

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . rather than studying the Word of God for ourselves, we immediately flee to commentaries or to the writings of men We may and must certainly use such writings and avail ourselves of them. But when they become a substitute for serious, personal Bible study, we are in trouble, serious trouble.

See "Taught of God by the Word
and Prayer" — page 424

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MEDITATION

No Charge Against Us

Rev. H. Veldman

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

Romans 8:33, 34a

In the context, the Lord has chosen a people from before the foundation of the world. And these people rejoice in the midst of the world because of

wonderful things. We hear them say that all things work together for good. And this: God will grant us all things for the sake of His Son, for "He that

spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Indeed, with uplifted head they walk unto the city that has foundations.

However, it is as though the apostle hears protests all about him. Indeed, the enemy cries out to us: the Lord will grant you all things, while you are sinners? And, intercepting these evil protests, which also very really are cast at the people of God, Paul cries out in this text, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Indeed, that God will grant us all things lies rooted in the fact that He has justified us. Hence, who shall condemn us?

* * * * *

Justification — what is it?

Justification is the primary concept in this text. Fundamentally, the word refers to our right relation to God's will and law. We can speak of this relation in a spiritual sense, in the sense of sanctification. Then we are spiritually in conformity with the will of God. Then we are holy. However, we can also speak of justification in a judicial, legal sense. This refers to our state. Then we deal with the guilt of sin. To be righteous legally means that, from a legal point of view, no charge or accusation can be brought against us. This, then, is a legal concept. It is this legal concept which is meant in this word of God. That this is true appears from the fact that we read here that no charge can be lodged against the elect of God.

To be justified means that we have completely fulfilled the law of God and continue to fulfill it. God declares us to be in complete harmony with His law, that our legal position over against the law is one of absolute innocence, so that there is nothing between us and the Lord. We must not confuse justification with sanctification. Sanctification refers to our condition; justification refers to our state. Sanctification is a spiritual work of the Holy Spirit; justification is the declaration of God as He is the Judge of all the earth. Justification is that declaration of God that we have completely fulfilled the law and continue to fulfill it, so that our legal position is not that of a guilty one but of perfect obedience and righteousness. And this justification is, of course, strictly dependent upon and determined by the living God.

Now, first of all, we must not confuse God's justification with pardon. This does happen in our civil life. A prisoner, sentenced to life imprisonment, may receive a pardon from the governor because of good behavior while in prison, because the governor judges that this prisoner has been sufficiently rehabilitated and can now function as an asset to society. With God, however, this is im-

possible. No sinner receives his freedom without the full payment of all his sin. Neither must we confuse this justification with forgetfulness. The Lord does not, cannot forget. That we are justified means, first of all, that we are declared by God to be completely innocent. However, this judgment rests upon holiest justice. The Lord, we know, gives no pardon; He never forgets a wrong. All guilt must be paid, and that in the way of the complete satisfaction of God's justice. When we are justified, however, we are also declared to be heirs of everlasting life and glory, entitled to the life of fellowship with God in everlasting glory and heavenly immortality. This justification is for God's church and people the basis of their salvation. This determines one's eternal weal or woe. The fundamental question is: how do I stand legally before God; am I guilty or innocent, worthy of life eternal or of everlasting damnation?

No charge to be laid against us! No condemnation! How amazing!

What an amazing shout of triumph we have here in this word of God! The apostle sees the church as in the midst of the world, always accused by the world. Let us visualize a trial in a courtroom. Three parties are represented here: the judge, the accused, and the accuser or accusers. Had not the apostle spoken boldly in the context? Had he not written that there is no condemnation for us, that all things work together for good to them that love God? And now the child of God is attacked. Many are his enemies. And now the apostle declares, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He challenges them to bring forth their charges. No condemnation? How is this possible? No charge can be lodged against us, no sin? Let us understand the implication of this challenge of the apostle. The apostle does not utter this question in fear, as if he were afraid that such charges can be brought against the people of God. However, this question of the inspired apostle is a glorious challenge, a shout of triumph, rooted in the conviction that such an accusation is impossible. But, how can this be? The idea, we understand, is that nothing can be lodged against us. Nothing? I cannot be accused of any sin? But, am I not full of sin? Do we not sin every day, in thought and in word and in deed? Is it not true that whoever would say that he had no sin deceives himself and the truth is not in him? And yet the question is asked, triumphantly, "Who shall lay anything to our charge?" What an amazing cry of triumph we have here in this word of God! We may well ask, how is this possible?

* * * * *

Indeed, apparently this cry of jubilation is surely unfounded. Look at all the charges that can be

lodged against us. First of all, the world accuses us, led by Satan, the prince of the powers of the air. They refer to our sins. Fact is, that ungodly world and the devil are surely acquainted with our sins. And they accuse us with a formidable witness, the law, the law of God. And that law of God demands obedience, and also the punishment of everlasting death upon our sins. Secondly, also the flesh testifies against us. And this flesh is far more formidable than the world. The world is familiar only with our outward sins. But this flesh witnesses in us. It speaks of our intimate thoughts, also of those prayers that are displeasing to God, the sins whereof we alone are conscious.

What shall we answer these accusers? On the one hand, we must not deny these charges. We must never try to refute these accusers, enter into debate with the devil and our flesh. We must never defend ourselves. As far as the devil and our flesh are concerned, let us by all means agree with them concerning our sins. It is so true what they say of us. In fact, we should answer the devil that we are much worse than his presentation of our sins. I know how great a sinner I am. I know this through divine grace. In fact, I am evil in all my walk, from the morning until the evening. Even my best works are as filthy rags. But, what then? We are sinners and we sin always. How is it, then, that no one can bring in any charge against us? Why is this?

Indeed, this cry of jubilation is well-grounded. Fact is, we read, God it is Who justifies. This appears in our text with all emphasis. *God justifies.* He is God, and He alone. He is the only Judge of the heavens and of the earth. Next to Him or above Him there is no other, no higher appeal. God, Who alone is God, Who alone has all power and authority, Who also alone determines my lot and destiny, has declared, I find no guilt in them. And He has declared us righteous upon the ground of perfect and unchangeable justice. And when God, the only Judge of heaven and earth, declares us righteous, that judgment is unchangeable, irrevocable. It can never be annulled.

However, this is not all. Can one never accuse *me* of any sin? This is indeed possible. It is certainly not difficult to accuse me of sin. This we acknowledge and confess every day. But, the text does not say this. We do not read that no charge can ever be lodged against us. But we do read this: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Against the elect no charge can ever be lodged. Why not? Because the elect are God's people as the Lord has known them from before the foundations of the world. The elect are God's people as He has known and loved them in Christ Jesus. The elect are they who are clothed, eternally, with the righteousness

of Christ Jesus. It is for this reason that the Lord does not see any unrighteousness in Jacob or iniquity in Israel. It is for the elect that Christ has suffered and died and is risen again. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself all our sins and trespasses, bore the wrath of God, the eternal and infinite wrath of God, in full consciousness and in perfect love and obedience. He paid for all our sins and trespasses and merited for us everlasting life, perfect fellowship with God in heavenly immortality. In Christ we glory, never in ourselves. He alone is our salvation. We are saved by grace, through faith, and never out of works. We must glory, never in ourselves, only in the grace of God. God's people will sing forever the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? None! Shall we take this cry of triumph upon our lips? Shall we say this, jubilantly and triumphantly? Shall the devil, the world, our flesh ever point to any sin and demand of the Judge of all the earth that He condemns us? Shall anyone plead against us, demand of the Judge of heaven and earth that He condemn us? I repeat: we must never argue with the devil. We must never attempt to defend ourselves. We must never try to place over against all our evil the little good we perform only in principle. We must embrace this word of God, carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. We must take God at His word. Indeed, let the Judge of all the earth speak. And, HE HAS SPOKEN. He has spoken here, in Romans 8:33-34, and throughout the Word of God. This word of God is sufficient? It is more than sufficient. Shall we, then, continue through our earthly pilgrimage, with dejected hearts and minds and souls? God forbid! Let us embrace this word of God through faith, this testimony of our God concerning His elect.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

God it is Who justifies.

None can therefore condemn.

We are justified, now and forevermore.

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EDITORIAL

Synod of 1985, A Brief Report

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

This year's synod was off to an early start. On Monday evening the pre-synodical service, at which the Rev. David Engelsma (last year's president) preached on Judges 6:11-17, was held; and on Tuesday morning Synod of 1985 began. Tuesday was devoted to organization, which includes the election of officers (Rev. J. Kortering, president; Rev. G. Van Baren, vice president; Rev. J. Slopsema, first clerk; and Rev. C. Haak, second clerk) and the appointment of advisory committees. The latter spent the rest of Tuesday preparing advice to steer Synod in its deliberations. For the next three days Synod alternated between the advice of Committee I (Mission matters) and that of Committee II (Contact Committee matters), and by the end of the first week had not yet completed its treatment of either report. Synod made haste slowly, in other words. This was due mainly to the fact that there were several weighty matters to which careful attention had to be paid.

It is not the purpose of this report to furnish all the details of the decisions of synod; for this the printed Acts will have to be consulted. Here we simply summarize and report some of the significant decisions.

Mission Matters

1. There were brief reports on the various missions in our own country. Without much discussion synod approved continuation of labors in the Northwest Chicago area, the Ripon, California field, and the Norristown/Blue Bell, Pennsylvania field. For the rest, with regard to these fields synod had to take care of various "housekeeping" and budget matters.

2. Synod gave lengthy and careful attention to matters concerning the Jamaica field. In fact, more than one item was sent back to the advisory committee for new and better advice. Undoubtedly the most important decision in this connection — one which made all other decisions concerning policy in the Jamaica work conditional — was the decision

of synod to express its disapproval of the actions of First Church and the Mission Committee in sending Rev. Bruinsma to Jamaica without an accompanying ordained co-worker who is a retired minister or a minister on loan, as required in the pertinent decisions of 1983 and 1984. Further, synod decided to instruct the First Church Consistory and the Mission Committee to attempt to obtain an ordained co-worker to work with Rev. Bruinsma for a period of 6 to 9 months, and that "in the event no co-worker (retired minister or minister on loan) can be obtained by October 1, 1985, Rev. Bruinsma be recalled from Jamaica and be declared eligible for a call in our churches." For the rest, synod made many policy decisions with respect to the Jamaica work which are too complicated and detailed to report here. As was said, however, all of these decisions are conditional in the light of the decision reported above.

3. As far as the report of the Foreign Mission Committee is concerned, there is nothing new to report. Synod had the advantage in its consideration of this report of having the Rev. den Hartog, who was home on furlough, present both for the consideration of the FMC report and in connection with the matter of sister church relations with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. The Rev. den Hartog's work in Singapore is going to be continued. Synod also decided not to authorize the sending of emissaries to Singapore and Malaysia in the coming year.

Contact With Other Churches

There was a lengthy and detailed report before Synod from the Committee for Contact With Other Churches. Of the several items of this report we single out the two most significant.

1. Following the committee's advice, synod approved the establishment of full sister church relations with the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore on the following grounds: "a. The ERC is a church established on the basis of the Reformed

Standards and maintains them in their ecclesiastical life. b. The ERC was organized as the fruit of our mission work. c. The ERC has been and is currently making use of our Seminary to train its ministers. d. The ERC itself has agreed to such a relationship. e. The Committee believes such full relationships would benefit us and them. f. Scripture calls us to seek fellowship with those of like precious faith with us (Eph. 4:1-16, Jn. 17:20-23). g. Although the ERCS has only provisionally adopted our liturgical forms and although our Church Order has not been adopted, nevertheless our liturgical forms are being used with growing appreciation and their church government is basically Reformed."

2. Also following the committee's advice, synod approved the establishment of full sister church relations with the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, North Ireland. This decision was preceded by two others. First of all, "That Synod interpret the expression 'The Reformed Standards' in V, B, 4 of the Constitution of the Contact Committee as including the Westminster Confession and Catechisms." And, secondly, "That Synod instruct the Contact Committee to discuss with the BPC the matter of women voting in their congregational meetings, because we consider this practice unbiblical (I Cor. 14:34, 35, II Tim. 2:11, 12)." Synod then proceeded to approve sister church relations on the following grounds: "a. The BPC has formally requested such relationships. b. The BPC is agreed with us in all essential matters of doctrine, life, calling, and church policy. c. The BPC is faithful to their confessions in their doctrine and life, and are earnestly attempting to maintain a distinctive Reformed witness in North Ireland. d. Such sister church relations would benefit both us and them. e. Scripture calls us to seek fellowship with those of like precious faith with us (Eph. 4:1-16, Jn. 17:20-23)."

Appeals

There were two personal appeals of decisions of Classis West with which synod had to deal. One concerned the matter of allowing ministers to preach in churches of other denominations. Classis West was sustained in its decision that this appeal was not legally before it. The other appeal concerned the matter of a consistory distributing a letter in connection with the sending of a teacher to North Ireland. This appeal was also rejected and Classis West was sustained.

Psalter Reprint

Last year it was decided to include in our *Psalter* the ecumenical creeds and also historical introductions to all the creeds. This will obviously involve a new edition of our *Psalter*. During the past year a committee has been investigating ways of accom-

plishing this goal, and they reported to Synod this year. Synod, however, decided that further investigation as to the best way of achieving this goal should be made; and the same committee was appointed.

Meanwhile, the current supply of the *Psalter* as published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Co. has run out. We have been assured, however, that there will be a limited reprint late this summer; hence, churches and individuals will be able to obtain the old edition until a new one is printed. Since the committee must report again to Synod in 1986, it looks as though it will be at least 1987 before the new edition appears.

Theological School Matters

In connection with the Rector's Report and the Report of the Theological School Committee, we may mention the following:

1. Synod decided to "remind our churches of the need of students and encourage our officebearers to counsel their young men concerning this need. Further, that the consistories be requested to have their pastors bear this need in mind in their catechism teaching and consider asking the Professors to speak to any concerned group or catechism class concerning this need." This is in connection with the fact that after next year, according to present schedule projections, we will have two pre-seminarians but no seminary students for three years.

2. Synod approved a policy for the orderly retirement and replacement of professors at our seminary, a matter which had been under study by the Theological School Committee for a couple years. For details you will have to consult the *Acts* when they are published, since it would take too much space here to cite all the facets of this plan.

3. Synod also approved in principle a request from the RFPA Publications Committee to lease some of the school property for a building; and it instructed the Theological School Committee to submit details to next year's synod.

Financial Matters

There is, of course, always a host of financial matters to which synod must pay attention in connection with the various labors of our churches. Synod always has one advisory committee which devotes all of its attention to these matters and which acts as a kind of "watch-dog" committee with respect to the denominational budget. It is neither necessary nor edifying to recount all those details here. We may, however, report that synod succeeded in holding down the increase in synodical assessments to \$15.00, or a little more than 4%: \$380 for fiscal 1986 as against \$365 this year.

And so what was undoubtedly a significant and a busy synod ended its sessions early Tuesday after-

noon, June 18.

May the Lord bless the decisions made!

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Case of Carnal Feasting

Rev. John A. Heys

Jesus said it. And we do well to give heed to it and remember it, if we would rightly understand the message in the book of Esther. What did He say that applies to this book? You will find it in Matthew 7:20 where we read: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." In the verses preceding it He had spoken of entering into the kingdom by the strait gate and of being wary of false prophets. Already in verse 16 He had stated, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And plainly the idea is that when we stand before a tree or bush, we can tell what kind of tree or bush it is by the fruit that we find upon it.

Thus far in our consideration of this book of Esther I have pointed out time and again the thistles and thorns and the complete lack of any grapes or figs in the lives of Esther and Mordecai, who were of the fleshly seed of Abraham. One fig, or one grape would at once reveal that we were looking at a grape vine or fig tree. And it is not a case of not looking closely enough. It is a case of God Himself, as His Spirit guided the author of this book infallibly and with a definite message in mind, deliberately pointing out the thorns and thistles and showing us that these descendants of Abraham were not the type that can and did produce as much as one grape or fig.

This comes again so clearly to manifestation in the last section of the book. What are the fruits of a branch engrafted into Christ? Not thorns and thistles but grapes. And what do these grapes on the branches engrafted into Christ, The Vine, look like? We have to be able to recognize a spiritual grape also when we see it. God Himself tells us in Isaiah 43:21 in these words: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Or, if you are looking in the New Testament for the spiritual figs to be found in the life of

the child of God, who has been born again with life out of heaven, you will find in I Thessalonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." In these two you have the evidences of the new life of the believing child of God. He praises God and expresses his thankfulness for the gift of salvation. Yes, he confesses his sins. He flees to Christ for forgiveness. But a heart filled with thankfulness to God for salvation is the evidence that he does hate his sins, and is putting his trust in Christ and His cross. The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day XXXII states this truth when it points out that we must still do good works, that is, produce grapes and figs and not thorns and thistles, after we are delivered by grace through Christ, because Christ "also renews us by His Spirit, after His own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God, and that He may be praised by us; also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof . . ." There you have it. One may know whether one is a good tree, by God's grace, or not by the fruits of praise and thanksgiving one finds in one's own life.

What did Noah do after that great salvation from the wicked world by the waters of the flood and in the safety of the ark? He built an altar to God, which is called a sweet savour which God smelled. This was not thorns and thistles but grapes and figs. What did Moses do when God destroyed the military might of Egypt in the Red Sea and saved His people from the bondage they had suffered for 400 years? Look up Exodus 15 and you will find his song of praise and thanksgiving. What did Jonah do when God sent the fish to save him from certain death in the midst of the sea? What do you read so repeatedly in the book of Psalms of the believers who were protected and saved by the God of our salvation? Is the book not full of praise to God?

When Christ was born did not the shepherds return to their sheep glorifying and praising God? What did Simeon and Anna do when He was presented to the Lord in the temple when He was forty days old? Indeed, by their fruits ye shall know them.

Now let us return to the line drawn for us in the book of Esther. A marvelous "enlargement and deliverance" was wrought. The Jews were safe with Mordecai the Jew as the prime minister and Esther the Jewess as the queen of the nation where they had their citizenship. Seventy-five thousand of their enemy were killed; and fear took hold upon their enemies. No one dared to lift a finger against the Jews. So we read in Esther 9:3, 4. But of what fruit are we told by God Himself, through the man He used to write this book? Are we shown grapes and figs of praise and thanksgiving to God? Or is there presented to us the thorns and thistles of a carnal feasting that does not even suggest that God was in the thoughts of these Jews, much less in the mind and heart of Mordecai, who ordered this day of feasting and called it not after God but after the dice, the "lucky" stones used by those who did not look up to God? There is a reason why the Almighty moved the secondary author to include this bit of the history that speaks of Purim and not of Jehovah.

The climax of the narrative actually comes earlier in the book when Haman and his sons are hanged, Mordecai is exalted to his most lofty position, and the Jews are victorious over their enemies and can breathe freely and have "joy and gladness" instead of terror because of doom staring them in the face. Why tell us of this feasting, if it is not exactly to show the carnality rather than spirituality of these Jews who stayed in the land, when the opportunity had presented itself for them to return to the promised land where God's temple again stood, and the types and shadows of the coming Christ were to be seen and enjoyed?

Now feasting as such is not necessarily carnal. We may and must appreciate the earthly gifts which God bestows upon us. He made a beautiful world for Adam and Eve to enjoy. Outside of the garden were thorns and thistles. Adam and Eve were given to feast on all the dainties in that first paradise. For even this was a picture of the amazing life we will have in the paradise to come. That life Jesus Himself more than once in His parables presented as a feast. And we are given sense organs of smell, sight, taste, hearing, and touch to enjoy this creation. God wants us to hear the beautiful music which He created — not the jungle noises, the screaming and moanings with animal gyrations that is called music by the world today. He wants us to see the beauty of color and shape in His crea-

tion; and to smell not only the flowers but the delightful aroma of food being cooked, the fresh scent of the pine forest, and many other delightfully fragrant creatures on this earth. He made us to feel smoothness and cooling breezes, as well as warmth of the sun and the softness of cotton. We must not then exclude also the delicious taste of the tremendous variety of fruits and vegetables and other foods. All these God has created, and all these He has given to man to experience in order that he may bring these back to God in praise. Remember that statement in Isaiah 43:21 that He has formed a people for Himself that will show forth His praise. That belongs to man's calling as God's royal priesthood. He must see, hear, smell, taste and touch the earthly creation and then bring it back to God in the form of praise and thanksgiving. That is dedicating it and consecrating it to God. And that is the duty of the priest. So beautifully we have it in I Peter 2:9 where the threefold office of man is presented. This people of God is a royal, that is, a kingly, priesthood which shows forth, as prophets in confession and song, the praises of Him Who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We must eat and drink, taste and smell, feel, see, and hear, and then render thanks and praise to God for what He gave us to enjoy. In that sense feasting is not in itself sin. It is sin when we eat and drink, taste and smell, and it all stops there! Then we are carnal, moved by and ruled by our flesh. Then what comes from God does not return to Him, because in Adam Satan got us to turn our backs upon the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and to say that this gift is ours and not the Creator's.

What we have to understand is that God never gives anything away. He gives. He is the over-and-everflowing fountain of all good, the Supplier of all man's needs and Provider of everything that man enjoys. And He gives, gives, and continues to give. But He gives in the sense of lending to the creature tools, means, instruments whereby he may praise Him and say, "O God, how great Thou art! O God, how good Thou art!" Is not that what we see when we are given glimpses of heaven today and of the kingdom of heaven as it shall be in the day of Christ? Does not every picture of heaven painted for us in Scripture shout loudly "Hallelujah"? Hallelujah translated means Praise Jehovah. Did you ever see a picture of heaven in Holy Writ that gave you the impression that there man is praising himself or some other creature?

What must be and is the significance of Romans 11:36? "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things; to Whom be glory forever, Amen." And by all means do not pass thoughtlessly over I Corinthians 15:28 where we read, "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then

shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." In a sense this is a commentary — as Scripture interprets Scripture — upon Romans 11:36. Because of Him, through Him, and unto Him are all things, He shall be all in all the thinking, willing, and acting of all the saints, when His counsel is fulfilled and His people are enjoying the wedding feast of the Lamb. What a feast that will be; and what a praise will begin and never end with thanksgiving to Him from all in the kingdom of heaven!

And in the day of shadows we do have shadows of what will happen when that kingdom is fully come and the new Jerusalem descends from God out of heaven and the tabernacle, dwelling place of God, is with man (Revelation 21:1-3). Shadows are caused by realities. The reality in this instance is the true, spiritual seed of Abraham in the new creation praising and glorifying God with thanksgiving for the wonderful enlargement and deliverance He has given us from Satan's power of sin over us, and from the curse and punishment we deserve.

And we must remember that a solid, square building will not cast a shadow in the shape of a tree with a long, thick trunk and an oval shaped foliage. Neither does a kingdom wherein all the citizens praise and glorify God with thanksgiving cast the shadow of a people that never confesses His name, never prays to Him, displays shameful, unvarnished fatalism, and after being rescued from the brink of death does not reveal one shred of thankfulness, and uses the name of its idol Pur instead of the name of Jehovah to remind the coming generations of this deliverance. And God does not want us to call that a shadow of His kingdom. Had He wanted us to see Esther and Mordecai as believers, He would have shown us one or two grapes or figs instead of bushels of thorns and thistles.

Yes, by their fruits we shall know the believers. By the shape of the shadow we will know what reality casts this shadow upon the earth in this life.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Debate on Christ's Resurrection

The *Christian News*, April 15, 1985, reports on a debate in England within the Church of England in which one of its Bishops, Right Rev. David Jenkins, allegedly casts doubt on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The article states:

Bishop Wood, . . . an evangelical, says he believes his brother bishop to be a kind and academic man, "but, nevertheless, I believe he should not be a bishop in the Church of England."

He says Bishop Jenkins should return to his academic life unless he could preach unreservedly this Eastertide that Christ was raised from the dead.

. . . Bishop Jenkins says in the newsletter that the question of whether the Easter tomb was empty or not does not prove or disprove the resurrection. He writes: "The evidence of the texts, the nature of tradition, and the general facts about the way people all over the world rapidly believe appropriate stories to support their religious beliefs leave me wholly uncertain about the empty tomb as literal historic fact."

In the place of this uncertainty, Bishop Jenkins in-

sists on the importance of "the encounters of faith, the assurance of faith, and the practice of faith. This faith claims that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is so real that it changes our approach to all reality. This faith I wholly share."

Interesting that a man could question the literal, historical fact of the empty tomb, yet claim that the "resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is so real that it changes our approach to all reality." This all sounds like the cry of the heretic who would deny fundamental truths of Scripture, yet use terminology which tends to confuse the undiscerning. Nor is it so strange that one teaches as does the above-named Bishop when so many want to deny the literal accounts found in Scripture. Usually there is first a denial of the literal account of Genesis 1-3; then a denial of the miracles and certain historical accounts, then a denial of Christ's resurrection and ascension. One can not tamper with parts of Scripture without such tampering eventually affecting the whole of his understanding of Scripture.

Consultation on Church Union (COCU)

Some of our readers may remember that 22 years ago there began a movement among several Protestant denominations toward organic union. What began with great fanfare soon seemed to flounder. But the movement (COCU) did not cease to exist. Recent reports indicate that the movement is alive and well. The *Christian News*, December 10, 1984, reports:

A major step toward ending the historic divisions within American Protestantism was taken here Nov. 30 by representatives of nine denominations that have a combined membership of 23 million.

Delegates from the nine groups voted unanimously to ask their denomination's highest decision-making bodies to accept a 70-page theological "consensus" document as the basis for the next actions the churches will take toward "organic church union."

... The consultation, whose headquarters is in Princeton, N.J., has a very small staff, said Dr. Moede. "As of now, the superchurch has only a six-person curia," he quipped.

He and other ecumenists, however, stressed that the envisioned union would not create a church of uniformity, but would preserve many diversities of tradition, worship style, and practice that denominations currently cherish.

The nine member churches are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church, International Council of Community Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, and United Methodist Church.

The same paper quotes reaction in a document published by St. Michael's Episcopal Church:

What are the specifics? This week's meeting will approve the document, "In Quest of a Church

Uniting," the first drafts of which have already been approved by the Episcopal Church. This document provides that everyone in the new "church" will agree to the truth of the others' creeds and confessions. This sanction of relativism means that even if two of COCU's members have beliefs which are contrary one to the other, everyone will agree that both beliefs are true.

... Then, prior to any statement of formal merger, the members of COCU will recognize each other's members, ministers and sacraments, providing for sharing of clergy, free exchange of members and sharing in eucharistic fellowship. With the new membership canon going into effect in 1986 in the Episcopal Church and the current practice of eucharistic fellowship with the Lutherans, the Episcopal Church has already entered upon the COCU way

All the above mentioned actions are provided for in the "Quest" document which is to get its final approval in Baltimore this week. Provided for in other documents also slated for approval are "councils of oversight" empowered to ordain clergy for all the churches, and joint baptisms and confirmations. Members of the councils will be bishops and "bishop-type" leaders from the denominations as well as "presbyters" which term now comes to mean any minister and not just priests

So the effort towards organic union between the various denominations continues. Opposition to such union is heard, but the pressure to unite is great. It might well be that this effort will succeed — especially since several of the denominations involved are themselves the fruit of earlier mergers. But is this not a reminder of the nearness of the church of the antichrist? What else could be said of an organization which can hold as equally true the conflicting views of the uniting churches?

Should the Dance Be Part of Church Liturgy?

The *Outlook*, June 1985, presents a report of matters coming before the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church this summer including a pro-

posal to introduce "liturgical dancing." By the time this article is printed, a decision on this question will already have been taken. I dare not guess the

outcome of this proposal. The writer in the *Outlook*, Rev. Peter De Jong, rightly expresses his strong revulsion for the entire proposal. He writes:

The perhaps last report of the Liturgical Committee . . . is devoted to defending and promoting the liturgical dance in view of the fact that the committee believes that some churches are now "ready" for it. It traces the past discussions and decisions about dancing, and by a survey of history, studied manipulation of the rather scanty Biblical references (to children's games and David's "dancing," for example), citing of unspecified cultural changes and appeal to a few academic specialists, seeks to rationalize now making liturgical dancing a feature of congregational worship! It tries to make its radical proposals more acceptable with a number of pious qualifications: The dancing must be "an act of worship," not "some form of entertainment" and must only "be done in an edifying manner." "The committee would regret it if the synod's decision should result in serious division among us. Yet the development of liturgy cannot be frozen at a certain moment."

It is curious that at the time when more of our churches than ever before are showing that their confidence in the denominational leadership has been rudely shaken, this proposal should arise to further demolish that confidence. If any people had illusions about the propriety and spiritual sensitivity of some of our more recent liturgical innovations, this final proposal of the committee should help to disillusion them. The committee's rationalizations somewhat resemble those of Aaron when he attempted to justify his concessions to the Egyptian calf-style of worship at Sinai with the announcement, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord" (Ex. 32:5). He forgot, as our committee and church forget, that God was not merely concerned about Whom we worship, but also how we worship Him. The first commandment is followed by a second which warns of His "jealousy" about that point. As our increasingly forgotten catechism points out, this commandment clearly teaches that we are not to worship God "in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" and that "He wants His people in-

structed by the living preaching of His Word," rather than by visual imagery. Perhaps few if any things in the agenda, document more clearly than this committee proposal our current departures from this guide.

Meanwhile, in other papers the liturgical dance is being encouraged and guidelines already set forth. In *Calvinist Contact*, May 31, 1985, we read:

It is important that when liturgical dance is first presented, it be done in the context of a worship service as much as possible. Because liturgical dance is integral to a worship service, taken away from that framework it loses something important . . . Liturgical dance is meant to be used as a tool to lead us to deeper worship.

In much the same vein, whatever type of liturgical dancing is done, it *must never be a performance or entertainment*. This is very important! The dancing is done for God's glory, not the dancer's glory or the congregation's glory . . . Always, the dance, music, poem, play, banner or song must support the theme of the worship service and stress it rather than stand proudly on its own. The whole point of calling it liturgical dance is to emphasize that the dance must fit into the unity of the worship liturgy . . .

Some suggestions on how liturgical dance could be implemented in a church . . . Talking back and forth and giving people a chance to learn about liturgical dancing before it is brought into their services can take away much of the threat that people feel by having dance in the church.

How soon is forgotten that important and moving cry of the Apostle Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). His admonition to another group of churches surely applies too: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-9).

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

The Missionary a Slave to All (3)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In this series we are studying I Corinthians 9:19-23. This passage, we believe, has a good deal to teach concerning the proper attitude and conduct

of a faithful missionary of the gospel. In the previous two articles we treated verses 19-20.

The entire passage reads: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Verse twenty-one reads: "To the ones outside of the law as outside of the law, (being not outside of the law of God, but in the law of God) in order that I might gain them who are outside of the law" (translation mine, R.D.D.). By "the ones outside of the law" the Apostle means non-Jews, i.e. Gentiles. By "law" the Apostle does not refer to the moral law of the ten commandments. God's will as summed in the moral law remains in force for both Jew and Gentile and in every age. All men everywhere and in every age are under the solemn and divine obligation to love God with all their hearts, minds, souls, and strength and to love the neighbor as themselves. The moral law of God is the rule for the Christian's life of gratitude for the redemption gained for him by God through Jesus Christ. The reference to law here is to the typical ceremonial and civil laws governing Israel as the typical theocracy in the Old Testament era. These laws are no longer necessary because Christ, the reality to which they directed the faith of the Old Testament saints, has come and redeemed His people through His cross and resurrection. (For a more detailed exposition of this concept, cf. the previous article in this series.)

That this is what is meant by "law" is evident from the fact that the Apostle hastens to add: "being not without law to God but under the law to Christ." The Apostle was certainly under, or more correctly, *in* the law to Christ. He was no libertine or antinomian. He understood his obligation to love the Lord with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. He knew very well that this love of God must be expressed to his neighbor. The Apostle struggled with that every day of his life (cf. Romans 7). As redeemed in Christ Who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, the Apostle was in the law to Christ. Christ had made him free from the law of sin and death. By the grace of God in Jesus Christ the Apostle was free to love God and his neighbor. This gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ is what the Apostle preached and lived. For the sake of the gospel of sovereign grace Paul purposed to offend no one.

When, therefore, the Apostle preached and lived among the Gentiles (those outside of the civil and ceremonial laws) he was at pains not to conform to Jewish civil and ceremonial law. He refused to act and live as a Jew when he labored among the Gentiles. The Apostle refused as well to insist that the Gentiles conform to Jewish traditions and practices. In fact Paul even rebuked Peter for doing this (cf. Galatians 2:11-21). In all matters indifferent the Apostle lived as a Gentile, i.e. as a non-Jew. In all of this, however, he never compromised with the idolatry and ungodly philosophies of the heathen. These he condemned sharply. Not once did Paul concede to the false religions of his day. Even when he found himself among the intellectual, philosophical, and religious elite in Athens Paul did not hesitate to point out the foolishness of their idolatry. With neither shame nor compromise Paul preached the sovereign God Who is revealed in the crucified, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Neither would he compromise with ungodly living. In his preaching the Apostle always stressed the need to walk worthy of the vocation with which God has called His people. He condemned in the sharpest of terms all lying, cheating, envy, pride, murder, stealing, adultery and fornication and all uncleanness, backbiting, slander and all manner of evil speaking, covetousness, disobedience to parents and all in authority. Always he called God's people to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free. But the Apostle never laid any unnecessary burdens on the Gentiles. And, as much as possible, he lived as the people with whom he labored.

His purpose and motive are expressed in the last clause of verse twenty-one: "in order that I might gain them that are outside of the law" (translation mine, R.D.D.). Paul desired the salvation of those to whom he preached. He preached and lived as he did because he wanted to gain the Gentiles to the cause of Christ and His church. In the case of the Gentiles these must not be offended by the Apostle's observing of Jewish law and custom. Certainly "it would have greatly impeded, if not entirely prevented the progress of the gospel among the Gentiles had it been burdened with the whole weight of Jewish ceremonies and restrictions" (Charles Hodge, *Commentary on I and II Corinthians*, p. 165, Banner of Truth edition).

The Apostle continues in verse 22a: "I became weak to the weak ones in order that I might gain the weak ones" (translation mine, R.D.D.). Some interpreters take the term "weak ones" to mean unconverted among both Jew and Gentile. They are "weak" in the sense that they lack the ability or strength within themselves to save themselves. While it is certainly true that all men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and for that reason

unable to save themselves, this interpretation of the text is incorrect. It is incorrect for at least two reasons: 1) If this were the correct interpretation it would mean that the Apostle became as an unconverted man to the unconverted. This would have been sinful on Paul's part. This cannot have been the case. 2) This interpretation does not fit the context. In chapter eight the Apostle speaks of "the weak brother" who cannot in good conscience before God eat meat sacrificed to idols. For this "weak brother" to do so would be to sin against God. In this chapter the Apostle lay down some important principles: a) We all know that idols are nothing. There is only one, true God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him (I Cor. 8:4-6). b) Eating meat neither makes us better nor worse before God (8:8). c) Some of the saints do not have this knowledge. To these, eating meat sacrificed to idols is a grievous sin. These are the "weak brethren" (8:7-13). d) Those who are strong must walk in love over against their weak brothers. They must refrain from eating meat sacrificed to idols lest they cause the weak to stumble into sin (8:9-13).

Those who are weak, therefore, also here in chapter nine, are weak Christians. They are weak in the knowledge of the truth and weak in faith. To these the Apostle became as weak. Paul tells us precisely in what sense he became as weak in the last verse of chapter eight: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh (sacrificed to idols, R.D.D.) while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Once more the meaning is that in matters indifferent, matters which do not involve any compromise

either for doctrine or the Christian life, the Apostle will go to any length to avoid offending those to whom he preaches. His chief concern is the progress of the gospel in the way of the salvation of the elect. Paul does not want to be a hindrance to God's cause.

Again, Paul's purpose is: "in order that I might gain the weak ones." When the Apostle speaks of "gaining the weak" the meaning is to strengthen and confirm. The Apostle's purpose in becoming as weak to the weak Christian is to increase the knowledge of the true doctrine of Scripture of the weak. His desire is to make them stronger in the faith. They must learn to understand that idols are nothing. There is only one, true God Who is revealed in Jesus Christ as the God of our salvation. Thus the Apostle becomes as weak so that they may be confirmed in their faith. By means of the preaching of the Word they must become stable, strong, mature Christians. In this way the church is strengthened and God's Name is honored.

This same attitude, this same resolve ought to characterize every faithful missionary and minister of the Gospel. The missionary must be at pains not to offend the weaker brother and become the occasion to cause that weaker brother to stumble in sin. A terrible sin indeed it would be if the missionary by his own sinful conduct were to turn people away from the truth and God's church. If the preaching of the truth hardens people the missionary can rejoice in God Who always causes him to triumph in the gospel (cf. II Corinthians 2:14-17).

We shall conclude this brief series, D.V., in the next issue.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Baptism Form

Rev. James Slopsema

The Impurity of Our Souls Signified

According to the opening statement of the Baptism form there are three principal parts to the doctrine of holy baptism.

A quick survey of the Baptism form reveals that

these three principal parts of baptism follow the three-fold division of the Heidelberg Catechism: how great my sins and miseries are; how I am delivered from my sins and miseries; how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

The first principal part of the doctrine of baptism

is "that we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again." Over this we may properly place the title, "how great my sins and miseries are."

The second principal part of the doctrine of baptism is that God "makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for his children and heirs." As our covenant God, God washes away all our sin in the blood of Jesus Christ. He also sanctifies us through the Spirit to be members of Christ, applies to us all that we have in Christ and renews us daily. This speaks very clearly of how we are delivered from our sins and miseries.

The third principal part of the doctrine of baptism is our calling to walk in new obedience through the power of the Spirit. This speaks of the gratitude we are to show for our great deliverance.

The first principal part of the doctrine of holy baptism is as follows:

That we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again. This, the dipping in, or sprinkling with water teaches us, whereby the impurity of our souls is signified, and we admonished to loath, and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves.

The main thought here is that the dipping in or sprinkling with the water of baptism signifies the impurity of our souls.

Notice that the Baptism form recognizes the validity of both immersion and sprinkling. There are many today, especially the Baptists, who teach that the only valid form of baptism is immersion. This has not been the historic Reformed position. The mode of baptism is not essential. It is immaterial whether baptism is administered by immersion or sprinkling. The essence of baptism is to be found rather in the symbolism of the washing of water.

In this connection the Baptism form teaches that baptism symbolizes the impurity of our souls. It does this, of course, only indirectly. The primary symbolism of baptism is the washing away of sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. Water has, among other properties, the power to wash away dirt from the body. Hence, it has been ordained by God to serve as a symbol to the church of the washing away of their sins in the blood of Jesus Christ. But for this reason the water of baptism also reminds us of the impurity of our souls. Were it not for the fact that our souls were defiled with the filth of sin, we would not need them washed in the blood of our Savior. Certainly, then, the dipping in or sprinkling

with water in baptism signifies the impurity of our souls.

In this same section the Baptism form also describes for us this impurity of our souls. According to the form, the impurity of our souls consists in the fact that "we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again."

Notice, first, that "we with our children are conceived and born in sin." This expression is also found in Q & A 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Q. 7. Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.

This expression is undoubtedly based on Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The truth conveyed in this expression is that, through the natural process of conception and birth, each child receives from his parents a corrupt nature which is totally depraved and defiled with sin. This is due to the original sin of Adam. When Adam sinned originally in Paradise, that original sin defiled him. It rendered him corrupt and depraved, incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. However, that original sin corrupted not only Adam but the whole human race as well. This is because when God created Adam the whole human race was created in Adam. Hence, as the human race develops from Adam through the natural process of conception and birth, the corruption of Adam's original sin is passed down from generation to generation, much like a hereditary disease. In this sense we and our children are all conceived and born in sin.

For that reason, says the Baptism form, we are also children of wrath.

Also this expression is taken from Scripture. In Ephesians 2:2 & 3 we read that "in time past ye walked according to the course of this world . . . among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

In this passage the expression "children of wrath" serves to describe one who because of his sinful walk is deserving of God's wrath. The wrath of God properly comes upon him because he disobeys God, fulfilling the lust of the flesh and of the mind.

We also with our children are by nature children of wrath. This is due to our being conceived and born in sin. Inheriting from our parents an evil nature, passing that evil nature again to our children, both we and our children are by nature evil and corrupt. We live and walk in sin. We walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, who is the Devil. Thus, we and our children are deserving of God's great and terrible wrath! Children of wrath we are!

So much is this true of us, adds the Baptism form, "that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again."

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness. Nothing that is evil or defiled has any part in that kingdom. Only the pure and undefiled may enter it and enjoy its blessings. This the Scriptures make clear in I Corinthians 6:9 & 10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (cf. also Ephesians 5:5 & 6, Galatians 5:19-21).

But we and our children are spiritually corrupt. We are evil, born in sin. So evil and sinful we are that we can not enter into God's kingdom unless we are born again in Jesus Christ. Our spiritual condition is so bad that entrance into God's kingdom requires the radical transformation of a new birth.

All this, says the form, baptism teaches us. By symbolizing to us the impurity of our souls, the water of baptism teaches us that we with our children are conceived and born in sin. It teaches us that we and our children are therefore children of wrath, in so much that without a rebirth in Christ Jesus we can not even enter into God's kingdom.

These are grim realities that we tend to overlook at the birth of our children. When God gives us a little child, we don't like to view that child as a little spiritual monster, who by virtue of his very birth is horribly twisted and perverted. We like rather to think of our children (and grandchildren) as innocent little angels, as pure as the wind-driven snow.

However, baptism serves to dispel all such delusions. By commanding us to present our children for baptism the Lord teaches us that our little children are conceived and born in sin. They are not innocent little children but children of wrath.

Unless they are born again in Jesus Christ, they can not enter into God's kingdom but will perish everlastingly.

And so by baptism we are "admonished to loathe, and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves."

First, we are admonished by baptism to loathe ourselves. That means we are to hate ourselves. Now we must be very careful to understand this properly. For the Word of God also tells us to love ourselves. This after all is the implication of the great commandment — to love our neighbor *as ourself*. Certainly this indicates that there is a sense in which we are to love ourselves. We are to love ourselves as new creatures in Jesus Christ, as those who have been born again and have thus received many wonderful gifts to serve God. However, from the viewpoint of our sinful nature we must hate and loathe ourselves. We must hate ourselves as we are in Adam, as we are conceived and born in sin, as we are children of wrath unfit for the kingdom of God.

Secondly, baptism admonishes us to humble ourselves before God. Of course! We certainly have nothing to be proud of. Certainly we have nothing to boast about. Our sinful origin and condition requires the utmost humility. And we must humble ourselves before God so that we confess to Him our sinful condition and our sinful lives, acknowledging to Him that we are hopelessly lost in sin, deserving of His wrath.

And therefore in the third place baptism admonishes us to seek for our purification and salvation without (i.e. outside of) ourselves. Certainly we need to be purified and saved. By nature we are children of wrath, barred from God's kingdom, bound for hell. But we are so hopelessly lost that there is not one thing we can do to save ourselves. There is not one thing we can do to turn away God's wrath and make ourselves fit for the kingdom of God. We must not look therefore to ourselves for salvation and deliverance. We must look elsewhere to someone outside of us.

All this we are admonished to do in baptism.

And if by faith we do so, we will also find salvation.

For the same baptism that declares to us that we and our children are hopelessly lost also declares to us that there is full and free salvation in the blood of Jesus Christ for each and every believer and his children.

Take time to read & study the Standard Bearer!

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Taught of God by the Word and Prayer

Rev. Thomas Miersma

We have been considering the reformers' doctrine of Scripture and its interpretation. Rome taught that Scripture was a dark book which would not be understood by the ordinary believer. According to Rome, Scripture needed to be supplemented by the traditions of the church which served as an additional revelation alongside of Scripture. Moreover, Rome taught that only the hierarchy of the church, popes, and councils could explain that Word of God. The believer therefore might not draw his own interpretation and understanding out of the Word of God but must trust in the pronouncements of the church, even if they appeared to contradict the Word of God itself.

Over against this view of Rome the reformers taught that Scripture is clear and understandable in itself, and complete in itself. That Word of God the believer could understand directly for himself because he is taught of God. The reformers taught that all believers in the church possessed the Spirit and that under the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit they were able to understand the Word of God for themselves. This ability belongs to the priesthood of all believers and to the believer's anointing with the Spirit.

This position of the reformers is of fundamental importance. The inner principle of understanding and interpreting Scripture is this: that we are taught of God to know and understand His Word, which is itself objectively clear. This stands over against all other sources of authority as a sure and certain source of authority, which is of God and not of men. The believer is taught of God, by His Spirit and Word, and by Him alone.

It is well in our day and age to underscore this principle. Often the child of God in the church approaches the matter of Bible study with doubt of his ability. He is not learned, not theologically trained like the minister, not a scholar or learned professor. Because of this he doubts his ability to understand the plain meaning of God's Word or to study it. The result is that a new priesthood is

gradually rearing its head in the Reformed community, a priesthood of scholars, who, more and more today, teach strange doctrines and the opinions of men. The believer is intimidated by them because of their supposed learning. This spirit of doubt strives also to make an entrance into our own Protestant Reformed Churches, so that rather than studying the Word of God for ourselves, we immediately flee to commentaries or to the writings of men. This is not intended to downgrade the many excellent writings produced in the midst of our churches. The believer does not live in isolation from his fellowsaints or from the leading of the Spirit in the church. We may and must certainly use such writings and avail ourselves of them. But when they become a substitute for serious, personal Bible study, we are in trouble, serious trouble. Nor may we ignore the truth that God has not given to all the same gifts and calling. But, nevertheless, the believer, as he stands in the church with the gifts God has given, is able to understand God's Word because he is taught of God. Lose this and you will lose the preaching of the Word also, for preaching then becomes the mere learned pronouncements of the preacher and no more God's Word, for also in the preaching we must be taught of God.

To this principle the reformers always added the necessity of prayer, prayer for illumination and divine guidance in the study of His Word. Sin also mars our understanding. As we must be taught of God, so also He must illuminate our understanding, and prayer is that means which He has appointed to seek this grace from Him. This is the cure both for our doubts and for our lack of understanding. Sin will lead astray in the understanding of God's Word. It will tempt us to come to God's Word and impose upon it our own meaning and interpretation, to speak instead of listening to what God has to say to us. Prayer is therefore necessary that we might be spiritually prepared to hear and to receive at God's hand what He will say. This is most impor-

tant. We do not come to Scripture to impose our views upon it, but to be taught.

These points the reformer Ulrich Zwingli raises in his sermon on the clarity and certainty of God's Word. We do well to hear what he has to say.

How then should I approach him and pray to him? In this way: First, put away that view of your own which you want to read into Scripture, for it is quite valueless, as I shall clearly show. I know that you will reply that you have worked through the Scriptures and discovered texts which support your opinion. Alas! here we come upon the canker at the heart of all human systems. And it is this: we want to find support in Scripture for our own view, and so we take that view to Scripture, and if we find a text which, however artificially, we can relate to it, we do so, and in that way we wrest Scripture in order to make it say what we want it to say . . . Note, then, that we must not approach Scripture like that. But how are we to come? In this way: If you want to speak on any matter, or to learn of it, you must first think like this: Before I say anything or listen to the teaching of man, I will first consult the mind of the Spirit of God. (Psalm 85:8): "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Then you should reverently ask God for his grace, that he may give you his mind and Spirit, so that you will not lay hold of your own opinion but of his. And have a firm trust that he will teach you a right understanding, for all wisdom is of God the Lord. And then go to the written word of the Gospel. (*Zwingli and Bullinger, The Library of Christian Classics*, Volume XXIV, translated by G.W. Bromiley. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953, pp. 88-89.)

So approaching the Word of God, to be taught of Him, we will both understand it and know the truth, and be taught of God. Being thus taught of God, the believer need not run to some human arbiter or interpreter to explain the Word of God to him. This Rome would have done by removing the Word of God from the hands of the people of God, that only the holy and learned few might understand it, leaving the people in darkness. Nor is the fruit of such study a matter of mere human opinion, of my opinion and your opinion. For if we are truly taught of God we arrive at sure and certain truth. Rome would have clouded the issue by pointing to many conflicting interpretations and opinions, casting doubt upon the truth and setting up the church as arbiter among many opinions, as if

only thus could the truth be known and not by the believer in his own study. The reformers however upheld consistently the principle that prayerful study of God's Word brings us to a certain conviction of the truth, that this also is the mark of true preaching of the Word.

To turn to the reformer Zwingli once more, he writes,

When you say then that an arbiter is needed to decide the issue and to compel those who are defeated, I deny it: for even the most learned of men are fallible except in so far as they are led by God. If they are not certain, God will guide them, but I myself can come to the same teacher and guide, and he will undoubtedly guide me also. You say: How do you know whether he will teach you or not? Answer: From his own words in Matthew 21 and Mark 11: "All things whatsoever — that is, all things which it is right and proper for God to give — ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Then, St. James teaches me to go to God for wisdom (James 1), saying: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Note that James points us to God and not to men. You say: But today we have men to preach to us: should we not ask of the preachers and doctors? Answer: No matter who a man may be, if he teaches you in accordance with his own thought and mind his teaching is false. But if he teaches you in accordance with the Word of God, it is not he that teaches you, but God who teaches him. For as Paul says, who are we but ministers of Christ and dispensers or stewards of the mysteries of God? (*Ibid.*, p. 90).

What then does this mean for us? If God promises us wisdom and understanding and Himself teaches us, then we both can study His Word and are in fact enabled to do so, and under His guidance we shall rightly understand it. The fruit of that study will be a true knowledge of His Word. This does not mean that we shall attain to perfect understanding, for sin will always cleave to us even in this matter of the study of God's Word. Yet that which we learn of God is true, though it be but in part, though in this life we see through a glass darkly.

Too often we make the excuse that we do not know how to study God's Word, or know where to begin. We forget that this study and understanding is not first of all a matter of methods of Bible study,

but of God, Who teaches us by His Spirit and Word, in the way of prayer. We do not need a course in the proper method of Bible study *before* we begin to study His Word. Rather we need prayer and a believing heart, that God Who has promised to guide us into all truth will also teach us both the meaning of His Word and the method of study also. For all the principles of proper Bible study and interpretation are themselves taught in the Word of God. It is easy to make our perceived lack of ability and lack of formal training an excuse for spiritual laziness. To do so is to deny that God does indeed give wisdom to those who ask of Him. If it is true that we are taught of God, as Scripture and the reformers set before us, then there is no child of God who is unable to study God's Word. The problem lies with our own unbelief and doubt of His

promises.

While principles and proper methods of Bible study are important, and we will consider some of them in coming articles, the Lord willing, the principal thing is to begin. No more does a child learn to walk in any other way than by doing, so also we do not learn how to study God's Word other than by prayer and by doing that study, out of a believing heart. That begins by taking up God's Word, reading and meditating upon it, and simply asking one question: What does God have to say to His people here and to me? And then we must listen to His Word that He may teach us. He Who promises to give us wisdom and to teach us will do it, by His Spirit which is given us.

IN HIS FEAR

The Christian Family After the Fall

Pastor Arie den Hartog

The fall of man into sin has had devastating consequences for marriage and the family. The most beautiful and blessed of all human relationships, that of husband and wife in marriage, was thoroughly corrupted and spoiled because of sin. The reason of this is that fallen man's nature has become totally depraved, and this militates against all possibility for a happy and blessed marriage, the foundation of the family. Our Lord describes the great evil that proceeds from the depraved heart of man: "For from within out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21 and 22). There is no sphere of life where this depravity of man is more evident than that of marriage and the home. For man's life in marriage to be happy and prosperous it must be God-centered. God made man to live in covenant communion and fellowship with his creator. This communion would be reflected in marriage as man lived in love in the blessed closeness of the two becoming one flesh. But man's sinful nature has made this impossible. He has become the enemy of God and so also of his God-given life's companion in marriage. He no longer knows how to live in

peace and happiness through loving devotion and faithfulness with his wife. He has become proud and self-seeking and filled with evil lust. Fallen man rebels against every ordinance of the Lord for marriage and the home. He seeks in his vain imagination to devise new arrangements for marriage and the home that will satisfy his own evil lust and free him from his God-given obligations and responsibilities in marriage. In doing this, man imagines that he will be free and that he will make his marriage and home better. But he has become a slave of his own wicked lust, and his mind has become darkened through his great foolishness. In all of his evil devices he has brought to marriage and the home all of the hellish misery of bitter strife and conflict, divorce and re-marriage, and a world full of rebellious and delinquent children. Most of the violence and wickedness that there is in this world can be traced to its origin in ungodly and wicked homes. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Not all of the advances in modern psychology, sociology, and methods of worldly marriage counselling have been able to restore peace and order and blessing to the home. As long as man lives in disobedience and rebellion against God this will remain impossible.

The corruption of marriage and the home became immediately evident at the time of the fall. The first consequence of the fall was that Adam and Eve knew that they were naked. No longer could they live in holy purity and faithfulness with each other as husband and wife. Their hearts were filled with evil lust which would soon break forth in all sorts of evil deeds against each other. God made man to be the head of his wife. According to the wonderful order of His creation, God ordained that man should rule over his wife in love for her good, to lead her, protect her, and provide for her. After the fall man has become an evil tyrant over his wife. He uses and abuses her only for his own glory and the satisfaction of his own lust. According to God's wonderful creation order He made woman to be the helpmeet of her husband. He required of her that she should live in loving devotion to her husband, to serve him in order that together they could serve the Lord. After the fall woman has become self-centered, vain glorious, disobedient, and rebellious against her God-given husband who has the calling to rule over her. The curse of the Lord came upon child-bearing. Before the fall the wonderful and glorious role of woman was to bring forth children in loving companionship with her husband. After the fall the woman suffers great sorrow and pain as she brings forth children. Her desire is to her husband and he rules over her. Man after the fall brings forth offspring and a race that is as depraved and corrupt as he himself is. He is totally unable to change the nature of his children. He no longer has the ability to nurture his children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. By his own ungodly example he teaches his children to be even more idolatrous, worldly, and corrupt than he himself is. Ungodly man brings forth a race that is bound with him for hell and destruction.

All of the history of mankind testifies of the great wickedness he has brought into marriage and the home. Consider some of the most awful examples of it. Think of the great evil of polygamy so prevalent in many heathen societies years ago. What a corruption of marriage this is. God made marriage from the beginning to be an exclusive life-long union between one man and one woman. But man, because of unbridled lust, is not satisfied with the wife that God has given him. For his own glory and prestige he desires to marry more wives, once considered the measure of his greatness. But in doing this he only brought jealousy, bitter strife, and confusion to his home. In the whole process woman was degraded and dishonored to a status as low as an animal. She was used and abused only for evil pleasure. Man gained such tyrannical power over her that he could despise and dispose of her at his will. Those he did not put away he often mal-

treated as his servants and slaves for his own advantage. These evil practices became prevalent even in Israel as they more and more adopted the abominations of the heathen nations around them. This was not something which the Lord approved of even when it was kings and rulers that committed these things. This was a great evil in His sight and He often sent His prophets to admonish Israel and to warn them of misery and judgment that would come upon them for this evil.

Consider the great evil that the women of this world have fallen into. They have given themselves over to lust and enticement, forsaking their own husbands and family to live in sinful pleasure. The depth of degradation to which this has brought the woman is the great evil of prostitution, the moral scourge of all the world. Recently I read in a history book about how many thousands of prostitutes once lived here in Singapore. What dishonor, misery, and wretchedness this has brought to the life of the women of this world.

The adultery and wickedness of man has left behind a world of illegitimate and destitute children with no father or mother to care for them. We read of thousands of illegitimate children that were fathered by American soldiers during the Vietnamese War. The depravity of man's nature and the frustration that sin has brought to the soul of man has caused other parents to abuse and beat their own children until they are left battered and torn and maimed for life, if not murdered. How awful are the consequences of man's sin and rebellion against God.

We need not look into past history to discover the great wickedness that man has brought into marriage and the home. The 20th-century man and woman are the product of many years of development in sin and wickedness. They imagine that they are not as savage and wicked as men of old; but in actuality they have increased in wickedness. The modern inventions of the age have enabled man to live in even grosser immorality and wickedness. Few are the husbands that remain faithful all their life to their wives in the holy bond of marriage. We read of much great wickedness in eastern society, and we know that it is no better in western society. Today the world has built resort areas that cater to men's basest immorality with the women of their choice. These are frequented mostly by married men. Meanwhile, women the world over are influenced by the ungodly and evil women's liberation movement to refuse and forsake their God-ordained roles as wife and mother in the home. They imagine that they are justified in doing this to liberate themselves from the evil tyranny and chauvinism of their male counterparts. How-

ever, in all of this they only show themselves to be as selfish, vain, and corrupt as men. Thousands of mothers every year the world over murder their own children before they are even born. They refuse the responsibility and burden of raising a family and dare even to go to such great wickedness as to murder their own children so that they might live in selfishness, lust, and pleasure. The heroes of our modern-day world are the immoral beasts of Hollywood and Broadway who glory in having one sexual partner after another, and in rebellion against God continue to put away their husbands and wives. Much of the world seeks to pattern its life-style after such men and women and for entertainment watches them revel in immorality and debauchery on the movie screen. God is not mocked by all of this wickedness. It is an abomination in His sight and He will come in His holy wrath for judgment.

But we must also see the consequences of the fall from a closer and more personal perspective. Our own sinful nature is so corrupt and depraved that we cannot live in marriage as we ought according to the holy ordinance of the Lord. How strong the temptation of our own sinful nature to spoil our marriages and home through our own evil cravings, selfishness, vain pride, and foolish wickedness. What a tremendous influence the wicked and ungodly world has upon us. How totally unable we are of bringing forth a new generation of children that is righteous and holy before God. How often the joy and blessedness of our own homes is marred by the entrance of sin and spoiled by bitterness, selfishness, and hatred both between husband and wife and among the children in the home.

Against the dark background of the history of fallen man God has made known the wonder of His grace and mercy by maintaining and preserving his covenant of grace with man. In His wonderful covenant of grace He has maintained the central place of marriage and the Christian family. According to His purpose of election He has preserved unto Himself an elect remnant. Throughout the history of the world He has redeemed out of this wicked world a people whom He has formed for Himself. Through the wonderful power of His grace and Holy Spirit He continues to regenerate and sanctify that people for the glory of His own name. This is the only hope for the Christian home in this evil world.

How wonderful is the story of God's great pur-

pose for the home and the Christian family. Immediately after the fall of man into sin the Lord appeared to Adam and Eve to announce the wonderful promise of His salvation. Though He chastened the woman for her sin of rebellion against Him by giving her pain and sorrow in child-bearing, yet He promised that she would bring forth the seed of the woman who would ultimately be the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was born in the fulness of time, born of a woman, to redeem us from the curse and corruption of sin. Already when God first announced this promise to Adam and Eve, Adam in faith called his wife the mother of all living. Wonderfully the Lord exalted the woman and declared that she would be saved through child-bearing.

God promised to the patriarchs of old already that He would bring forth from them a new and holy generation according to His wonderful covenant of grace. He promised to make the seed of Abraham as numerous as the stars in heaven, and as the sand by the sea shore innumerable. In spite of the great wickedness of the world God has maintained His covenant from generation to generation and raised up a godly seed. He has further promised to bring His people to a new and better land of which Canaan was a type and where sin and wickedness would be no more. Through His grace He continues through all the history of the world to use the families of the godly to cause many sons and daughters to be born to endless life in Zion. This is the hope of the God-fearing and of the Christian family.

As Christians God has given us the great calling to raise up Christian families. Young people must seek truly godly and faithful partners in life. They must not pursue the lust and vanity of this world. They must seek to marry in the Lord. As Christians we must be earnest and faithful to pattern our homes after the principles laid down in the word of God. Thank the Lord that His Word contains so much instruction for marriage and the home. In every respect our homes must be radically different from those of the world.

As parents we have the tremendous calling and responsibility to bring forth and raise up godly children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, by correction and discipline and by godly example.

In order to do all these things we need to be constantly searching the word of God and praying for His grace.

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FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

G. Lubbers

Chapter XXI

The Mystery Of The Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9

THE SEVENTY YEARS AS PRESENTED IN THE "SEVENTY SEVENS" — Daniel 9:24ff. (continued)

All attempts to "read into" this symbolical number definite chronological dates must needs fail. And they have. The Lord will keep the waiting saints in holy suspense until He will reveal the grand Gospel news to the aged Simeon that he will not see death until he has seen the Lord's Christ — the Messiah (Luke 2:26)!

Hence, we must not be tempted to outwit and outdo the Dispensational advocates in attempting to give a better and more plausible interpretation of these symbolical numbers in terms of time-years on the calendar. Many have attempted this and have likewise failed to do justice to the text.

We have referred to the attempt of the Dispensational teaching in regard to these "weeks." Let us hear from Dr. Scofield's Bible notes firsthand. We quote from pages 914, 915.

These are "weeks" or, more accurately, seven years; seventy weeks of seven years each. With these weeks the national chastisement must be ended and the nation established in everlasting righteousness (vs. 24)

The seventy weeks into seven = 49 years. The sixty-two (weeks) = 434 years. The one week = seven years (vss. 25-27)

1. In the seven weeks = 49 years Jerusalem was to be built in "troublous times." This was fulfilled as Ezra and Nehemiah record.

2. Sixty-two weeks = 434 years refers to the time after Messiah was come (vs. 25). This was fulfilled in the birth and manifestation of the Christ. The date of the crucifixion is not fixed. It is said to be "after" the threescore and ten weeks. It is the first event in verse 26.

3. The second event (in verse 26) is the destruction of Jerusalem, fulfilled in 70 A.D.

4. The "unto the end," a period not fixed, but which has already lasted 2000 years. To Daniel was revealed only that wars and desolations should continue (sic).

5. Between the sixty weeks after which Messiah was cut off, intervenes the entire church-age. Verse 27 deals with the last three and a half years of the "seven," which are identical with the great tribulation (Matt. 24:1-28), and "the time of trouble" (Dan. 12:1) and the hour of temptation (Rev. 3:10).

What shall we say about this dispensationally-constructed interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27?

I would observe the time-worn rule to remember that it often requires more time and space to point out the fallacy of what is set forth than it does to write out such a fallacy in few words. We will not weary ourselves nor the reader with a belabored refutation of the points set forth in Dr. Scofield's Bible notes. Rather, we will point out what we consider to be the vulnerable point in this entire presentation. It is that this entire attempted exegesis is ruled by the erroneous training of the Scofieldian fiction of a "Church-age," which denies the faith, "I believe an holy catholic church," the church which the Son of God gathers and defends and preserves out of the entire human race, both in the Old and New Testament.

Scofield's notes try to make room for a "church-age" between the "seven sevens" and the "sixty-two sevens" combined and the seventieth "seven." And the chronological period between these first sixty-nine "sevens" and the seventieth "seven" is then "already 2000 years"! Now it is true that we are in A.D. 1985 already. But this by no proper inference from the "seventy sevens" allows for a Dispensationally-constructed "church-age." This we have convincingly shown in an earlier chapter

in this series: Believing All The Prophetic Scriptures.

No serious Bible student who loves the Reformed Faith which confesses to believe "an Holy Catholic Church" will be deceived into holding that "weeks" here (sevens) may be exchanged with "years." The entire presentation of Scofield is premised on the assumption that such is the case. We quote from the notes, the basic teaching of Scofield, "These are 'weeks' and 'weeks' are 'years'." Here we see a glaring example of what Paul calls "cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." This is some very clever and deceptive exegetical jugglery. Notice, by the simple fiat of Scofield, "sevens" are made into "weeks," and "weeks" are simply transformed into "years," without any proof from Scripture. *Sapienti Sat!* May the wise take heed!

If a chain is as strong as its weakest link, then the chain-interpretation, which rests upon a heretical principle, cannot be deemed to be strong and Scripturally cogent; it has no power of convicting man in his conscience, nor can it be deemed a rule of faith. Notice, that Scofield attempts to superimpose the Dispensational hodge-podge interpretation on what is clearly a symbolical presentation of the perfection of the salvation of the church in the blood of the Cross. The entire presentation of the "church-age," being an intermission between the main events of the Jewish conceived kingdoms, which weighed in the balance of sound Bible interpretation must be found wanting.

The above teaching should not be dignified with much detailed rebuttal. Rather we will attempt to explain the symbolism in agreement with the great teaching of the Bible concerning the significance of the numbers "10" and "7." As we have said earlier, this is the presentation in symbolical numbers of the perfection of God's covenant according to God's firm and everlasting decree. For this deals with the kingdom which God will give to the saints (Dan. 7:22).

When we come to grips with the usage of the term "seventy sevens" we take notice of one key passage which sheds a great deal of light on this important question of the proper interpretation of prophetic symbolism. It is Jesus Who infallibly opens the Scriptures, Who speaks in this passage. We refer to Matthew 18:21, 22. Here we read, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but until seventy times seven."

Among other matters we should notice two matters here in Jesus' reply to Peter.

The first is that it is quite evident from Jesus' answer to Peter that Jesus did not understand Peter to have made a count, a *literal* count. Why did Peter not say, unto five times? Or any other number from one to ten apart from the number "seven"? Did Jesus understand Peter to say that he would indeed be willing to forgive a brother "seven times," but that when the eighth time came he would definitely feel that this was going beyond the necessary boundaries of love? I think not. However, that is the way in which this is often explained from pulpits. I hold as my view that Peter was well acquainted with the truth that the number "seven" was the number of God's covenant; that this number indicates the meaning of the Sabbath rest, the expression of God's covenant mercies. Peter was no legalist; Peter's spiritual life needed to be sharpened unto love abounding (Heb. 10:24). The number "seven" connected with the number "ten" expresses this perfection of love (I John 4:18). For is not love the bond of spiritual perfection (Col. 3:14)? Here in this perfection we walk the more excellent way, where the saints dwell in brotherhood (I Cor. 13:1ff.; Psalm 133:1). That is the lesson which Peter and we all need to learn well!

We believe that this usage of Jesus establishes the rule of interpretation that the term "seventy times seven" is no mere multiplication table in simple arithmetic, but that it is the combination of seven as intensified by "ten" to the degree of the perfection of heaven!

In the second place, we ought to notice that this follows from Jesus' instruction and admonition in verse 35, where we have the teaching of Jesus' parable on "forgiveness" applied. Here we read, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother from the heart."

We, therefore, may say that as little as Jesus is speaking here of the number "seven" in the literal numerical sense, so little does Gabriel speak of "sevens" in the terms of literal weeks in Daniel 9:24. "Seventy weeks (sevens) are determined upon thy people and the holy city to finish the transgression . . . and to anoint the most holy."

Let us then proceed to give a positive presentation on the entire text in Daniel 9:24ff.

"IT IS FINISHED" TO THE UTTERMOST (Daniel 9:24; John 19:30)

The text here reads as follows:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the pro-

phency, and to anoint the most holy."

This is the translation of the KJV of the Bible.

The Hebrew terms allow sometimes for a little more pointed meaning than what the English terms indicate. However, this is a very good translation of the Hebrew.

In our text we notice that very emphatically salvation is from the LORD. It is all foreordained by God in the Volume of the book; it is written in His Scroll. Thus is the implied sense in the message of Gabriel: *are determined*. This makes the nature of these weeks to be in the higher dimension of heaven, and of the throne of grace and glory in God's holy temple. We hear the clarion-sound, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place . . ." (Isaiah 57:15). And who can stay His hand, who declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 45:21)? For the Messiah, of whom Daniel speaks, has His assigned duties as the great Office-bearer. He is the temple-builder. Of Him Daniel 9:25 speaks. Such is the constant teaching of all the Scriptures both in the Prophets and in the

Psalms. He is no mere Jewish king as do the Jews and Dispensationalists dream. He is the King-Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Into this very pattern of the heavenly the Son of God fits as the Messiah.

This Christ takes this text upon His lips. He experiences in sacrificial obedience the fullest import of this "it is determined" of these "seventy sevens"! He takes this entire text before the throne of God on the place of the skull, outside of the gate of Jerusalem, which is spiritual Sodom and Egypt, and says in clear and understandable prose: It is finished. Yes, in the Greek this is only one word. It is *"tetelestai"*! The entire role of the prophetic Scriptures were in His bowels; it was sweet in His lips, but it was bitter in His stomach. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All that Daniel 9:24 prescribed for this Christ, as His Messianic duties, were finished.

Yes, He nailed all our sins and accursedness for them to the Tree. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes are we healed!

News From Our Churches

June 13, 1985

Rev. De Vries preached his farewell sermon at Southwest Church in Michigan the evening of May 26 and was installed in our Edgerton Church in Minnesota June 6th. Rev. R. Moore was installed in our Hull Church in Iowa the evening of May 26. Rev. Kamps led the church service. Since the time that Rev. Joostens declined the call to our Lynden Church in Washington, Lynden Church has formed a trio of Rev. R. Hanco, Rev. K. Koole, and Rev. G. Van Baren. Rev. C. Haak has declined the call to Southwest Church and Rev. D. Kuiper has asked for an extension for the call to our Isabel Church in South Dakota.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Miersma and son, Eric, arrived home in Holland, Michigan from New Zealand on May 30. They were at the Kent County Airport in Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 12, along with many friends, including Rev. and Mrs. Hutton from Northern Ireland, to welcome home Deane and Donna Wassink and family who returned home from a year's stay in Northern Ireland, where Deane taught in the Covenant Christian School of Northern Ireland. Rev. den Hartog and his family are visiting the states while Rev. den Hartog attends this year's synod in Hudsonville Church and the Singapore Camp-Day, where he will show slides of the "Reformed Faith in Singapore," an affecting

slide presentation put together by the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. Rev. den Hartog also presented a program to our Doon congregation in Iowa, May 31.

The new address of Rev. and Mrs. John A. Heys is 5107 Ridgeview Drive, Hudsonville, Michigan 49426. Telephone No. 669-2769. The new address of Rev. and Mrs. H. Veldman is 7797 Coachman's Lane, Jenison, Michigan 49428. Telephone No. 1-616-457-6578.

Rev. and Mrs. George Hutton from the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, N. Ireland arrived in South Holland June 5th. On June 7th, Rev. Hutton spoke on "The Reformed Faith in N. Ireland and Scotland Today" and on June 9th he spoke on "The Political Situation in N. Ireland Today." He also attended our synod and spoke to our Holland Church in Michigan.

Rev. D. Engelsma gave a Spring Lecture speech on "The God-fearing Family," in our Hudsonville Church May 9. A copy of this speech is available for \$3.00 from Arnold Haveman, 4133 Meadowfield, Hudsonville, MI 49426. Rev. Engelsma also led the pre-synodical church service, preaching on Judges 6:14-16.

A series of lectures were held in Bluebell, May 17 and 18. On Friday, Prof. H. Hanco spoke on "Un-

conditional Election" and Prof. H.C. Hoeksema on "Limited Atonement." On Saturday, Rev. K. Hanko spoke on "Total Depravity," Rev. G. Van Baren on "Irresistible Grace," and Rev. R. Hanko on "Perseverance of the Saints."

Trinity Church in Texas recites part of the form for the Lord's Supper together. At the end of the prayer on the bottom of page 62 they say the Apostles' Creed together and conclude the Thanksgiving Prayer at the bottom of page 63 by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Rev. J. Kortering made this appropriate statement for the graduates of Grandville Church, "We are thankful to God for His goodness shown in providing us with good Christian schools not only, but also for our students who benefit from that instruction."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Howard Pastoor, Jr. and to Mr. and Mrs. Don Van Dyke in the loss of their father, MR. HOWARD PASTOOR, SR.

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38, 39)

J. Bol, Pres.
C. Kooienga, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 22, 1985, our beloved parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. HERMAN VAN DYKE celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to our Lord for covenant parents who sought to teach us the ways of God. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in the years that He may give.

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Genesis 17:8)

John and Judy Van Dyke
Charlynn, Tracy, John
Gary and Cris Van Dyke
Eric, Trisha, Mark
Dan and Linda Van Dyke
Brenda, Brian, Jeremy, Michael

Steven Van Dyke
Alan Van Dyke
Timothy Van Dyke
Kathy Van Dyke

IN LOVING MEMORY

On June 1, 1985, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother MRS. GRACE MEELKER, at the age of 82 years.

We have found great comfort by the words found in II Corinthians, Chapter 5, verse 1 — "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Her husband — Eltje Meelker

Her children — Al and Anna Visser
Dan and Kobie Fluke
Lee and Alice Jenkins
Grace Meelker

Jim and Luella Johnson
3 grandchildren
1 great-grandchild

Calimesa, California

tion. The purpose of this instruction is not accomplished merely in academic achievement; but through such study our young people may grow in godliness, know their place in the covenant of grace, and use their ability which God has given them in the service and acknowledgment of His majesty and faithfulness in Christ. The school of sanctification continues till our graduation in death."

If failing eyesight prevents you from enjoying *The Standard Bearer*, if your job takes you on the road and you are tired of worldly radio fare, if you are the kind of person who finds it easier to listen than to read, remember that *The Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape from the Evangelism Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Send requests to Evangelism Society, Box 7214, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

DH

NOTICE!!!

Classic West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, CO on September 4, 1985, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda must be in my hands 30 days before Classis. Delegates in need of lodging or of transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of the Loveland Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 15, 1985, our dear parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN BISHOP celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren thank our Heavenly Father for giving them these many precious years together and for the faithful covenant instruction they have given us. We pray they will continue to experience the blessings of our faithful God in their remaining years.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

Elaine Brockhouse
Alvin and Ardis Meijer
Clarence and Sandra Tinklenberg
Douglas and Sarah Bishop

Henry and Nancy Tuinstra
24 grandchildren
2 great-grandchildren

IN LOVING MEMORY

On May 24, 1985, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and sister, MRS. EDITH VANDER LEE at the age of 75 years. We can but rejoice in her going Home and thank God for giving her such peace in her pathway.

May our God strengthen them by His Spirit and Word.

"For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14)

Mr. Gerrit Vander Lee
Ralph and Wilma Vander Lee
Dorothy and Ken Vink
9 grandchildren

Mrs. Andrew (Helen) Peterson
Mrs. Adrian (Della) Vanden Bosch
Mrs. Ralph (Minnie) De Young
Mrs. Louis (Jeanette) De Young
Mrs. Stuart (Louise) Vander Lee
Mrs. James (Margaret) Dirkse