in this and the following paragraphs concerning both legalism and revolution.

He who applies himself seriously to the work of church reformation and desires to perform this work under God as the one who works is not only for others but also for himself, such a one can never put his hand to this glorious task with his eye fixed on a pre-determined result. He could do this if the book of God's counsel lay before him unsealed, but now, because this book is and remains closed to him, the way is irrevocably shut for him to determine his activity with a view to the outcome. There remains only one way open to him: the way of *obedience*.

All reformation of the church, whether by spiritual awakening or gradual church renewal, or by a break with the organization of the church federation, or with the church itself, can never be

undertaken in any other way than in the way of quiet and unconditional *obedience*.

Even though it appears as if everything else fails, one must still reform, because reformation is God's high command to His church, her ministers and members. Nothing, in whatever form it appears, can ever excuse the church, her ministers and members from that obligation to *obedience*.

However, in order that this obedience become no cloak for independent and arbitrary action, each child of God must first of all earnestly weigh the deliberations of his own heart whether the impulse that drives him is actually the desire to be obedient.

This can most safely be determined by facing these two questions: 1) whether one is conscious of his guilt before God for his former disobedience; and 2) whether one avoids offense to the honor of his God in the choice of the means he uses.

It is for that reason that we stress consciousness of guilt under the judgment of God as the point of departure for all good reformation, and at the same time we show all respect for the body of the Lord in each church which has not completely died and is not possessed by Satan. Especially the consideration weighs heavily which Calvin (Bk. IV, chap. 2, para. 12 of his *Institutes*) says of the churches of Rome: "Although they lack the legal form of the church, I cannot deny that there are still churches of God among them." This is set alongside of the fact that in Israel the church flourished again even though idolatry had penetrated even to the temple.

If one should conclude from this that this Pamphlet sounds like: "Not by power or might, but by the Spirit of the Lord!" we answer that we despise that outcry in the false sense in which it is commonly found on passive lips. But we highly regard and wholeheartedly concur with the meaning

which the Holy Spirit has given to this outcry of the prophet Zechariah.

We cannot impress upon the hearts of our brethren too strongly that they must cease from that unholy practice to use this precious Scriptural passage in such a wrong way that they falsify the sense and meaning, and finally make it say the opposite of what it intends.

Usually these words are quoted without paying attention to the context, and the conclusion is reached that the Holy Spirit addresses us: "You ministers and members of My church, cease from all your own attempts at reformation. Nothing will come of that. All that is power and might will accomplish nothing. You have nothing to do but simply to preach, and all else must come from My Spirit."

There is not one word of this in the fourth chapter of Zechariah's divine prophecy.

Mention is made of Zerubbabel the prince, who at the head of the returned exiles had undertaken the reformation of the fallen Jerusalem church. And he had undertaken this work, not by preaching only, but so far as possible by the use of trowel and pickax. Power and might therefore in the most literal sense!

According to that which many brothers understand by the sound of these words, Zerubbabel had to be instructed to abandon in his reformation the use of trowel and pickax, in short, all this busyness, all this show of power, and wait quietly for the Lord's Spirit.

In the meantime, the thrust of this speech of God is the very opposite.

Zerubbabel wants to quit and the Holy Spirit charges him not to quit but to persevere courageously.

Zerubbabel was frightened.

The waylayers round about rose up against him with the power of weapons, and now his courage fails and he thinks: "I have no army to set over against that might of weapons. Thus I am lost. I give up reformation. Lord, you do it."

But the Holy Spirit does not permit this and gives him this revelation: "Zerubbabel, do not discontinue your reformation of Jerusalem's church *for a moment*. Because you are *mistaken* to think that you alone can reform when you can set power over against the power of the enemy. They will be of no avail against you. Because, see, the outcome does not depend on power over against power, or might over against might, but totally on the secret and invisible working of the Spirit of the Lord.

Far indeed from recommending passivity, this

Word of Scripture condemns all passivity and commands us rather to proceed calmly with reformation in the way of the obedience of faith, also when it appears as if we butt our heads against a copper wall.

Or, to say it yet more clearly, following the words of the text themselves, there is the cry: "Not by power and might, but by the Lord's Spirit shall it happen." Thus this is an explanation of the immediately preceding vision.

And what was this vision? This. Zechariah saw a golden candlestick standing, a symbol of the church of Christ. A candlestick with seven lamps. Now for each of these lamps a supply pipe stretched upward and through these pipes the oil, i.e., the inflowing of the Holy Spirit to the church had to be brought. For this reason the seven supply pipes reached a jar and into this jar oil dripped from the two olive trees which were placed to the left and the right of that oil jar.

We do not want at this point to investigate further the significance of those two olive trees, an investigation which is connected with the explanation of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:4. Nevertheless, it is certain, according to all expositors, that these two olive trees refer to men, official persons, priests and prophets. The thrust of this prophecy can thus never be that we say: "The work of the Holy Spirit comes outside of human effort." The opposite is true: "The flowing forth of the Holy Spirit comes to the congregation by the mediation of individual persons in whose heart I work My grace."

This gives us the occasion to expose the basic error of an incorrect passivity.

This error is hidden in an incorrect conception of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Some think of this work of the Holy Spirit as outside the ordinary means and activity of the ministry. This is a dualistic conception.

This is not and cannot be the case. This would lead us completely along the fanatic paths of Anabaptism. Enthusiasts of all kinds, not the Reformed, are those who always press for such a dualistic working of the Holy Spirit. According to the pure doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit all official obedience in the ministry is either dead form and then characterized by barrenness, or else fruitful because of the influences of the Holy Spirit.

One must not go the Romish road of considering obedience in the official ministry as a meritorious work of ministers. Then one forsakes entirely the Reformed heritage. But if one does this in such a way that one honors no work of his own in this official obedience, it speaks for itself: Whose work

shall it be then if not the work of the Holy Spirit?

A person in office should never be able to shrink back from the duties to reformation with an appeal to Zechariah 4:6. He ought rather to keep his eye on that very word. Every avoidance of the obligation to obedience is severely censured and opposed by

the power of the Word. This should be pressed upon his soul: That he must exactly be incorporated into one of these two olive branches, through whose branches and twigs, i.e., through whose obedience also in the work of reformation, the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit must be brought to the seven churches of the living God.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Law Circumvented

Rev. John A. Heys

A prisoner who has been sentenced to die in the electric chair, and who through "friends" outside the prison succeeds in getting the judge, who sentenced him, shot to death, and his home burned to the ground, will not by these deeds escape the punishment decreed for him, and save his own life. His wrath may be pacified. He may gloat over the fact that he got revenge upon his enemy. But though the judge is dead, his sentence stands. And those who had been appointed to carry out the sentence will execute it in due time. The sentence remains on the books after the judge has gone the way of all flesh.

Similarly when king Ahasuerus had Haman hanged on the gallows, which he had built for his enemy Mordecai, the king got revenge. His wrath was also pacified, we read in Esther 7:10. So was Esther's wrath against Haman pacified; and she got the revenge she sought. Mordecai's flesh likewise was highly pleased by this turn of events upon his enemy. But the fact remains that Haman had gotten a decree that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month all the Jews in the kingdom must be killed. And the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be altered. Haman's death in no way affected that decision.

This explains why Esther made one more uncalled-for appearance before the king on his throne. The king had taken Haman's life. He had given Esther Haman's house; and she in turn gave it to Mordecai. The king had also exalted Mordecai to be his prime minister in the place of Haman. But Mordecai would serve in this capacity only for a

few months, and enjoy this house of Haman very briefly. Esther likewise would see this happy turn of events only for a short while. You may be sure that both Esther and Mordecai would have exchanged this house and political office of high standing for an extension of their lives. Without life these have no meaning. Without life they cannot be enjoyed. When life here below ends, all that is here below slips away from us. Therefore Esther appears once again before the king. For if he does not reverse the decision that all the Jews in his realm be slain, Esther and Mordecai also would lose their lives.

In light of all this one has difficulty trying to figure out this king. Did he have such a poor memory? Was he so often under the influence of alcohol that he was not even aware of what was going on in his kingdom, and what decisions he had been led to make? Did he not see that hanging Haman and giving his house to Esther would not keep her from being slain on that thirteenth day of the twelfth month? Was he so under the influence of alcohol that he could not think that matter through to see that he had to do more? Did he have to wait for Esther to come and point out the consequences of his decision that Haman moved him to make? Was he under alcoholic influence when he agreed with Haman, and now he does not yet realize what he did then?

Consider first of all that the king knew that Mordecai was a Jew. Esther 6:10 leaves no doubt about that. The king told Haman to "do even so to Mordecai the Jew." He did not yet know

Mordecai's relation to Esther, but that he knew that he was a Jew cannot be denied. Then too consider that Esther's maids and chamberlains knew that she was the adopted daughter of Mordecai. According to Esther 4:1-4 she sent her maids and chamberlains to Mordecai. And Mordecai, according to verse 8, told Hatach to tell Esther to make request *for her people* before the king. There was no reason for hiding her people now. She too was doomed to be killed in the twelfth month of the year; and it was urgent that she do something for her people and for herself. We can, however, only wonder whether before this Esther always told the truth or sometimes lied to hide the fact that she was a Jewess — at least there in the palace and before her maids and chamberlains. Knowing that Mordecai the Jew was the one who brought her up as his adopted daughter, she may have had to lie to keep Mordecai's charge that she not reveal her people and her kindred. Husbands and wives however have adopted children of another kindred and people. And in this mixed populace of that vast realm of Ahasuerus it would not have been strange for one to adopt a child of another people and kindred. Being an extremely beautiful woman it may not have shown on her face that she was a Jewess. Not that Jewish women were not at times very beautiful. Think of Sarah and of Rachel. But there must have been something in her features that made it possible for her to pass for anything but a Jewess. At least the secret was kept until the decree that Haman got from the king was published, and Esther had to send clothing to Mordecai, and had to send Hatach to find out why he did not put off his sackcloth and take the clothes which she had sent.

Even the three days of fasting which the Jews practiced were, according to Esther 4:15, 16, for her sake. This, too, would reveal to the inhabitants of Shushan that she was a Jewess. In the providence of God this did not get to the king's ears, nor to Haman's. For God had something else in mind and was preparing for Haman's downfall. But there was plenty of evidence afloat now that Esther was of that people whose death and destruction were slated to take place in a few months.

Only the almighty hand of the God of our salvation, which moves every creature and fulfills His counsel in every detail as He eternally decreed it, led the affairs in the kingdom so that the king and Haman, up till the moment that Esther revealed it in her plea before the king at that second banquet, did not know that which many in the very palace of the king knew about Esther, namely, her people and kindred and her relation to Mordecai. We read in Esther 8:1 that Esther told the king who Mordecai was to her. This however was after Haman had been exposed as the king's enemy as

well as the Jew's enemy.

But knowing that he was a Jew, and knowing that Haman had made him draw up such a decree concerning the sure death of the Jews, one can only wonder about this king who does not put two and two together and get four. He gives Haman's house. He promotes Mordecai to be his prime minister, but he seems at least to forget that the sword still hangs over the head of his wife and new prime minister. Truly here also the "king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters: He turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1). We can call it folly as far as Ahasuerus is concerned. But it is divine wisdom and covenant faithfulness for His people. And we do have here a beautiful manifestation of God's grace upon His people, which will be pointed out in a moment.

The God Whose grace for His people abideth ever, and Whose mercy upon them faileth never, once again makes the king extend the rod to Esther when she appeared before him uncalled-for and with a request. He also moved him to tell Mordecai to write whatever he pleased and to seal it with the king's ring, so that it might not be reversed. And Mordecai wrote a decree that circumvented, not reversed, the decree Haman got from the king. It gave the Jews the right to assemble and fight against those who would seek on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month to kill and to destroy them. The very decree was signed by a Jew who was the new prime minister. This struck fear in some of the Jew's enemies. And we now have in that kingdom two conflicting laws which invited civil war and social unrest as well as confusion in the minds of the subjects of that vast kingdom.

All this came out of God's counsel and served to preserve the seed of the woman, so that The Seed of the Woman might be born, and in time crush the head of the serpent and of his seed. But it must be borne in mind that God does not save us from our sins by circumventing His law. The law of the Medes and Persians was the law of finite man; and when the Medes and Persians were overthrown and their kingdom swallowed up by the Greeks, their laws melted into nothingness. When we deal with our sins before God, we deal with the eternal, infinite Creator of heaven and earth. We are dealing with One Whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and Whose laws are never altered or withdrawn. Being wise and good they need no amendment, nor future qualifications. He says, "Love Me." And there is no way to circumvent that law. He created us for that purpose and will never, never wink at any failure to do so. It was only one sin of Adam that brought death and the curse upon this world, and then it was what to us might look like a rather innocent sin without any violence or

harm to another man. But God said that to eat would bring death, and one bite of the forbidden fruit did unalterably bring death. And if we look for that law to be circumvented, we are looking for what will not and never can happen.

Instead God spared the lives of the Jews so that the Christ might be born and from the moment of His birth might *fulfill*, not circumvent, that law for the elect, and so fully satisfy for our sins that there is not one smallest fraction of punishment and of the curse that is left for the Church of which that Christ is the Head.

In this day of shadows we see a circumventing of man's unjust, foolish law resulting in fighting, bloodshed, death, and violence. Three hundred of the enemies of the Jews died in Shushan alone. In all the realm seventy-five thousand citizens of that kingdom had their lives wiped out because of these two conflicting laws. Circumvention did not bring peace but a sword. And such circumvention of the law certainly did not achieve peace with God. He planned it all this way in His counsel so that The Prince of Peace might come as promised from the day that God's unalterable law was broken. But Esther, Mordecai, and Ahasuerus did not realize peace with God for their people and kindred. Indeed, we read in Esther 9:16 that the Jews did not lay their hands on the prey, even though Mordecai saw to it that the decree gave them permission "to take the spoil of them for a prey." It cannot be denied that there still was burning bitterness in the

heart of Mordecai. He had no peaceful thoughts against any who might rise up against the Jews on that day that was singled out by Haman. But more serious is the fact that peace with God is completely out of the picture here. The whole book of Esther reads like any history book written by an unbeliever, as far as the behaviour of the characters in it is concerned. There just is nothing of faith that the secondary author used by God could in all honesty write about any of them.

Consider also that the decree Haman wrote was sent to the king's lieutenants, governors, the rulers of every province and to every people after their language. The decree Mordecai drew up has this significant addition that we read, "and to the Jews according to their writing"; and it "granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together to stand for their lives." The rulers who received this second decree were instructed and warned in it; but the Jews were only encouraged to resist. We find not one word, however, addressed to these Jews encouraging them to put their trust in God and have peace of mind because of His covenant faithfulness to all His promises. Paul writes in Philippians 4:6, 7: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ." There is not even the suggestion of such a message to the Jews here. But we will have more of this in the next article.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Discerning Comments

In the *Banner*, April 29, 1985, a discerning letter is presented in "Voices" which makes several pointed comments about the relationship of "common grace" with the present direction taken by the Christian Reformed Church. One would hope that many have taken note of it:

In 1924 Classis Grand Rapids East deposed Rev. Herman Hoeksema because he was found guilty of publicly attacking the three points of common grace. The CRC has never retreated from this doctrine of

common grace, which was supported by liberals and conservatives.

Yet two years before the Hoeksema case liberals and conservatives were at war over the Janssen case. Synod 1922 condemned Dr. Ralph Janssen's views and relieved him of his professorship at Calvin Seminary. His views were those of a higher critic, and were based on his belief in common grace.

If common grace allows one to maintain that natural man manifests good in the world of arts and

sciences, then one is allowed a view of Scripture using "lower" and "higher" criticism.

Perhaps the conservatives' belief in the doctrine of common grace precludes unity with the Protestant Reformed. Yet their failure to be consistent in the development of the doctrine of common grace denies them kinship with those who are developing it. It is this inconsistency which precludes unity within our own ecclesiastical walls.

An interesting comment indeed! For many years the P.R.C. have been accused of relating the developments toward greater liberalism in the CRC to their adoption of the three points of common grace. And repeatedly the conservatives in the CRC have insisted that this liberalism was a result of distorting the idea of common grace — or that there

was no relationship at all. Yet here is a writer who asserts what has long been denied in the CRC.

The relationship between the common grace theory with the Janssen case and present-day "Report 44" and other developments within the CRC could well have a careful study. In fact, would it not be worthwhile if these "conservatives" mentioned by the letter-writer were interested in an in-depth study of common grace with the PRC who were cast out of the CRC because of their denial of this Synodically-adopted doctrine? Perhaps these conservatives could show how that proper development of the "common grace" theory excludes and precludes "higher criticism" and liberalism — or the PRC might show how that the letter-writer is so very correct indeed!

"Faithful in Love"?

The *R.E.S. News Exchange*, April 9, 1985, presents the following comments on a Dutch study guide, "Faithful in Love,"

Writing in *De Wachter*, bi-weekly Dutch language magazine of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, editor Dr. Sierd Woudstra castigates the study guide "Faithful in Love" as being unfaithful to Scripture. Issued in 1983 on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), the small booklet (48 pages) is intended to promote discussion about biblical norms for personal relationships, both inside and outside marriage.

Woudstra's major objection to the guide is its failure to acknowledge that Scripture sees marriage as a unique institution, quite unlike any other relationship. According to Woudstra, the booklet rightly states that the biblical directives are colored by the times and situation in which they were given. For that reason, for example, Reformed churches in general have taken a less absolutistic view of divorce than

would be dictated by a strictly literal application of the words of Jesus.

But the writers of the booklet, opting for what they call a "covenantal" approach, go far beyond that. Not only do they refuse to reject so-called homosexual and lesbian marriages, they also contend that such relationships can have the same ethical value as a marriage between man and woman. Expressing his great disillusionment with the booklet, Woudstra faults the writers here for lacking all sense of direction.

This is one further indication of the rapid drift towards apostasy. It is also in line with other "liberal" views concerning divorce and remarriage, women in office, etc. which likewise rest on a "less absolutistic view . . . than would be dictated by a strictly literal application of the words of Jesus." Denial of "literal application" as well as a literal interpretation of Scripture can only lead to these deviant views introduced wholesale into the church.

PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES (con't. from page 383)
feastdays, the three appointed feasts of Passover, Feast of Harvests, and the feast of Tabernacles, which latter was connected with the great day of Atonement. Even these were all on the principle of the number "seven." The Passover was killed on the 14th day of the first month, which Passover feast was eaten on the 15th day. This was $2 \times 7 = 14$ plus 1. This is "seven" doubled to perfection, so that Israel could enter into the "first day" of the new week. This was true with respect to both the feast of the Passover and the feast of Tabernacles. It is on the basis of the number "seven" that a male

child was circumcised on the "eighth day." This eighth day was the first day of the first new week in the life of the male child. It symbolized that old things were passed away, that the perfection of the new had come (Gen. 17:12). There is no reason to doubt that it is for this reason that Christ arose on "the eighth day." Ever the Sabbath of the New Testament fell on the eighth day. Do not we read of the appearances of Christ that He even appeared to the disciples (John 20:26). Our New Testament Sabbath is the first day of the new week; hence, it is that Christ arose on the *eighth* day, when viewed from the Old Testament perspective!

Movie Attendance

Some time ago, *Calvinist Contact*, August 24, 1984, contained comments by Henry Knoop concerning movie attendance which are worth consideration. Though the writer seems to approve of certain selected movies, he has some pointed criticism about the whole matter:

Movie attendance has been a subject of controversy among Christians for over fifty years. In the Christian Reformed Church, for example, the Synod of 1926 accepted a motion that movie attendance was a "worldly amusement" and appointed a committee to study the nature of worldly amusements and give advice concerning the disciplining of church members who engage in worldly amusements.

The committee reported two years later and declared that, through Common Grace, worthwhile movies could be produced by unbelievers, but it was the task of the believer to responsibly exercise his Christian liberty. The implication was clear — movie attendance was a form of worldliness that the Christian must avoid.

In response to a classical overture, the Synod of 1949 appointed a study committee to clarify the stand on worldly amusements taken in 1928, but not to change it. Two years later, however, this committee responded with two reports: one emphasizing that people who engage in "worldly amusements" should be disciplined, the other emphasizing that not every instance of movie attendance is wrong for a Christian. The Synod of 1951 listened to both sides and adopted a compromise. For the most part it followed what the latter report stated, but at the same time added that it did not condone movie attendance.

As a result of another classical overture and study committee appointed in 1964, the Synod of 1966 adopted a number of principles concerning worldly amusements. Among them:

—The Christian must lead a life of spiritual separation from the world even while enjoying those things (such as movies) which are neither commanded nor forbidden by the Bible.

—In going to movies the Christian shall be guided by an enlightened conscience, in prayerful submission to the Word of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

—Christians should voluntarily restrain the exercise of their Christian liberty to go to the movies by their concern for their own spiritual welfare as well as a loving concern for the spiritual welfare of others.

—Because the movie is a "cultural thing" like a magazine or newspaper that can be used for good or

evil, it must be judged in the light of Christian standards of excellence.

—The Christian should reject and condemn the message of those movies which sanction sin and subvert the Christian view of life.

—Christians should become sensitive to what is good and evil in movies. Christians must engage in the constructive critique of movies and learn how to evaluate them from a Christian point of view.

These principles are still the official guide of the church . . .

A number of thoughts come to mind as a result of this quick survey. Note, first of all, the gradual shift in emphasis from "worldly amusement" to "a cultural thing," a term much more favorable for movie goers today. Yet, I wonder how many movies being produced today actually contribute to the development of our culture in a significant way. It seems that the vast majority of popular movies today are merely "amusements," and worldly at that. It is getting increasingly more difficult to find a good one.

Secondly, when I look over the list of principles guiding movie attendance, I wonder how many people actually consider the matter so seriously anymore? How many people prayerfully submit to the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit when it comes to movie attendance?

. . . Finally, for almost twenty years we've been challenged to constructively critique movies and evaluate them from a Christian point of view. Have we succeeded? Do most Christians have a well-defined critical framework which they can take with them to movies? I wonder . . .

One can appreciate the comments made above. One senses too an agonizing appraisal of the past decisions of the CRC on movie attendance — and their consequences in the life of the church.

We also can learn from all of the above. Reports of young people from our churches attending movies are heard. Television, presenting essentially the same movies, is watched in some of our homes. Do we well understand that the CRC gave limited approval to see some movies — on the basis of common grace (a doctrine which we deny)? Are we ever consistent in our walk? The antithetical walk must be clearly evident — for such is the fruit of the Spirit.

Read The Standard Bearer!

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Baptism Form — Introduction

Rev. James Slopsema

In the next several articles we intend to study the baptism form as we find it in the back of our Psalter.

The baptism form is one of our liturgical forms. By a liturgical form we mean a document or form designed to aid us in public worship. The word "liturgical" describes that which pertains to public worship and prayer. In the back of our Psalter we find several such forms. In addition to our baptism form we also find forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for Excommunication, for Readmitting Excommunicated Persons, for Ordination of Ministers, Elders, and Deacons, Professors of Theology, and Missionaries. There is even a form for Confirmation of Marriage.

MINOR CONFESSIONS:

These forms are often called minor creeds or confessions. They are to be distinguished from our major confessions: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt — the Three Forms of Unity.

Our liturgical forms are called minor confessions or creeds for good reason.

First, these liturgical forms include statements of faith and therefore partake of the nature of a confession or creed. A creed is a statement by the church in which she expresses what she believes to be the truth of God's Word. And this is exactly what we find in our liturgical forms. The truth of God as it relates to baptism, the Lord's Supper, excommunication, the work of officebearers in the church, and marriage are all summarized in our forms. Hence, they are to be considered confessions or creeds of the church.

However, and this in the second place, our liturgical forms are to be considered as *minor* confessions because of their limited scope. Our Three Forms of Unity are comprehensive statements of

faith. Through them the church confesses the whole of the truth of God's Word as she has come to believe and cherish it. However, in the liturgical forms the church touches only upon certain aspects of the truth. In many instances these truths are truths set forth in the Three Forms of Unity but more fully developed in the forms. But the liturgical forms are not intended to be comprehensive statements of faith. Hence, they are minor confessions in distinction from our major, comprehensive confessions.

Quite in harmony with this, the doctrinal statements in our liturgical forms are binding upon the church. It is required of every officebearer in the church to sign a Formula of Subscription. By so doing he expresses agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. He also promises to teach and faithfully defend the doctrines set forth in them. Should an officebearer knowingly teach contrary to the Three Forms of Unity he is by that fact to be suspended from office. This establishes the doctrines of our Three Forms of Unity as official church doctrine. All officebearers and members are bound by these creeds. Now the Formula of Subscription does not make mention of our liturgical forms. However, our Church Order does. As the Church Order regulates the administration of the sacraments, the ordination of officebearers in the church, excommunication, and marriage it specifies that in each instance the proper forms be used (cf. Articles 4, 22, 24, 58, 62, 70, 76, 78). In this way the Church Order certainly elevates the doctrinal statements of the liturgical forms to creedal statements that are official doctrine in the church and binding on all officebearers and members.

For that reason our liturgical forms are also profitable for study. From them we glean a wealth of instruction concerning the precious truths of God's Word. This we hope to do in the next several articles as we treat the baptism form.

VALUE OF OUR FORMS:

We may ask: why have liturgical forms?

Many churches do not have forms for baptism, Lord's Supper, ordination, and excommunication as we do. In turn, there are many who question the wisdom of liturgical forms. The objection is that the use of liturgical forms tends to make the worship of the church a mere formality, a meaningless ritual. "Worship becomes automatic, mechanical and thus meaningless when liturgical forms are used."

In response we must acknowledge that dead formalism is always a danger in worship. How often haven't we been guilty of being miles away in thought while the form for baptism or Lord's Supper has been read in the worship service? This certainly makes our worship a meaningless formality. However, the same can be said for other parts of worship. How often haven't we been just as guilty of mental absenteeism during the congregational prayer or the sermon? This suggests that the use of liturgical forms as such does not lend itself to or promote meaningless formality in worship.

There are especially three things that contribute to dead formalism in worship: 1) ignorance of what one is doing in worship, 2) an erroneous conception of what one is doing in worship, 3) a spirit of indifference toward worship. Any one of these or combination of these will eventually render worship an empty ritual.

The key to overcoming much of this is instruction. Certainly ignorance and a faulty view of worship is overcome with instruction. And because indifference towards worship is often rooted in ignorance, this too is often helped by sound instruction. By all means the church must be knowledgeable about what she is doing in worship. She must be taught the meaning of the sacraments, of ordination into office, of excommunication, and other aspects of her worship. Error must be exposed. The light of God's Word must be shed on every aspect of her worship. Only then can worship be meaningful, edifying, and God-glorifying.

This is especially true of the sacraments. The sacraments are means of grace which the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen our faith. However, the sacraments do not work magically or automatically. The water of baptism itself does not effect salvation. Neither do the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper themselves strengthen faith. The sacraments work as a means of grace only when they are understood as signs and seals of the cross and only when they are used as such by us in faith believing. Those who are ignorant of the true nature of the sacraments or have erroneous conceptions of them receive nothing from them.

For this reason the church must be instructed in these things. Now conceivably this could be left to the minister every time the sacraments were celebrated. However, in this way error is more apt to creep in. And the instruction may be incomplete, perhaps even one-sided. Consequently, the Reformed fathers saw the need for liturgical forms to guide the church in the celebration of the sacraments and other important acts of worship.

HISTORY:

We ought to understand a little of the history of our baptism form.

Our Form for the Baptism of Infants may be traced back to a form written by Peter Datheen in the Netherlands. Datheen had translated the Heidelberg Catechism from the German language into the Dutch in 1563. With the help of Van der Heyden, Datheen also wrote other liturgical forms which were published in 1566. Among them was a baptism form which was modeled after other forms written by Calvin, a Lasco, Micron, and Olevianus.

In 1568 the Reformed churches in the Netherlands were charged by the Wezelian Convention to use the questions found in Datheen's baptism form, although some churches by this time were using this form. In 1574 the particular Synod of Dordt shortened the form and required all the churches to use the whole form, not just the questions, for the administration of baptism. Several other Synods after this concerned themselves with the wording of this form and made various revisions. One of these Synods to revise the form was the great Synod of Dordt of 1618-19 which gave us our Canons. However, none of these Synods published an official, up-to-date text of the form. In 1897 Dr. F. L. Rutgers and his assistants, Dr. H. Bavink and Dr. A. Kuyper, prepared an edition of the baptism form taking into account the various revisions of the past Synods. An English translation of this form is what we find in the back of our Psalter.

If we turn to the back of our Psalter we also find a section for the baptism of adults, entitled "To Adult Persons." This has a somewhat different history. This section was composed by the great Synod of Dordt (1618-19). In composing this part of the form the Synod of Dordt relied heavily on two other forms in use at that time. The one was a form drafted by the churches in North and South Holland in 1603 and which was also used by the churches of Friesland and Gelderland. The other form from which the Synod of Dordt drew was the form drafted by the Synod of Vere in 1610. This section for the baptism of adults was intended by the Synod of Dordt to be used along with the first part of Datheen's baptism form which treats the

doctrine of baptism in general. This is the first part of our form which begins with the words, "The principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism are these three."

OUTLINE:

We conclude this introduction of the baptism form with a brief outline of the Form for Infant Baptism.

I. Doctrinal part.

A. The significance of baptism in general.

1. Our original sin and need for regeneration is symbolized and taught to us through the sprinkling of water.
2. Baptism is a sign and seal of the washing away of sins through Jesus Christ and thus of God's eternal covenant of grace.
3. Through baptism we are taught to take our part in the covenant.

B. Infant baptism in particular.

1. The objection is anticipated that infants

can not be baptized because they do not understand these spiritual realities.

2. The reply:

- a. Our children are partakers of Christ without their knowledge.
- b. This is evident from Genesis 17:7 and Acts 2:39 which teach that God establishes His covenant in the lines of continued generations.
- c. For this reason God commanded children to be circumcised in the OT and Christ blessed them (Mark 10).
- d. Since baptism is come in the place of circumcision, infants are to be baptized.

II. Liturgical part.

A. The prayer before baptism.

B. The exhortation to parents with the questions to be affirmed.

C. The act of baptism proper.

D. The thanksgiving prayer.

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Perspicuity: The Objective Clarity of God's Word

Rev. Thomas Miersma

The Reformers and the Church of Rome, as we have seen, stood in open opposition to one another on the issue of Scripture's sole authority and all-sufficiency. Rome taught that there stood alongside of Scripture a second authority, the traditions of the church, which it claimed were received from the apostles and of equal value with the Scriptures. Rome also set the church above both Scripture and tradition as the source from which both received their authority and power.

Over against these errors the Reformers, following Scripture's own testimony, received the Scriptures as the Word of God, the all-sufficient rule of faith and life. They also found set before them in the Scriptures the sole authority of the Word of

God. Scripture's own claim is that it is God's Word of truth. Upon the basis of that Word of truth the Reformers labored to reform and restore the church of Christ, for the church must be brought into conformity with the Word of God, as subject and obedient to it.

Thus far we have been considering Scripture itself as the objective and sole standard of truth. We must yet also consider the subjective principle of Scripture's interpretation, that is, who is able to understand that Word of God? In this connection we must see the difference between Rome and the Reformers regarding the priesthood and office of all believers. Before turning to this, however, there is one aspect of Scripture's own character which we

must still consider, though it is closely intertwined with the internal and spiritual principle of Scriptural understanding. That is the matter of Scripture's own clarity or perspicuity — in itself.

The Reformers took the position that the Word of God as the sole standard of truth and God's revelation was understandable and clear as God's Word to man. This the Church of Rome denied. Rome maintained that Scripture was a dark book, difficult to understand, whose interpretation was far above the ability of the average believer in the church. The church as the sole authority above the Word of God could make the dark sayings of the Scriptures clear and set forth their meaning. Thus they interposed between the people and the Word of God, the priesthood of the church and the pronouncements of the church as the only means to understand God's Word.

This conception portrays the Bible as a book on the same level as the dark sayings and utterances of heathen prophets and oracles. Because of this, Scripture was to be kept from the common people. The church, by which Rome meant the clergy of the church, and the higher councils and papacy in particular, alone had the ability and right to declare the meaning of God's Word. Behind this teaching of the church was the desire to keep the people in ignorance of God's Word and to silence also the Reformers.

Over against this false view of Rome the Reformers maintained that Scripture is clear and understandable in itself. Man's failure to understand it aright was not to be attributed to the Word but to sin and unbelief in the heart of man. The Word of God itself is clear and readily understood. The reason it seemed dark to Rome was to be attributed to Rome's misuse of the Word of God by wrenching texts out of their proper and natural context and meaning. Further, Rome broke the unity of that Word of God and set Scripture in opposition to itself to obscure its meaning for their own ends.

We live in a day and age when this same subtlety of Rome is being reintroduced into the church under the new guise of so-called scholarship, so that a new priesthood has arisen, a priesthood of scholars, who will in the name of a new hermeneutic introduce into the church the doctrine and practices of men. It is well therefore to take note of the principle that the Scriptures are clear and understandable in themselves. They can be understood and their meaning is plain to the believing heart. This does not mean that they do not require prayerful and serious study, precise and careful exegesis. But this is altogether different from saying that the Bible is an obscure book which

only a select few can really understand while the rest of the common people of the church remain in ignorance.

This attack upon the Word of God the Reformers resisted in their day and we must in our own. We can well learn from them. In 1522 Ulrich Zwingli delivered a sermon or lecture to the nuns at the convent of Oetenbach near Zurich. The subject of this sermon was the clarity and power of the Word of God. We will turn to this sermon from time to time in coming articles.

Zwingli proceeds from the principle that man as created in the image of God was made a creature capable of understanding God's Word. The Word of God is clear to him therefore in itself and is powerful, either as a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. That Word of God, whether spoken by God unto man or set down in the Scriptures is therefore inherently clear in its meaning. If man does not understand it, the fault lies with man and not with God's Word.

Thus he writes,

The Word of God and the messenger of the Word are a sweet smell or savour (II Cor. 2); but a savour of life to some, and of death to others. Illustration. Consider a good strong wine. To the healthy it tastes excellent. It makes him merry and strengthens him and warms his blood. But if there is someone who is sick of a disease or fever, he cannot even taste it, let alone drink it, and he marvels that the healthy is able to do so. This is not due to any defect in the wine, but to that of the sickness. So too it is with the Word of God. It is right in itself and its proclamation is always for good. If there are those who cannot bear or understand or receive it, it is because they are sick. So much by way of answer to those who rashly maintain that God does not want us to understand his words, as though it were his will to bring us into danger. If we fail to understand him, it is because we are out of favour. A son knows that he enjoys his father's favour even when his father speaks roughly to him or rebukes him. He is outside his grace only when he does not speak to him at all either to teach or admonish. So too it is the most bitter punishment and a sure sign of imminent calamities to be deprived of the consolation of the Word of God. (Zwingli and Bullinger, tr. G.W. Bromley, *Library of Christian Classics*, Volume XXIV, The Westminster Press, 1953, p. 75.)

The Word itself therefore is clear and good. It is

man's own darkness which is at fault if he understand it not. Zwingli then proceeds to demonstrate this truth by showing from both Old and New Testaments that when God spoke His Word unto His people, they understood it. This clarity may not be separated from the internal principle of the illuminating work of the Spirit of which Zwingli has more to say and to which we will return. But the principle must be established: the Word of God is clear in itself and perspicuous.

The trouble with Rome however, and also in our own day, is that man always seeks to impose his own opinions and meaning upon the Scriptures or to obscure them by taking a text out of its context. Rome would have subjected the meaning of Scripture to the church's authority and would have added to it. It was not that Scripture was unclear, for the Word of God is a unity whose clear and natural meaning can be understood. The problem was spiritual blindness and inability to hear the Word of God. Thus they cast doubt upon its meaning by their subtlety, seeking to impose tradition, the pronouncements of the church and the fathers upon Scripture. They placed upon it the opinions of the majority and made truth subject to the vanity of man. Zwingli rather forcefully points this out.

In direct contradiction to the teaching of Paul, that all interpretation and thought and experience should be made captive to the will and service of God, they try to subject the doctrine of God to the judgment of men. Now take note of the answer: In the first place, by the Gospel we do not mean only the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but, as we have said, all that God has revealed to man in order that he may instruct him and give him a sure knowledge of his will. But God is one, and he is a Spirit of unity, not of discord. Hence we may see that his words have always a true and natural sense; may God grant it, no matter how we may wrest them this way or that. And here I beg you in the name of God not to take it amiss if I draw your attention to a common error. It is that of the majority of those who in these days oppose the Gospel — for although they dare not admit to doing this in public, in secret they do everything within their power to that end. Listen to what they say. Not everything, they say, is told us in the Gospels. There are many good things which are never even thought of in the Gospel. Oh, you rascals — you are not instructed or versed in the Gospel, and you pick out verses from it without regard to their context and wrest them according to your own desire. It is like breaking off a

flower from its roots and trying to plant it in a garden. But that is not the way: you must plant it with the roots and the soil in which it is embedded. And similarly we must leave the Word of God its own proper nature if its sense is to be the same to all of us. And those who err in this way we can easily vanquish by leading them back to the source, though they never come willingly. But some of them are such confirmed dunces that even when the natural sense is expounded in such a way that they cannot deny it, they still allege that they cannot presume to understand it thus unless the Fathers allow that it may so be understood: on the ground that many expositors will always have a better understanding than one or two. Answer: If that is the case, then Christ himself was in error, which God forbid, for most of the priests of the time held quite a different view and he had to stand alone. And the apostles were also mistaken, for they were opposed by whole nations and cities. And even today the number of unbelievers far outweighs the number of believers: are we to conclude then that their view is right and ours wrong simply because they are more numerous than we? No. Consider for yourselves; truth is not necessarily with the majority. What then of the argument? It has no force in the present controversy. Indeed, I see that even popes and councils have sometimes fallen into serious error, especially Anastasius and Liberius in the Arian heresy. Will you concede that? Yes. Then your case is lost, for you must allow that if they erred once there is always the fear that they will err again, and therefore we cannot trust in them with any certainty. Once we have discovered that — for: *omnis homo mendax*, all men are liars, deceiving and being deceived — we see that ultimately only God himself can teach us the truth with such certainty that all doubts are removed. (ibid., pp. 86-87.)

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IN HIS FEAR

The Christian Family — Its Biblical Foundations

Pastor Arie den Hartog

It is our purpose to write a series of articles on the Christian family for our contribution to this department for the year. Although much has been written on this subject lately we believe that this subject is of such great importance and that it has so many facets to it that it is one that is worthy of further consideration. The family is the most fundamental of all the institutions which God in His infinite wisdom has established among men. There is none of greater importance. It is basic to all the other institutions of the church, the state, and society. We as Reformed Christians especially know how tremendously significant the institution of the family is in the church and kingdom of God. We know and believe the great truth of scripture that teaches us that God from the beginning to the end of time is pleased to continue His gracious covenant from generation to generation with believers and their children. How precious to us is the promise of God to our father Abraham: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7). The institution of the family is also of great significance for the church of Jesus Christ. A strong church depends upon strong Christian homes. It will only continue if each succeeding generation by the grace of God fulfills its covenant obligation to raise up a godly seed. Many of us in the Reformed tradition can testify of several generations before us who by the grace of God were Christians. This is no reason for us to boast but only reason for the highest praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. What a great wonder of His grace and mercy it is that He should be pleased to raise up the generations of His people from a race as thoroughly corrupt and depraved from its very birth as ours is. Each generation of the covenant is a new manifestation of the wonderful grace and mercy of the God of our salvation.

From the time of the fall of man into sin under the instigation of the devil the institution of the family has been under attack. Each age experiences new and more subtle attacks on the family. We

witness the increasing immorality of our age, the many broken homes, and the destitute and delinquent children that this evil world in which we live brings forth. We must not imagine that we are immune from these attacks on the family. Even in our own midst we see corrupt and apostate generations arise. There is an increasing number of cases of family trouble and even of divorces in our own churches. With much sorrow we witness an element of our own young people that are worldly and ungodly.

The Christian home must be built upon the foundation which the Lord Himself has laid down in His Word. More and more the world is seeking to overthrow these foundations. It is said that these foundations are irrelevant for our modern age. We are told that we must change the order of the relationship between husband and wife in marriage. Some are even so foolish and evil to suggest that authority in the home ought no longer to be exercised only by father and mother but it must be shared with children in the home. There is a rise of incidents where men and women no longer want to get married. They do not want the obligation and responsibility of establishing a home and raising children. More and more we witness living-together arrangements where men and women live in "sexual freedom" outside the holy bonds of marriage which God has ordained. Many modern day couples decide even before they marry not to have any children or to have very few children lest their own freedom be limited and lest they hamper themselves in the great pursuits of life for pleasure and wealth. Often fathers and mothers are so entirely wrapped up in the labors of earthly careers that precious little time and effort is spent with children. By all means we must find other institutions than the family, it is said, to care for and raise the children. These notions do not arise because families are so poor and destitute that both father and mother have to work to make ends meet and simply to feed their hungry children. No, these ideas arise in an age of extreme wealth and materialism unparalleled by any the world has ever

known. Others are clamoring for so-called alternative life styles, with arrangements as abominable as two homosexuals living together and even raising children. There is a desperate need for us as Christians to maintain the foundations which the Lord has laid for the family, the foundations which are sure and unchangeable.

We believe that marriage and the family had their beginning in God's creation order. In His great wisdom, for the glory of His own name and the welfare of man and society, and especially for the future of His own church and kingdom the Lord decreed the order of marriage and the home. The story of this is told us in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis. On many occasions we have had opportunity to study these portions of God's Word in connection with giving instruction at the regular pre-marriage counselling classes held in the church here in Singapore. Each time we study these and other sections of the Word of God on the subjects of marriage and the family we are again amazed by the beautiful order which God created. We are told in Genesis 1 that God created man in His own image and likeness. We are told that God created both male and female in His own image. In this respect man and woman are equal before God. The woman is not a lower form of being than the man according to God's creation order. Both were created in such a way that they could know, love, and serve God their creator. This was the purpose which God gave both to man and to woman.

When God made man male and female He did not create each separate and independent of one another. He did not create them both at the same time. He created man first and He created woman out of man. Thereby He established the order of marriage that man should be the head of his wife and that woman should be his companion and helpmeet. This wonderful order of God makes possible the great mystery of marriage. When God first created man He made him with a great need for a companion and helpmeet. God made Adam to feel this need very keenly when He brought all the animals to Adam and Adam realized that there was no helpmeet to be found for him. God made man a helpmeet out of his own rib. How beautiful the story of God's creation of marriage. When God brought Eve to Adam, with great joy in his heart Adam exclaimed: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). God made for Adam a helpmeet that, like himself, was created after His own image and that was also wonderfully different from him, such that she could live with him and in the blessed union of one flesh and fulfill his greatest need and afford him the deepest joy and satisfaction. God gave to Adam his

most precious gift in giving him Eve. Furthermore, the Lord joined them together and gave them the command to love one another and live in life-long faithfulness with each other. This story is not some fairy tale devised by man. It is far more wonderful and blessed than anything that man in his sinful heart can imagine. The marriage which God created was the beginning of the home and family. The welfare of the home and family depends first of all on the order in which husband and wife lived with each other. This is not one that can be changed at whim and fancy of man so that it is equally proper for the woman to rule over the man or for the two, the man and the woman, to have equal authority. God made man to be the head over the woman, giving him authority over her and the obligation and calling lovingly to protect and keep her and lead and guide her. God made woman to be a help unto man to serve him so that together they might serve the Lord their creator.

God gave both to the man and the woman the mandate to have dominion over all the earth. Together they were to rule over God's creation for the glory of the Lord. Yet in this Adam was to be the head and Eve was to be his helper. Neither could perform their calling without the other. This calling they would fulfill in their daily occupation. We believe that this mandate continues for man today. The Christian man and woman fulfill this command only by the grace and Spirit of God. They no longer labor only for this earth but they are joint heirs through Christ Jesus of the world that is to come.

At the time of creation God also gave to man and woman the mandate to bring forth children, to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. This is another amazing and wonderful aspect of God's creation of the family. The man and the woman were called to fulfill this obligation together in obedience to God and in love for each other. Also this was a mandate. Today it is imagined that bringing forth children is merely a matter of personal preference. Some may even without any other than selfish reasons decide not to have any children. One of the most amazing facts of God's creation of man is that He created them from the first not in hundreds and thousands as He did the animals. God first created one man and woman and united them together in marriage. He gave to them the most amazing and wonderful power under His providence to bring forth children after their own image and likeness. Especially to the woman He gave such an amazing and wonderful role that within her very own body a new life, a new human being could be born. We must never cease to be amazed at the great wonders of God in all of these things. It has rightly been said that woman's role in this is so

absolutely fantastic that there is nothing which God has given to man that equals it.

In God's creation order marriage and the home were to be the sphere in which children were to be born and raised. Herein also is manifested the great wisdom of God. Let no man say that any institution of man's own invention can replace what God has ordained and created. It was not God's purpose to continue to create independent and full-grown mature men and women after that He had created Adam and Eve. He was pleased to bring every other human being into this world as a helpless and dependent, weak and undeveloped little babe. The whole of the development of these little babes, physically, psychologically, and spiritually was to be the responsibility of their parents. The sphere in which the children were to grow was the sphere of the home. Every aspect of the home would have a tremendous influence upon the development of the child. How wonderfully suited the family is ideally for the purpose for which God created it. From a natural point of view the family would be the warm protective sphere in which children could grow and develop. In the family the children not only receive physical sustenance but also love, encouragement, and direction in life. In the sphere of the family, children would learn the knowledge and fear of the

Lord. In the sphere of the family, children could see the example of father and mother and follow after it. All of this would have been true even had there been no fall of man into sin. The Lord caused that children should come forth from the very flesh and blood of their parents. With this arrangement there would be the strongest of physical ties between them to motivate parents in the necessary care and concern for the children.

In His wonderful providence the Lord ordained that father and mother should have their own unique role in the raising of the children. This role is related to the very nature of man and woman. The healthy physical and spiritual development of the child is dependent upon the unique influence of both mother and father. The Lord ordained that the father should exercise the role of authority and protection and provision and the mother of tender compassion and concern.

We have considered the family as it is ideally according to the purpose of God. We know of course that sin came into the world and had tremendous consequences for the family. It did not however abolish the order which God created. The biblical foundations of the family stand for all time, even though we as Christians in our families can only begin by the grace of God to live according to them.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

Rev. G. Lubbers

The Mystery Of the "Seventy Weeks" in Daniel 9, Chapter XX

Gabriel the Messenger From God's Throne (con't.)

At the fulness of time this same Gabriel is sent as a Messenger from God. God suddenly comes to His temple by means of Gabriel at the time of the sacrifice (Mal. 3:1). The suddenness of his appearance to Zacharias reflects the suddenness with which the "Messenger of the Covenant," the Lord Jesus, will come to Israel in order to usher in the Kingdom of heaven. Truly, when Jesus came in the flesh, the Kingdom was realized by His death and resurrection and by His glorious ascension. And the people were told that the kingdom of heaven was come, be it then unawares to blind unbelief (Matt. 12:28).

Be this as it may, the plain truth is that it is Gabriel who brings the grand message to Zacharias, the father of John, the forerunner of Christ. Principally John came to reconstitute all things in preparation for the King (Matt. 17:11, 12; Mark 9:11-13). John was the long-expected and foretold Elijah, who was to come (Is. 40:3-5; Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4). This was the great subject of discussion even in the Jewish seminaries (John 1:19-24). He is the friend of the Bridegroom, this John; he must prepare the way, present the Messiah to Israel, and then go away from the scene of action and die like the greatest of the prophets (John 3:25-36). The very kingdom of heaven will suffer violence because of John's preparatory labors, and the violent will take it by force (Matt. 11:12). Thus the

power of the coming age is set aflame in the church, and men taste and see the power of this age to come. Believers taste and see that the Lord is good (I Peter 2:3; Psalm 34:8).

To bring this great announcement, Gabriel is the designated Messenger, the ministering spirit who stands before God (Heb. 1:14). No, Gabriel is not to sit at God's right hand; he may not sit upon the throne, as do later Christ and all the saints, but he stands "before God," as His mighty messenger. He hastens to do God's bidding! And men had better listen for their very life's sake (Heb. 2:1-3).

We are, at this point, especially interested to show that Gabriel is the divinely appointed and designated angel to bring the *Gospel*-tidings of the fulfillment of the promises made in the Old Testament. And in both points of God's wise dispensation Daniel must serve this role, whether it be at the time of Daniel, when the last fourteen generations of the holy, royal line is ushered in, or whether it be at the end of this designated period when Christ will be born from the Virgin. Forsoothe, any other angel could not bear the very meaningful name: Gabriel. The name Gabriel is *God is mighty!* The Almighty God is nobly and ably represented in this Gabriel, who had power to lay his hand on a fainting Daniel to strengthen him (Dan. 8:18), and who can by his mighty word make Zacharias dumb for a very specially designated length of time (Luke 1:20). This Gabriel represents the God Who raises the dead to life, and Who calls the things that be not as if they were (Rom. 4:17). Surely the true seed of Abraham do not in hope against hope live and die in vain!

God Almighty sent His great angel!

Gabriel was a messenger sent forth to minister for them, who shall be the heirs of salvation. And Scripture emphasizes that this message is not only for the circumcision but also for the foreskin, to all who walk in the footprints of the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:12). He who does not believe this does not believe all the prophetic Scriptures. For the elect, the believers out of both Jews and Greeks, those who are near and who are far off, shall all one day be the one new man in Christ, one fold and one Shepherd (John 10:16; Is. 56:8; Ez. 37:22; Eph. 2:11-22). Truly, Daniel's message from Gabriel is not merely concerning the rebuilding of earthly Jerusalem, and the raising up again of the temple after the pattern of the Solomon's temple; it refers to the far greater and more perfect temple which is to come, which shall indeed be filled with the glory of the Lord forever, the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit (Haggai 2:3-9; Eph. 2:17-22). Only such a message is the answer to Daniel's imploring and supplication concerning "Jerusalem, thy holy

mountain" and the "sanctuary that is desolate for the Lord's sake" (Dan. 9:16ff.). Daniel knew full well that the return to the full-fledged priesthood after the order of Aaron could not perfect anything. There is no sacrifice in the Old Testament which could cleanse the conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22).

This makes for the urgency of Daniel's prayer, that God may cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary which is desolate for the Lord's sake. God has a greater and higher purpose in destroying the Old Testament temple, namely, that He may raise up the temple in three days to heavenly heights of glory in the better and true tabernacle, which shall be filled with the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (John 2:19-22).

The Seventy Years as Represented in the "Seventy Sevens" (Daniel 9:24)

It ought to be quite obvious to the most careful and believing reader, that the angel Gabriel, speaking of the "seventy sevens" (weeks) does not merely refer to seventy "years" as did Jeremiah in his prophecy, and as referred to in the Chronicles (Jer. 25:11, 12; II Chron. 36:21). The years referred to and predicted by Jeremiah are literal calendar years, giving historical dates. Israel could mark these off on their calendar; it was a veritable countdown. Israel is definitely instructed by Jeremiah that they must prepare themselves to live in the foreign land of Babylon in hope of returning to the promised land after exactly seventy years. In the meantime they must submit to the "powers that be" in Babylon. It is well to study carefully that remarkable word of the LORD to Israel in Jer. 29:4-7. It is the divine directive for Israel's life and preservation in Babylon, where they hang their harps upon the willows. Notice the following injunctions:

1. Build ye houses and dwell in them. Vs. 5
2. Plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. Vs. 5
3. Take wives and beget sons and daughters, take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye be increased there and not be diminished. Vs. 6
4. Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives. Vs. 7
5. And pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

Here we see the work program, a program of hope for the church in the midst of the world. This was not merely the order of the day for Israel in Babylon, but such is the abiding principle for the life of the church in the midst of all nations (Rom. 13:1-8; I Peter 2:13-17; I Tim. 2:14). God ever has in mind the gathering of the church out of all nations.

World history is church history! The safety of Israel in the midst of the world is that she sanctifies the LORD God in obeying His word. Thus she enters into the rest (Is. 8:12, 13; I Peter 3:15).

When we are dealing with actual historical times and circumstances, and of definite historical dates on a calendar, we can also have definite injunctions for the proper conduct of God's people in these historical situations, appointed by God.

This is not the case with the "seventy sevens" of which Daniel speaks. He really makes the revelation of the Mystery of these "seventy sevens" in rather startling and arresting terms. And it should be noticed, that Jehovah through His messenger is truly ushering in the fulfillment of the Old Testament "lunar calendar," which regulated the feasts and sabbath days in their prophetic intent and meaning. No other nation outside of Israel, the people of God, ever received such a calendar of "sevens."

What is the reason for this?

The Scriptural meaning of the number "seven" is that it represents the perfection of the work of God, whether in creation or in recreation. We read in Genesis 2:1 that God finished His work of creation on the seventh day. This was the capstone of God's creation work, sanctifying all things in His

service (Heb. 4:4). Here is not the place to enter into the matter here cited from Genesis 2:1; we only refer to this to show the meaning of the term "seven." It is the cornerstone of God's dealings with His people in their life's pattern, which must not be merely number "six," which is the number of man, of this creation apart from God (Rev. 13:18). Six is the number of man. In its highest perfection of antichristian world-and-culture it is never more than six hundred sixty-six. However, seven is the perfection of the Covenant, of the tabernacle of God with man.

The Bible teaches very clearly and loudly that God will bring His people into the land of "rest," a land of Sabbaths. Here in this land He will place His "name in the place of rest." This is the place where God will "record my name" (Ex. 20:24). God will bring His people into His land of rest, a land of many sabbaths. The land must have its prescribed sabbaths, and Israel must enter into the rest of God, His perfected Covenant. God had designated that Israel must come to worship in the holy sanctuary, whether this would be the tabernacle at Shiloh or the temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5, 11, 13). Hence, the entire life of Israel is regulated by the number "seven." We notice this in the regular weekly sabbath on every "seventh day," or in the special (con't. on page 372)

News From Our Churches

April 30, 1985

The elders of Hope Church, Redlands, California have been busy traveling to Ripon to exercise oversight of our Mission work and to encourage the group of saints there and Rev. Houck. Remember this work of God in your prayers.

Covenant Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey reports that the church structure is complete on the outside, including the steeple. The latest step was installing the curb, driveway, and parking lot. This step also included the water line, hydrant, and electric. The gas and electric were installed at a reasonable cost that saved the church a considerable amount of money. The rough plumbing, electric, and air ducts on the inside of the church are finished. However, the insulation, sheetrock, furnishings, carpet, further plumbing and electric, the air and heating units need to be done. The estimated cost to finish the church is around \$65,000.00.

It was a privilege and pleasure for our churches in the Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and South Holland areas to have Rev. Rawson, pastor of the Independent Measboro Dyke Evangelical Church

at Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England visit and speak with us. His vibrant speeches clearly set forth his love for the Reformed Truth. The church there is comprised of eleven families and six individuals who stand alone in their love for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. While in America, Pastor Rawson spent time in Kalamazoo at the International Day, in South Holland, and in Grand Rapids where he spoke to Grandville Church in the morning and First Church at night and then to Adams Street School on Monday morning. Rev. Rawson has been a follower of our Protestant Reformed teaching for many years and has corresponded extensively with Prof. Hanko, and has long been a member of the tape study class, "Studies in Bible Doctrine." May God graciously lead Rev. Rawson and the small group of believers with His Fatherly hand.

The Activities Committee of Kalamazoo Church, with committees from Byron Center Church and Faith Church in Michigan, is planning a Singapore Camp Day. This Camp Day will be held like the Camp Days held in Singapore.

The Men's Society of South Holland Church in Illinois sponsored a lecture for May 3. Rev. C. Hanco spoke on the topic "The Events Surrounding The Schism of 1953."

Southeast Church's Evangelism Society in Grand Rapids, Michigan sponsored a Dutch Psalm Sing at Raybrook Manor.

The Spring Ladies' League of Hull, Doon, and Edgerton Churches was held in Edgerton. Prof. Decker spoke on the topic, "God's Prescription for Anxiety."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Lynden, Washington Protestant Reformed Church expresses deep and abiding sympathy to its members, Mrs. Anna Boonstra, Mr. Herman Boonstra and Mrs. Eleanor Boonstra in the death of their husband, father and father-in-law respectively, MR. OSCAR BOONSTRA.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:23, 24)

The Adult Bible Society

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Young Peoples' Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington, wishes to express its heartfelt sympathy to one of their faithful members, Herman D. Boonstra, and his family in the recent death of his grandfather, MR. OSCAR BOONSTRA.

May he and his loved ones experience the comforting presence of the Spirit of Christ, Who still says to us: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

The Young Peoples' Society
D. Zandstra, Pres.
E. de Boer, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

On Wednesday, April 10, 1985, it pleased our covenant Father in heaven to take unto Himself our beloved husband, Father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, MR. OSCAR BOONSTRA at the age of 77 years.

Our sorrow is deep, but the Lord who makes covenant with His people sustains us in the knowledge that He is faithful to take unto Himself those to whom He has freely and graciously given the hope of life in Christ.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." (II Corinthians 5:1, 2)

Mrs. Anna Boonstra (His Loving Wife)
Peter Boonstra (His Dear Children)

Joanne and Frank Vogel, Jr. Andrew and Sylvia Boonstra
Fred and Shirley Boonstra Tressa and Don Kamphouse
Janet and Gerrit Honcoop Herman and Eleanor Boonstra
Pauline and Billy Ray And his 33 grandchildren, and
Sandra and Loren Harsch 20 great-grandchildren
Lynden, Washington

Prof. Decker also spoke to Covenant Christian High School P.T.F.A. on the subject, "Whether It is Right, Proper, and Desirable to Teach Our Children at Home Rather Than in School."

The Men's and Ladies' Societies of Grand Rapids, Michigan heard Rev. M. Joostens speak on "World Hunger: Our Responsibility As Churches or Individuals."

Grandville Church, Michigan has changed the months they observe the Lord's Supper. They now observe the Lord's Supper in May, August, November, and February so that these times will not conflict with Christmas, Lent, and the annual synod.

Rev. George Hutton, Pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, Northern Ireland, will speak at a public meeting in South Holland, Illinois on the evening of June 7.

DH

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 1, 1985, our parents MR. AND MRS. JOHN C. LUBBERS, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren rejoice that our Gracious God has given them these precious years together.

We thank our Covenant God for their Christian example, constant love and patient instruction. We pray for our Heavenly Father's richest blessings on them in the years to come.

Ed and Lorraine Miedema	John and Joan Bouma
Don and Correne Van Overloop	27 Grandchildren
Gary and Carol Lubbers	10 Great Grandchildren
	Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to a fellow member, Mrs. Irene Holstege, in the death of her brother, MR. IVAN VAN FARROW. Our prayer is that God will be her comfort in sorrow.

"I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
June Van Overloop, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and congregation of the Lynden, Washington Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere and heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Oscar Boonstra and her family in the passing of their husband, father and grandfather, MR. OSCAR BOONSTRA.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in him will I trust." (Psalm 91:2)

The Consistory of
Lynden Protestant Reformed Church
H. Vander Meulen, Pres.
D. Scheele, Clerk