

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is all too wonderful! The Living God, Who is the Resurrection and the Life, is born out of the old root of David, the dead stump of the house of Jesse! The Holy One makes His entrance into our world, conceived and born from sinners as we are!

He Who possesses the eternal riches of glory became poor, extremely poor, to enrich us

See "Let Us Go to Bethlehem" — page 122

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THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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

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

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

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

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

MEDITATION

Cornelius Hanko

Let Us Go to Bethlehem

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." Luke 2:15

"There were shepherds abiding in the field by night!"

Ordinary men dressed in their shepherd's garb!

Yet they were believers in God and in His Christ!
They were saints who represented the church of the old dispensation!

While the stars moved in their courses through the heavens, these lowly shepherds sat and pondered! Nothing broke the stillness of the night except the occasional munching of the sheep. Often they sang to themselves, "My soul in silence waits for God! Only for God! In Him is all my salvation!" Often they added with a sigh, "For long has been our sorrow's night. Afflicted through the weary years, we wait until Thy help appears."

And suddenly on this particular night an angel of the Lord stood among them! And the glory of the Lord shone round about them! Before such dazzling brightness they hid their faces. Never before had the glory of God's face shone so brightly upon mortal man! Shepherds who had not been given time to change their shabby garb, a few flocks of sheep, and the Judean hillside were all flooded with the glory of the Lord! Never before had heaven and earth been so closely united in one!

And the angel said unto them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you glad tidings!" The Gospel! The good news was proclaimed that night, flooding the hearts of these men with a joy unspeakable and full of glory! For already in the early hours of this new day the Savior is born! It has just happened! The promised Messiah is come, who is Christ and Lord! Born for your sake!

When you go to look for Him, do not look in the royal palace of Jerusalem. O no! Do not look for a Babe in pomp and splendor! You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger as an outcast, the poorest of the poor!

Hardly had the message been uttered or heaven opened, the angel hosts descended among them to worship the Child! Glory to God! Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth! Peace in the people of God's good pleasure! The angels, the glory, the harmonious choir singing with a beauty that mortal ears had never heard, yes, especially the glad tidings must have filled the hearts of the shepherds with a feeling as if for the moment they had been translated into the heavenly glory of the new and eternal day!

The song faded, the angel hosts passed out of sight, the darkness of the night once more surrounded the shepherds! It took a little while for their eyes to adjust to the darkness, for their souls to grasp all that they had seen and heard, and to realize that all things remained as they had been.

But they were of one mind! They had but one desire! Let us go and search out all the way to Bethlehem!

That we may see the thing that is come to pass!
"Which the Lord hath made known to us."
The thing! The thing spoken by the angel!

Often words fail us when we try to express matters that are deeply spiritual and heavenly.

We generalize. We speak of "the thing," which can mean almost anything. Yet to us it may refer to something most wonderful.

The thing that the shepherds referred to was the wonder that had been revealed to them, still too wonderful for them to understand!

A wonder is God's hand of mercy reaching down into our earthly existence! It is the power of God working mightily for the salvation of His elect, drawing them unto Himself out of the bondage of sin and death into the glorious liberty of the sons of God! Zion is redeemed through judgment, and delivered out of this present world, translated into the glorious perfection of the new creation!

Therefore Scripture makes known to us these special acts of power as a part of the wonder of our salvation!

"The thing that is come to pass."

The thing that was spoken, "which the Lord hath made known to us."

There was no doubt in the minds of the shepherds but that the Lord God had spoken to them through His heavenly messenger, confirmed by the angel host which gave honor to the Babe and proclaimed the joy in heaven among the angels and the saints that the Savior is born! There was no doubt in their minds but that the long awaited, promised Savior had come into the world that very night!

The Messiah, God's Anointed! Our great Prophet, our eternal High Priest, our glorious King has come as a mere Babe lying in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes!

No, the incongruity of it all did not trouble them! The Lord had spoken! The importance of this great event overshadowed all other considerations!

God's Son, who rests eternally in the bosom of the Father, has come into the flesh to dwell among us, even while He is in heaven!

God's Son, Mary's Child, enters into our world of sin and misery in deepest humility to suffer and to die, to arise as Victor over death, in order to lead many sons into glory!

It is all too wonderful! The Living God, Who is the Resurrection and the Life, is born out of the old root of David, the dead stump of the house of Jesse! The Holy One makes His entrance into our world, conceived and born from such sinners as we are!

He Who possesses the eternal riches of glory became poor, extremely poor, to enrich us with the exceeding abundance of riches of salvation, even as these had been promised to Him of the Father!

The wonder of it all! His amazing love, His mercy and compassion impelled Him from all eternity to empty Himself of His glory, to humble Himself in the form of a servant even unto the accursed death of the cross to bring many sons along with Him into covenant fellowship with His God in the heavenly mansions!

Unto you is born the Savior!

For four thousand years the angel that came to the shepherds (was he Gabriel?), had waited in eager anticipation for this moment when he might be sent with the glad tidings of the Savior's birth! The whole angel host had been watching the unfolding of God's counsel here on earth, eagerly anticipating the moment when they would be sent forth to proclaim the glad tidings of our salvation, in which they themselves were so fully involved! The time had come! The virgin mother brought forth her Firstborn Son! At the given signal they went forth to sing their song of praise that echoed through the heavens and re-echoed through the fields of Bethlehem! They sang of a joy in which they also shared and will share eternally!

This message of salvation has been repeated over and over again through the Scriptures and from many pulpits, also from many lips of the saints. Many hear it, but only the meek and the lowly receive it and rejoice!

Unto you, the broken of heart and the contrite of spirit, comes the glad tidings, your Savior is born!

Let us now go even to Bethlehem!

Great eagerness spurred the shepherds on to look for the Babe. Their chief concern at the moment was not their sheep. Nor did any one of them suggest that they should wait until daylight to carry out their search! Not one of them, upon second thought, questioned the word of the angel, even though this coming of the Messiah was so contrary to their expectations. No pomp, no fanfare, no worldwide proclamation, a lowly Babe born from a commoner in deepest shame and humility! Not one of them raised the objection that it is scientifically impossible for a virgin to conceive and bear a son, or for God to be born of a woman, even though the prophet had spoken of it!

There was no time for such idle speculation, since within them was the powerful drive of faith, wrought by the Spirit in their hearts, spurring them on to seek Him whom their soul desired!

A new day was dawning, also within their hearts!

Soon they were on their way. The search was not a difficult one. Not many babies were born in Bethlehem that night. Surely none other was born in a cave or a cattle stall. The explicit directions of the angel soon brought them to the mother, and soon they were bending in worship over the Babe!

We can only wonder what thoughts passed through their minds. Abraham had longed for it, but had never lived to see it. Here lay the hope of the ages, the answer to thousands upon thousands of prayers! A short time later, when the day had dawned, they hastened through the city to tell friends and acquaintances all that they had seen and heard!

Let us also arise and go to Bethlehem!

Let us go with the Scriptures in our hands to behold Him Who is the fulfillment of God's promise of our salvation!

Let us bow down and worship Him, our God Who came into our flesh, Immanuel, God with us!

In our thoughts we watch Him grow up as the Man of Sorrows, the suffering Servant of God, who all His life long was burdened with the weight of God's wrath against our sins. Let us pause a moment at the foot of the cross, where God's blood was shed, and where God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, never more counting our sins against us. And there let us confess that He was wounded for *our* transgressions, was bruised for *our* iniquities, that the chastisement of *our* peace was upon *Him*, and by *His* stripes we are healed!

For He is now the risen Lord! With an eye of faith we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, exalted as Lord above all! Soon coming to judge the nations in righteousness! Even then He will be our Jesus, our Judge, to judge our miserable lives on the basis of His atoning work of the cross, to declare us righteous in Him, free from sin and guilt and worthy of eternal life in covenant fellowship with our God!

We hear Him say: Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me!

O come, let us adore Him, Christ, our Lord!

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

EDITORIAL

Meet James Arminius (2)

Was James Arminius a heretic?

To many of us this may seem to be an utterly foolish and unnecessary question. Perhaps it seems to be a question like, "Is ice cold?" or, "Is fire hot?" In other words, for a Reformed man this is not even a question which needs asking. For a Reformed man it is a fundamental presupposition.

However, the Editor of *The Banner* (Oct. 6, 1985, pp. 6, 7) tries to present Arminius in a favorable light and to persuade his readers that Arminius was not a heretic or, at least, not nearly such an evil man and such a bad heretic as he is sometimes presented as being. We have already examined the matter of the character and conduct of James Arminius in our November 15 editorial. It remains now to examine this second matter: was Arminius a heretic?

Editor Kuyvenhoven has the following to say on this subject:

... In many areas the independent Bible student Arminius was at odds with his speculative teacher, Beza. In many instances I am inclined to side with Arminius and not with Beza. Today most Reformed thinkers agree with Arminius that election and reprobation do not originate in God in the same manner; and we would warmly support Arminius's emphasis that we may not think of our election apart from Christ. Arminius is probably right in saying that the "I" of Romans 7 who cannot escape the tyranny of evil is not the believer who is *in Christ*, free from the law of sin and death and empowered by the Spirit to do what is right. Arminius also says many things about Romans 9 with which we would now agree. But his views of God's grace and human freedom are ultimately unacceptable.

Later in the same editorial Editor Kuyvenhoven quotes with approval from a review of Carl Bangs's book on Arminius by the Rev. Leonard Verduin, a review which appeared in *The Banner* in 1973:

... In a *Banner* review of the book ... Verduin agrees with Bangs that "what we now call Calvinism

was a *second phase* of the reform" in the Netherlands; "there was a native theology from very early times ... not so one-sidedly pardon-oriented as was the later theology imported from the South ... [and] not as obsessed with the concept of predestination either." Verduin seems to say that the theology that finally prevailed at the Synod of Dort, ten years after the death of Arminius, signified a narrowing of Holland's theological stream. In that sense Arminius's claims that he stayed within the Reformed tradition may be correct, though I am not so sure he had Calvin and Augustine on his side.

A few more paragraphs of Verduin's 1973 review are worth repeating:

"If there are still people around who live with the caricature that Arminius was an arch-heretic, a Pelagian, a man who shied away from the idea that salvation is by grace and by grace alone, these *must* read this book. A man who prays on his deathbed, as did this man: 'O thou great Shepherd who ... brought again from the dead, Jesus, my Lord and Savior, be present with me, a sheep of thine that is weak and afflicted. O thou God of my salvation, render my soul fit for the heavenly kingdom and prepare my body for the resurrection!' — such a man cannot be the bad man a certain tradition has made him out to be.

"If there are still people to be found who think Arminius got a square deal at the hands of the "orthodoxy" of his times, these too *must* read this book ...

"If there are still people on the scene who think of the Synod of Dort as an altogether holy moment in the annals of Christ's church, ... let such persons by all means also read this study ..."

Now, first of all, let me clear away some rubbish about a supposed difference between Calvin and Beza (Calvin's successor in the Academy in Geneva) and about a so-called second phase of the reformation in the Netherlands. These myths are abroad in Reformed circles. They are used especially to attack the Reformed view of predestination. And they are used to deceive the simple, as though

Calvin had a different view of predestination — and especially of reprobation — than did Beza. And these myths gradually gain credence through repetition. They are then used to uphold Arminius and to condemn the doctrine of the Canons as a "narrowing of Holland's theological stream." Over against this, it should be stressed:

1) That there was no fundamental difference between Calvin and Beza. Theodore Beza was Calvin's own handpicked successor at Geneva's Academy. He was also the author of a sympathetic biography of John Calvin. And before Calvin's death, the two were genial co-workers. Certainly, there were differences between the two, just as they were two different personalities. But fundamental differences of doctrine, particularly with respect to predestination and more especially with respect to reprobation, there were not.

2) The same is true with respect to the notion of a second phase of the reformation and an alleged narrowing of Holland's theological stream. This is a myth! Was there *development*? By all means! But, in the first place, the development was exactly *in the line* of the Reformation; it was not divergence, but development. In the second place, such development of the truth took place as it so frequently has taken place in church history, namely, in the way of controversy — in this instance, the Arminian controversy. In the third place, this development was by no means limited to the Netherlands, though its focus was there. Do not forget that *every Reformed denomination* of that day was represented at Dordt. And all the foreign delegations as well as the Dutch delegates were signatories of the Canons.

3) It is intellectually dishonest of supposedly Reformed scholars to belittle Dordt and the Canons of Dordt and Beza's theology and forevermore to be praising Arminius and his theology and to be viewing him sympathetically. I can understand that an avowed Arminian might do this, but I cannot understand that a man who claims to be Reformed does it. And it is detrimental to any Reformed church. If there is anything that a Reformed church does not need nowadays — and this is true especially of the Christian Reformed Church — it is the promotion of Arminius and Arminianism.

But was Arminius a heretic?

Taking the term *heretic* in the strictly technical sense: No!

In the strict sense of the word, of course, a heretic is one who has been found guilty of heresy by an ecclesiastical assembly, first of all. In the second place, a heretic is one who refuses to recant his heresy when he has been found guilty. And, in the third place, a heretic is deposed and expelled from the church because of persistence in heresy.

Plainly, in this sense James Arminius was not a heretic. He was never deposed and expelled from the ministry in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Why not? He did not live long enough. He died in 1609, ten years before the Synod of Dordt completed its work and deposed and expelled multitudes of his disciples as heretics. And when he died, he was technically in good standing in the Reformed Churches, for the simple reason that up to that time no ecclesiastical assembly had put him and his views on trial.

Nevertheless, James Arminius was a heretic in the sense that he was the *father* of the heretical doctrines which were exposed and condemned at the Synod of Dordt and the teacher and spiritual father of many of the men who were condemned and deposed at Dordt. Concerning this, just a few words.

In the first place, it would not be difficult at all to prove this from the writings of James Arminius, and to do so at length. We have made reference to this in another connection with respect to Arminius's view of Romans 7 and his denial that Romans 7 is speaking of the sanctified Christian. It is interesting to note in this connection, that implicit in his view of Romans 7 was also a denial of the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith. At one of the conferences referred to in our first editorial on this subject, Gomarus placed Arminius's heretical view of justification as No. 1 on the docket of those items which were to be discussed and debated. Interesting this is, because, while the doctrine of justification as such did not become the subject of debate and a confessional declaration at the Synod of Dordt, it was nevertheless surely involved, just as it was involved in the Semi-Pelagian doctrine from which the church was liberated in the Reformation.

In the second place, the clearest proof of heresy is in the Five Points of the Remonstrance, adopted schismatically by the Arminian party in the year 1610, the year following the death of James Arminius. Where did those points come from? Did they drop out of the blue? Of course not! They were formulated by the Arminian party under the leadership of the bosom friend of Arminius, Johannes Uitenboogaert. In the Remonstrance you behold the fruit of the underhanded work of James Arminius. No one can deny this. And what was the fruit? This, without quoting the Five Points in full: 1) Conditional election and reprobation. 2) General atonement. 3) The denial of total depravity. 4) The doctrine of resistible grace. 5) The questioning (without forthright denial) of the perseverance of the saints. These doctrines have officially been declared to be the embodiment of the Pelagian heresy in our Canons. It is unbecoming for any

Reformed man to deny, as do the Revs. Verduin and Kuyvenhoven, that Arminius was an arch-heretic, a Pelagian. Our fathers accused the Arminians of bringing up the error of Pelagius again out of hell!

In the third place, just a few words about the Rev. Verduin's reference to the dying prayer of Arminius. My first word is that I will not judge Arminius's prayer; but neither can Verduin. Only God can do that. In the second place, the question is not what Arminius may have prayed — many a heretic can have pious words. The question is: what did Arminius *teach*? In other words, demonstrate that his teachings were not heretical. In the third place, one must be very careful to

discern heresy, because heretics come with cunning craftiness and lie in wait to deceive (as Ephesians 4 puts it). I can quote you words from the Five Points of the Arminians to which any Reformed man can and does subscribe. Here are two examples: 1. "... this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good." 2. "... all good deeds or movements that can be conceived must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ." But read these statements in their context of Point 4 of the Remonstrance, and they are heretical.

Was Arminius a heretic? Unequivocally, YES; and a dangerous one! HCH

ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

Alive '85

Something "big" happened in the Grand Rapids area late last summer, something "big" and something "sad." It was an evangelistic crusade called, "Alive, '85." *Christianity Today* in its November 8, 1985 issue reports: "Grand Rapids, Michigan, is no modern day Sodom or Gomorrah. The city of 185,000 is the home of such highly respected evangelical institutions as Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Zondervan Publishing Company, a major evangelical publisher.

"A haven for Reformed Christianity, Grand Rapids seems an unlikely target for a major evangelistic crusade, especially one conducted by an Episcopal clergyman. Yet that is what happened with Alive '85, a three-city (Grand Rapids, Holland, Grand Haven, R.D.D.), 15-day crusade, the largest event of its kind in Western Michigan.

"Some 60,000 people attended the meetings Hundreds had to be turned away in Grand Rapids. In all, nearly 1,700 people dedicated or rededicated their lives to Christ. Of these, some 500 were not church members."

Yes, it was big! Some 60,000 people in attendance, hundreds had to be turned away, "the largest event of its kind in western Michigan." It was widely advertised in the media and by means of billboards and tracts and leaflets. *The Grand Rapids Press* reported on it, as did local TV and radio stations. Nearly 150 of the 600 churches invited to participate accepted the invitation. It was a big event.

"The crowds came to hear a little-known, British-born Episcopal evangelist named John Guest. The 49-year-old clergyman committed his life to Christ in 1954 at a Billy Graham Crusade in London. He joined the Church of England and went on to become an itinerant evangelist as a singer in a Christian rock band.

"Evangelism is a driving force in Guest's ministry. Fifteen years ago he ran the youth division of Billy Graham's New York City crusade. In 1968, he founded an evangelistic campus ministry Coalition for Christian Outreach. A year later he led a major evangelistic outreach on the beaches of Grand Haven, thus introducing himself to western Michigan. In recent years he has worked with evangelists Leighton Ford and Luis Palau.

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"For the last 14 years, Guest has served as rector at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania suburb of Sewickley. During his pastorate, church attendance there has grown from 250 to about 1,200." (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 8, 1985)

Why the crusade? Lee Huizenga, vice-chairman of Alive '85 said, "We saw a lot of apathy [in the churches]. There was virtually no evangelistic outreach going on in the area." Clare DeGraff, organizer of Alive '85, said, "Churches in this area are very conservative theologically, but they've also been very lukewarm, and we felt it was time to bring renewal." (*Christianity Today*)

Why do we term this "big" event "sad"? For a number of reasons. Apathy and lukewarmness are serious, dangerous, destructive sins. (Cf. Revelation 3:16.) There is constant need for renewal in God's church. Churches who stand in the Reformed tradition understand that reformation is ongoing. The church must always be reformed and reforming according to Scripture and the Confessions. Aside from the question as to whether God does this reforming by means of "evangelistic crusades," it's sad that over 100 of the nearly 150 participating churches were churches bearing the name Reformed. (For these statistics cf. *Christianity Today* and the Oct. 28, 1985 issue of *The Banner*.) The theology and, therefore, the preaching of John Guest are shot through with Arminianism. *Christianity Today* reports: "When it comes to preaching the gospel, Guest exhibits his singlemindedness. During the Michigan crusade, the urbane Episcopalian at times sounded like a fundamentalist firebrand, 'If you die before you give your life to Christ,' he proclaimed, 'after you've been in hell three seconds, you'd give anything for three seconds back on earth to give your life to Christ.'" This is not Reformed language. *The Banner* quotes Guest: "Some of you are going to make a decision tonight that could change your life, help you change your church, and help your church change the world. That's the order [in which] it has to happen," he said. Guest said that God's sovereignty goes hand-in-hand with a person's choice for Christ. "The same Paul," he said, "who taught that God, by his own sovereign election and love, chooses us, also pleaded with his audience to respond to Jesus. That God is sovereign does not diminish that we are held accountable and responsible for our decisions. Are you the one that God is calling to himself tonight? It's to you I appeal and beseech in the name of Jesus. Come and give your life to him. Do not leave this place without surrendering your life to him.'" This is Arminian language. Each of the services of the crusade was concluded with an altar call. That's sad!

Such language is a far cry from what the Bible and our Reformed Confessions teach. When Jesus preached sovereign election and reprobation (cf. John 6:37, 44, 65; read the entire chapter) many of his disciples said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (verse 60) and they "walked no more with him" (verse 66). The Apostle Paul preached to the Romans, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Romans 9:16). To all those who object to this precious truth, declaring that there is unrighteousness with God, and babbling about free will, gospel offers, and making decisions to surrender one's life to Jesus, the Apostle has this to say: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20 ff.). The Scriptures teach that sinners dead in trespasses and sins are made alive in Christ and saved by grace through faith, God's gift (Ephesians 2:1-10). The Apostle came with no offers, no pleas for decisions to the Corinthians. Paul, in the confidence that "all things are of God," came with the imperative of the gospel: "be ye reconciled to God" (cf. II Corinthians 5:18-21). That venerable part of the Three Forms of Unity, the Canons of Dordt, accurately reflects the Biblical truth when it states, "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel" (Canons, II, Article 5). That over 100 churches in the Reformed tradition felt the need to get help from an Episcopal, Arminian clergyman to spark renewal is very sad indeed!

That the churches, also the Protestant Reformed Churches, need to be reformed and always reforming is true. Of this there can be no doubt whatsoever. What does the church need to be and remain Reformed? The church does *not* need higher critics in its seminaries, women in ecclesiastical office, revised creeds or new creeds. The church does not need Arminianism or evangelistic crusades. The church needs "faithful men who are able to teach others" in its seminaries. The church must pray for grace to be faithful to the rich and wonderful heritage of the Scriptures as set forth in the Reformed Confessions. The church needs to pray for daily repentance and faith in the hearts of God's people. The church, if it is to be and remain true to the Scriptures, needs preachers who really preach. It needs preachers who are convinced that the Bible is God's inspired and infallible Word. Preachers, the church needs, who faithfully expound the Word of

God from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. Preaching is the great need! Preaching that without shame proclaims the truth of Scripture over against every lie, false doctrine, and ungodly practice in the lives of God's people. And, preachers too are needed to be sent to proclaim the gospel to the nations.

The church also needs elders to rule her in the name of Jesus Christ. The church needs discipline in order that she may be obedient to God's will both in doctrine and in life. The sacraments must be administered according to the institution of

Christ. Elders who rule in Christ's name must see to it that the Word is faithfully preached, the sacraments administered, and that God's people know, love, and live the truth of Scripture.

Without this there will never be reformation. Our prayer for the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ is that God will give her preachers who really preach and elders who will rule in the name of Christ keeping the church pure in doctrine and obedient in life.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Herman Veldman

The Apostles' Creed (5)

In our preceding article we were calling attention to the fact that Answer 24 of our Heidelberg Catechism cannot be understood to refer to the three divisions of the Apostolic Confession, and that each of the Divine Persons is distinguished and described here. Question and Answer 24 reads as follows: "How are these articles divided (the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed)? Into three parts: the first is of God, the Father, and our creation; the second of God the Son, and our redemption; the third of God the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification." We noted that this interpretation would teach the heresy of Tritheism. This is our first objection to this interpretation of Answer 24 of our Heidelberg Catechism and of the Apostles' Creed. We now continue.

Secondly, this interpretation is neither the meaning of the Apostolic Confession nor of the authors of our Heidelberg Catechism. It is true that the Confession speaks of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord, and of the Holy Ghost. But we must notice the following. Of God, the Father, we read that He is almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. However, is not also the Son almighty, and also the

Holy Spirit? Are not also the Son and the Holy Spirit creator of heaven and earth? Does not therefore this first article of the Apostles' Creed speak of things which are applicable to all the Divine Persons? And what do we read concerning Jesus Christ? Is it not striking that we read immediately of Jesus Christ? We read this: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ." It is true that we read of the Lord Jesus Christ as God's only begotten Son, but this we read only because only God's only begotten Son could be this Lord Jesus Christ. And do not the rest of the articles all speak of Christ as He was and is active in the state of humiliation and exaltation? Do they not therefore speak of Christ as to His human nature and as He is the Head of God's people? And, although the last five articles call our attention to the Holy Spirit, they speak of Him, do they not, as the Spirit of Christ and as He operates within the church, calling the church into existence throughout the ages, and bestowing upon the church the communion of the saints, forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and everlasting life. Moreover, neither is this the interpretation of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is also the line that is followed by the Heidelberg Catechism. Besides, the author of this catechism, in his own explanation, declares emphatically that

this twenty-fourth answer does not at all purpose to separate the three Persons of the Trinity, and to ascribe anything to the One with the exclusion of the others.

Thirdly, we should also note the wording of the Apostolic Confession. We read: "I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ . . .; I believe in the Holy Ghost." Why is it that the name God appears only in this first article? Why do we not read: "I believe in God, the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Spirit"? The name God appears only in the first article of the Apostles' Creed.

We may, therefore, conclude the following. In all the works of God, all the three Divine Persons are equally active. The Triune God creates — out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. The Triune God redeems — out of the Father and through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, although it is true, of course, that the Second Person assumes our flesh and blood. And the Triune God sanctifies out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, although it is true that the Holy Spirit dwells within our hearts. This is scriptural. Indeed, the Father creates. But Scripture teaches that all things were created by the Son (Colossians 1), and that the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters (Genesis 1). And we read in John 17 that the Father sanctifies. Redemption, too, is the work also of the Father and of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, we would say that this Apostolic Confession speaks of the Triune God as the God of our salvation and in relation to the believing Church. Fact is, we read, "I believe in God, the Father, etc." In other words, this confession is the confession, the believing expression, of the Church. We read in the first article, "I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." It is true, of course, that reference is made here to the Fatherhood of the first Person in His personal relation to the second Person. But we should notice what the Heidelberg Catechism says of this first article. He is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is that as the Triune God. He is also the Father of creation, and He is that as the Triune God. The Catechism also mentions God's counsel, and that surely belongs to the Triune God. In addition to this, He is also the Father of His people, and He is that as the Triune God. The first article, therefore, speaks of the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator omnipotent, the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. The first article, therefore, calls our attention to God, the Triune God, our almighty Father, creator of the world, the first world and also the second world, and also as our Triune Savior. The second part of the Apostolic

Confession calls attention to the Son, the only begotten to be sure, but preeminently as the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered and died under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. And the third part of the Confession speaks of the Holy Ghost, primarily the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ and of His church.

We conclude, therefore, that in the Apostolic Confession the Triune God stands before us, and that He is the Object of our faith, even as He is revealed as our Father in creation, as our Redeemer in Jesus Christ our Lord, and as our Sanctifier in the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now this is extremely important. Indeed, extremely important. This is due to the fact that it constitutes the possibility of our faith in the Triune God. What does it mean to believe in God, and to believe in God as the Triune God? The natural man will not believe in God. To be sure, God has revealed Himself, unmistakably, undeniably. According to Romans 1:20 the invisible things of God, such as His Godhead, power, and wisdom are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. Besides, the Lord has not left Himself without witness, testifying also within man that He is the living God. Nevertheless, many refuse to believe in the living God. He will constantly change and corrupt the glory of the incorruptible God. He will constantly change God to suit himself, will make of God a graven image, will humanize God, place Him within the framework of his own creaturely and corrupt mind and thinking. Man will refuse to serve God as God, the alone living God. All we need do is think of all the present-day conceptions of the living God. There is the evil and corruption of Modernism. Modernism is humanism. Modernism denies the supernatural, denies the virgin birth, the physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Modernism transforms the living God into the figure of a corruptible man. And then there is also the heinous conception of Arminianism. Arminianism revolves about the free will of the sinner. Arminianism believes in a predestination that is based upon man's belief or unbelief. Arminianism refuses to allow God to be God, changes Him into a corruptible man, refuses to give unto the Lord the glory and honor which are due to Him alone.

What does it imply to believe in God, the Triune God? That God is God Triune implies that He is God, the living God, the only God, and that He is really God, Who alone does all things for His own Name's sake, Who rules, alone rules, and is worthy of all adoration. That He is the Triune God implies that, as the living God, He is God, Who is absolute, is what He is alone, the Incomparable One. He is in

Himself perfectly and eternally the Self-Sufficient covenant God. He needs no man to contribute or add to His glory. He is in Himself eternally and completely Self-satisfied. He lives eternally in the enjoyment of Himself. That God is Triune implies that He is eternally glorious, infinitely and supremely blessed, wholly sovereign, and worthy of all praise and adoration. He alone must be glorified — our only calling is to call Him great and that even forevermore. We must bear in mind that God is God alone, that He is Absolute Reality, that He alone is the one and only absolute being. And that He is Triune means that, as God Who is one in essence and three in persons, He knows Himself, has fellowship in and with Himself, rejoices in Himself as the alone and all-sufficient One, rejoicing in His own infinite being and fulness. And to believe in Him means that we acknowledge Him, love Him, set all our trust and confidence in Him, worship and adore Him, do all unto the praise and the glory of His Name.

Now we can understand that the possibility of our faith is outlined and set forth before us in this twenty-fourth answer of our Heidelberg Catechism. Of ourselves we will not believe in Him, cannot believe in Him, cannot will to believe in Him, refuse to believe in Him. We love ourselves, seek ourselves and the things of this present evil world. We will not bend the knee before Him; we will not allow Him to be God; we will not acknowledge Him to be worthy of all praise and adoration. And, incidentally, there is no salvation

possible for the unitarian who denies the Trinity and believes in a one-person god. To the unitarian, God, of course, is not a covenant God. And there is no salvation possible for him, because he denies that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit.

We must believe in God, the Father, Almighty, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in the Holy Ghost. Our heavenly Father is almighty, revealed when He, by the word of His power, created the heavens and the earth. How tremendously important this is! How could we be saved if this were not true? As that almighty Creator of heaven and earth He must also reveal Himself within my own heart and life. Life must be called out of death, light out of darkness. God must speak in me even as He spoke at history's dawn. God must speak and it is, command and it stands. Indeed, the word of recreation is surely more wonderful than the work of creation. Immediately prior to God's creation of the world there was nothing. But, immediately prior to God's word of recreation there is a dead sinner who is full of sin and enmity and darkness. This sinner must be called out of death into life, out of darkness into the light. This cannot be accomplished through a general well-meaning offer of the gospel, so widely preached and taught today. No sinner can or will or can will to accept such an offer. God must speak as He alone can speak and as He spoke when He created the heavens and the earth. Indeed, I believe, must believe in God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and of earth.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Jason L. Kortering

Genesis — The Beginnings (concluded)

In our outline of the book of Genesis, we have yet to complete the last two "generations."

10. The generations of Esau (36:1-37:1). Esau's name is given as "Edom." He took his three wives and five sons which are mentioned by name and his daughters with all his substance and moved to Mount Seir because there was not enough room to

dwell in the land alongside Jacob (36:1-8). His generations are then listed by sons and dukes (36:9-30, 40-44). The kings that reigned in Edom are listed (36:31-39). Jacob dwelt as a stranger in the land of Canaan (37:1).

11. The generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26). Joseph is mentioned first because the subsequent history

focuses upon his involvement in the family of Jacob. At seventeen years of age, he brought the evil report of his brothers to Jacob. Jacob loved Joseph more than the others and gave him the coat of many colors. Enmity developed between Joseph and his brothers (37:2-4). The dreams of Joseph are recorded, of the sheaves and sun, moon, and stars, both indicating Joseph's exalted position (37:5-11). While he was bringing food to his brothers at Shechem, they plotted to kill him. Reuben intervened and they threw Joseph into a pit. In Reuben's absence, they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a kid and presented it to their father. He grieved in his apparent death (37:12-35). Joseph was sold to Potiphar, officer of Pharaoh of Egypt (37:36). An indication is given of the sad spiritual state in the family of Jacob by the adultery of Judah with his own daughter-in-law, Tamar. Two of Judah's sons, Er and Onan, were slain by the Lord for their sins. Judah promised that his youngest son Shelah would be given to the widowed Tamar. He failed to do this; and after his own wife died he visited a harlot in Timnath. This "harlot" was Tamar, and she conceived twins, Pharez and Zarah. Judah's sin was exposed (38:1-30). Joseph became the overseer in Potiphar's house and prospered greatly. Potiphar's wife attempted to get Joseph to commit adultery with her. He resisted her advances and one time fled from her, leaving his garment behind. When Potiphar returned home, she unjustly accused Joseph of trying to rape her. In anger Potiphar put Joseph in prison (39:1-23). While in prison Joseph was joined by the chief butler and baker of Egypt. One night they both had a dream. The butler dreamed of three grape vines, and he had a wine glass in his hand. Joseph was led by God to interpret this to mean that in three days he would be restored as butler before Pharaoh. The baker had a dream of three baskets on his head, which Joseph interpreted to be three days and he would be killed and his body fed to the birds. These events took place as Joseph had said (40:1-23). After two years, Pharaoh had a dream and was directed by the butler to turn to Joseph for an interpretation. The seven cows in his dream represented seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh appointed Joseph to oversee the gathering of corn during the seven years of plenty so that they would have food during the famine (41:1-57). During the years of famine, Jacob and his family were also affected. Jacob decided to send his 10 sons to Egypt to buy corn. Benjamin, the youngest, remained home.

Joseph immediately recognized them, but did not disclose his identity. To test them he accused them of being spies and put them in prison. Joseph challenged them to prove their sincerity by having one of them stay in prison and the rest return home and bring their youngest brother on the next trip. Simeon stayed in prison. They discovered their money in the bags of corn and reported these events to their father. Fear was upon all of them. Jacob resolved that Benjamin would not return with them: "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, will ye take Benjamin away?" (42:1-38). The famine persisted, so at long last Jacob consented and Benjamin accompanied his brothers to Egypt. Judah accepted responsibility for his safety. They took double money in event they were accused of stealing it the first time. Joseph recognized them when they arrived and he received all his brothers, including Simeon who was released from prison, in his own house. Joseph was overcome with joy when he saw Benjamin, though he did not reveal his true identity to them as yet. At the evening meal, they sat separate from the Egyptians, arranged according to their age, and Benjamin received five times more food than the rest (43:1-34). Once again the sacks were filled with corn and their money placed in the neck of the sack. Only this time Joseph ordered his servants to put his silver cup in the sack of Benjamin. As they departed for Canaan, Joseph ordered his servants to pursue after them. When they caught up with them they accused them of stealing Joseph's silver cup. The brothers denied it and suggested that whoever had the cup should be taken as a slave into Egypt. Search indicated that it was in Benjamin's sack. With grief they returned to Egypt, afraid of the future. Judah made an intercessory plea, offering himself in Benjamin's place (44:1-34). Joseph finally revealed himself to them and explained that God had a purpose for all of this. He had to be sold into Egypt to preserve life. Joseph instructed his brothers to return to Canaan and get Jacob and all the family and that they should come to live in Goshen, for there were yet five years of famine ahead. Pharaoh agreed and wagons were sent, laden with presents for Jacob. Upon hearing that Joseph was yet alive, Jacob resolved to go to Egypt (45:1-28). As Jacob departed from Canaan for Egypt, the Lord met him in Beersheba. He told him not to fear to go to Egypt, that He would be with him there, and that, though he would die in Egypt, his family would return to Canaan. A total of seventy souls went to Egypt. When they arrived near Goshen, Joseph met them, and he and his father embraced. Jacob was at peace and he consented to meet Pharaoh (46:1-34). Pharaoh agreed to have Jacob and his family stay in Goshen, since they were herdsmen and the land was fitted for this pur-

pose. When Pharaoh asked Jacob his age, he replied, "130 years, few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

While Joseph administered the distribution of food, the people came to him and brought money, cattle, deeds of land in exchange for food. The government of Egypt claimed one fifth of the increase. Seed was provided and the harvest shared. Jacob was now 147 years old and strength failed. He made Joseph promise that when he died, Joseph would bury his body in Machpelah by his forefathers (47:1-31). Joseph was informed that his father was near death. He went to see him and took his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh along. Jacob rejoiced in their presence. He blessed Joseph by pronouncing a blessing upon his two sons. Deliberately he crossed his hands and placed his right hand on Ephraim, the youngest. Joseph pointed out this error, but Jacob insisted that Ephraim would be the greater. In this way he gave the double portion to his beloved Joseph (48:1-22). All the sons now gathered before Jacob for his final blessing: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, Benjamin. These are pointed out to be the twelve tribes of Israel. Once again he charged them to bury his body in the cave of Machpelah. He then died majestically (49:1-33). Joseph instructed the Egyptians to embalm the body of his father. After forty days of mourning, they obtained permission from Pharaoh to make the journey to Canaan for burial. A great procession went and the Canaanites were moved with this show of loyalty. They returned again to Egypt. Joseph's brothers, realizing that their father was dead, made overtures of peace with Joseph, asking forgiveness for their past sins. He answered peacefully: ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good. Having lived for 110 years, Joseph prepared to die. He took an oath of the children of Israel that they would carry his bones with them when they would leave for the promised land. After his death, his body was embalmed and put in a coffin (50:1-26).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is the method of interpreting Genesis important for a person's understanding of the en-

tire Bible? Prove that, from beginning to end, Genesis is historical.

2. Show from the whole of Scripture that the first five books of the Bible (Pentateuch) are called the law. Why is this so?

3. What is the relationship between creation and redemption? Is it true that a denial of creation leads to a denial of redemption? Explain.

4. Should the fact that we have no original manuscripts of Old Testament writings shake our faith concerning the fact that they are the Word of God?

5. Why is the Hebrew language so adapted to Old Testament writing of types and shadows?

6. We consider Genesis to be a book of beginnings. How does this relate to the central message of Christ? Consider in what way Christ is revealed in the book of Genesis.

7. Having reflected on the outline of the book of Genesis, we notice that most of it deals with the lives of a few patriarchs: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Make a list of the spiritual lessons God teaches us through the lives of each of these men.

8. The flood event has a prominent place in Genesis. Demonstrate from the evidence in Genesis that God, from creation on, prepared the world for the flood (judgment). Why is this important for us to see when we face the judgment of fire at the end of the world (II Peter 3)? How was the gospel of Christ revealed through the flood?

9. Even though the main covenant line is through Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the "generations" also include Ishmael's and Esau's generations. Why is this and what does this tell of the relationship between the true Israel of God and the apostate Israel?

10. In Galatians 4 Paul speaks of the Old Testament "Israel" as being children and that we are now adopted in Christ as mature. How does this distinction help explain our relationship to the patriarchs and what they mean to us from a spiritual point of view, especially the sins in their lives?

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FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

James D. Slopsema

The Baptism Form

According to the baptism form there are three principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism. The second principal part is that:

Holy baptism witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sin, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

According to the opening sentence of this paragraph of the baptism form, baptism "witnesseth and sealeth unto us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ."

The first principal part of baptism signifies the impurity of our souls. Consequently, baptism teaches us that we with our children are all conceived and born in sin, are all children of wrath and cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless we are born again.

Following from this is the second principal part of baptism, that baptism signifies and seals to us the

washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. This truth concerning baptism is quite evident from the sacrament itself. Baptism involves washing with water. In baptism one is either sprinkled with water or immersed in water. Now, water has the power to wash away the dirt of the body. Hence, baptism is a sign and seal of God of the washing away of sins in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Having established this fact, the baptism form proceeds to connect baptism to God's covenant of grace.

In this the form is certainly correct. For baptism along with the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. Baptism is a sign of incorporation into this covenant; the Lord's Supper is a sign of being continually nourished and fed in God's covenant. Both can serve as signs of the covenant, of course, because they both are signs of the cross of Jesus Christ, which stands at the heart of the covenant.

The baptism form connects baptism to the covenant by showing that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This was the command of Christ Himself shortly before His ascension into heaven. In Matthew 28:19 He charged His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now, according to the baptism form, when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us.

It ought to be quite obvious that when the form speaks here of God the Father it refers not to the first person of the holy Trinity alone but to the Triune God. For it is not the first person alone who establishes the covenant of grace with us apart from the second and third persons of the Godhead. The establishment of the covenant is the work of the triune God. That triune God is time and again

called Father in the Scriptures. The triune God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and for Christ's sake is also our God and Father. And it is in this same sense that the baptism form speaks here of God the Father.

Jumping ahead just a bit we ought to bear in mind that when the baptism form speaks of the Son, it speaks not just of the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, but of the eternal Son as He came into our flesh in the fulness of time to be our Mediator — Jesus Christ. And when therefore the form speaks of the Holy Spirit, again the reference is not simply to the third person of the Godhead but to the Spirit of God as given to Christ at His ascension into heaven to be the Spirit of Christ, through Whom Christ dwells in the church and blesses her.

At this point it is very important in our consideration of the baptism form to understand the nature of God's covenant.

Many ideas concerning the covenant have arisen throughout the history of the Reformed churches. The covenant of God has been conceived of as an alliance between two parties over against a third. Again, it has been described as a contract or agreement between two parties with promises, conditions, and threats. It has also been viewed as essentially a conditional promise. These views, however, inevitably lead us into Arminian waters and are to be rejected.

Rather is the covenant of grace to be viewed as a living relation of friendship and fellowship between God and His elect people in Jesus Christ.

Key to this concept of the covenant is the idea of friendship and love. In the covenant of grace God draws near to His people with His eternal love. In that love He richly blesses them. He adopts them as His own children, making them heirs of His eternal inheritance. He cares for them and provides for all their needs, whether physical or spiritual, whether for time or for eternity. The fruit of this wonderful love of God for His people is that they in turn love Him with deep gratitude and devotion. They cherish Him as their God and Father. In this love they serve Him with all their hearts, seeking in all things to honor and glorify Him. The covenant is a most beautiful relation of love between God and His people.

In the context of this loving relationship there is also a most beautiful fellowship. In His covenant love God draws near to His people in fellowship. He walks with them and talks with them. He lives and dwells with them in His tabernacle. He shares all things with them. He and His people live one life together so that the elect of God are able to enjoy

God completely and forever.

Such, briefly, is the covenant of grace.

It ought to be evident from this brief description that the covenant of grace is all of God. Its conception, its establishment, its continuation, its preservation are all of God and not of us. Furthermore, this beautiful covenant is with the elect of God alone, whom God has eternally destined to eternal life. In that connection, the covenant itself is also the essence of that life eternal to which God has destined His people.

Now, in baptism, whether it be our own baptism or the baptism of another we witness, God witnesses and seals to us that He makes such a covenant of grace with us. And He assures us through baptism that in that covenant He "adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." This "us" of course is the believer, whose faith is the fruit and thus the proof of his election by God.

Now the baptism form goes on to teach that when we are baptized in the name of the Son, God the Son seals to us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins.

The Son referred to here, we have seen, is the Son of God come in the flesh as our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is of utmost importance that we have also this assurance of the Son of God in baptism concerning the washing away of our sins. For the covenant of God can be established and maintained with us only in the way of the washing away of sins.

We must understand that by nature we are corrupt and depraved. So total and complete is this depravity of ours that we can only hate God with all our heart. This hatred comes to manifestation in a life of terrible rebellion against God. We will not nor can we in the least bit serve Him according to His commandments. All our works are evil. We are guilty of transgressing in one form or another all the commandments of God. This, in turn, offends God greatly. What an abomination we are before God in our sin! It ought to be quite obvious that no covenant relation of love and fellowship can exist between God and us so long as we remain in this state. We do not want God; nor can God have us.

For God's covenant with us to exist it is necessary that our sins be washed away. First, the guilt of our horrible sins must be removed through perfect payment so that they are no longer offensive to God. Then we must be delivered from the horrible depravity that has taken hold of us. We must be changed spiritually so that we no longer rebel against God in hatred but serve Him in love

and adoration. To use the expression of the baptism form, we must be "freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God." This constitutes the washing away of our sins. And it is only then that there can exist between God and us the beautiful relation of friendship and fellowship which is the covenant of grace.

This washing away of our sins is accomplished only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through His death Christ paid the full price for our sins so that we are no more guilty before God. In Christ we are righteous. The cross has removed the offense of all our sins. And it is through the power of Christ's resurrection that we are delivered from sin's control, changed and renewed to serve God in love.

The washing away of our sins in Christ's blood is the key to God's covenant with us. That washing away of sin is graphically depicted for us in the sacrament of baptism. That we may be assured of God's covenant with us, Jesus Christ, God's Son, assures us through baptism that He does "wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God."

Finally, the baptism form teaches us that when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us that He will dwell in us and apply to us all that we have in Christ, namely, the

washing away of our sins.

We have already seen that the Holy Spirit referred to here is the Holy Spirit as given to Christ at His ascension to be the Spirit of Christ.

We must understand that if our sins will actually be washed away it is necessary that we be brought into living connection with the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To use the language of the form, we must be incorporated into the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection. This is accomplished by faith. By faith we are made one with Christ, one in His death and one in His resurrection. It is by faith and by faith alone that the power of the cross and the resurrection actually reaches us to wash away our sins.

This all important work of bringing us into living connection with the cross and resurrection of Christ and applying to us that which we have in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.

And this same Spirit assures us in baptism that He will accomplish this great work in us. Through baptism He assures us that He will dwell in us, that He will sanctify us to be members of Christ by faith and that He will apply to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins. Furthermore, He assures us through baptism that He will continue this work until we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Thomas C. Miersma

Scripture Interprets Scripture: Grammatically

"We confess that this word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith. And that afterwards God from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation,

commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and he himself wrote with his own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine scriptures." Confession of Faith, Article III.

With these words of our *Confession of Faith* we give expression to the Reformed truth that the Scriptures are the written Word of God. They are the written record of God's revelation of Himself to us, "holy and divine scriptures" or writings. They are verbally inspired. The understanding of God's Word and its interpretation therefore necessarily involves us in a study of the written text of Scripture. This is what Bible study and exegesis are all about. The principle, "Scripture interprets Scripture," requires careful study of the text of Scripture. This also characterized the reformers' doctrine of Scriptural interpretation.

As Scripture is the written Word of God it requires, if we are to be faithful to it, a careful study of what it says. Each word must be studied as to its meaning in the whole of Scripture. Each expression and word must also be studied in its grammatical relationship to the rest of the verse and sentence. Each sentence must be studied in its relationship to the whole of the passage. This study of the meaning and relationships of words, grammar, and language belongs to sound and careful Bible study and interpretation. It is well to consider this principle which the reformers taught us as we also begin another season of Bible study in our churches. The purpose of such study is exactly to let the text speak, and to hear exactly what God is saying to us. It keeps us from intruding our own thoughts and opinions into the text and twisting its meaning. It will guard our societies from becoming a mere exchange of our own opinions and feelings about the text, all of which are worthless and meaningless if they are not rooted in the text of Holy Scripture. I want to take the time therefore in this article and a few which follow to treat these doctrinal principles also from the practical point of view of our own Bible study, that we might not simply learn about the reformers but also follow in their footsteps.

Where do you begin with such study? Ideally you begin with the original languages of Scripture. God gave His Word in the Greek (New Testament) and Hebrew (Old Testament) languages and it is to them we turn first of all. That is why we require of our ministers that they both know these languages and use them. The reformers themselves were students of the original languages for the same reason. Indeed, so desirable did they consider the study of Scripture in the original languages that Luther even advocated that they be taught, both Greek and Hebrew, in the Christian day school. Having said this however, we recognize that this is an ideal which is beyond the reach of most, save the minister.

Two things should be noted however in this connection. First of all there are tools available which can be used to assist us in some measure to get around this barrier, and a few will be mentioned below. Secondly, part of the value of studying Scripture in the *original* languages is that it is being studied in *another* language, which necessarily forces the reader to pay more attention to what he is reading. If you know a language other than English, or learned one in school, such as Dutch, Spanish, French, or German, use it! Try reading the text you are studying in that language and translating it into English. It is surprising how much can be learned in this way. Note the differences between it and our King James translation and ask yourself the question, Why? It is exactly this process of questioning, meditation, and spiritual reflection which is at the heart of good Bible study.

What then do you do if you have access only to the English Bible, and how is this principle, "Scripture interprets Scripture," to be applied to the text? It is to this question that we turn our attention. This is as the reformers themselves intended. It was in harmony with the recognition that Scripture is the holy and divine Word of God that they sought to put in the hands of God's people faithful translations of the Scriptures. It is one of the particular blessings of our King James translation as opposed to many so-called modern translations, that it lends itself to careful Bible study.

The place to begin our answer to this question is first of all to look at our Bibles for a moment and say something about the many Bible translations available. Many of these modern translations slide over difficulties in the text or attempt to simplify them. They are so often not so much translations as paraphrases, in which the translator, so-called, attempts to put into his own words what he thinks or feels the text means rather than translating what it actually says. There is no good reason for this, and it makes Bible study in English more difficult, not easier.

To use but one example drawn from the current and popular *New International Version*. The opening words of Colossians 3:14 in that version read: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, . . ." while our King James translation reads, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, . . ." Notice two differences here. First, our *King James Version* uses such historic Reformed doctrinal terminology as "elect." The *KJV* has itself helped to shape our theological vocabulary in English and this is one of the advantages of using it in Bible study. But secondly, notice the difference

between "bowels of mercies" and "compassion." The text says "bowels of mercies" in the original. If the text of Scripture is verbally inspired, as we maintain it is, then in our study we want to know as much as is possible what the Holy Spirit actually said and how He said it. Bowels draws a vivid picture before our minds which the mere word compassion does not, though that may be the meaning of the figure here. Fundamentally such paraphrasing is a departure from the Reformed doctrine of verbal inspiration.

What else can we notice about the Bibles we use? There are certain things about our *KJV* which we tend to overlook, although we know them, which can serve us in Bible study. The use of the pronouns "thee" and "thou" for instance, regardless now of whether they are more reverent or not, are an aid to understanding the text. It can make a significant difference in the meaning of a passage if "thy" (second person *singular*) rather than "you" (second person *plural*) is used. For example, in a passage of the Word of God in which the church is addressed as "thou," we are pointed to the fact that the church as an organic whole, one body, and therefore singular is being addressed. But where God addresses the church as "you," the living members of that body are addressed individually. See for example I Thessalonians 1:4.

Another familiar matter is the distinction between the names Jehovah and Lord in the *KJV*. The name Jehovah, the exact spelling of which is not exactly clear in the original, is translated by the word "Lord" but is printed differently in our Bibles than the English translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*, meaning Lord. Jehovah is usually spelled LORD but with all the letters in capitals, the last three let-

ters being reduced in size, while the name meaning Lord is printed normally with only the first letter capitalized. Thus Psalm 23 begins, "The LORD (Jehovah) is my shepherd," emphasizing by that name the covenant character of Him Who is our shepherd, as He Who takes us into His covenant fellowship in Christ, and not simply the sovereign lordship of our shepherd.

Similarly, our *KJV* carefully distinguishes as far as is possible between the words of the original text and those which were inserted by the translator to make a smooth English sentence and meaning. These inserted words are necessary and we ordinarily ignore the fact that they are insertions when we read. But in Bible study it is worthwhile to take note of them. They are the words usually printed in italics in the text. Sometimes reading the text without them brings out the meaning more sharply and vividly and with even greater power. Try reading Psalm 36 this way, particularly verses 4, 5, and 6, noticing the parallels and equations which are drawn in each verse and the way they are brought home.

These tools are given us to use in understanding God's Word as we read it and to aid our study of that Word. This does not mean that these things are always going to be helpful to us in our Bible study, but they are intended to bring us as close to the original language of the text in its inspired form in the original languages as is possible. We are to use them. Good Bible study begins with a good and faithful text and translation, and this we have in our Authorized Version. This is but a beginning however, and we will pursue this subject further, the Lord willing, in a coming article. (to be continued)

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

The Moonies (2)

Last time we discussed the history and basic beliefs of the Moonies. In this article we want to evaluate this popular cult, as well as consider our calling with respect to an organization like the Moonies.

Perhaps one of the most fundamental deviations of the Moonies is their teaching concerning God and concerning Jesus Christ. The Moonies deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Denying the deity of Christ, the Moonies also deny the truth of the Trinity.

These two closely connected errors are sufficient reasons in themselves to classify the Moonies as a cult. This is always one outstanding characteristic of a cult — the denial of the Godhead of Jesus.

The Bible teaches, and the Christian religion has always confessed, that Jesus Christ is not only a man, but also very God, the Son of God in human flesh. This was the confession of Thomas when he beheld the risen Christ: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). This was Jesus' own testimony concerning Himself during His earthly ministry. To the Jews He said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). Clearly Jesus was proclaiming His own deity to the Jews who were standing around Him. And this was exactly how they understood Jesus' statement, because the very next verse records that they took up stones to stone Him (John 10:31). Throughout the New Testament Jesus' deity is affirmed, as for example in Acts 20:28 and I Timothy 3:16.

The Moonie teaching concerning Christ is not new. Denying the deity of Christ is one of the oldest heresies in the church. This was the error of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' own day. This was the error at the heart of the Christological controversies in the first centuries of the New Testament church. Nor are the Moonies unique in this today. Other cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International, and the Hare Krishna attack the deity of Jesus Christ. No group can claim to be Christian, in any sense of the word, and deny the fundamental doctrine upon which Christianity depends, the deity of Jesus.

In close connection with their denial of Jesus' deity, the Moonies are guilty of ascribing deity to their leader, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. This is often what happens. Often it is the case that a cult denies the deity of Jesus in the interests of proclaiming the deity of the head and founder of the cult. This is indisputably true of the Moonies. This is apparent just from the names by which the Moonies refer to their leader: Lord of the Second Advent, Lord of Creation, True Father. This is also apparent from the acts of worship which the Moonies render to Sun Myung Moon. Moonies are taught to pray to Sun Myung Moon and his wife in the same way that Christians pray to Jesus Christ. Moon's writings carry ultimate authority with the Moonies, authority above and beyond any authority that they might be willing to grant to the Holy Scriptures. Moon and his followers ought to take to heart the story of Herod in Acts 12. There we are told that after Herod rendered a very stirring oration the people cried out, "It is a voice of a god, and

not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 12:22, 23).

It is also heresy on the part of the Moonies that they regard of equal and higher authority than the Word of God a human book. This book is *The Divine Principle*. *The Divine Principle* is the 536-page book containing the visions that Moon is supposed to have received on Easter Day in 1936. *The Divine Principle* claims to be the "new, ultimate, final truth." Here, too, the Moonies show themselves to be a cult. Still another characteristic of a cult is its denial of the authority of the Bible, and its raising up some authority above or alongside of the Bible, usually the writings of the founder of the cult. In many, many ways the teachings of *The Divine Principle* flatly contradict the teachings of the Bible. The Christian knows only one book that is "able to make (men) wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"; only one book that has been "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:15, 16). That book is not *The Divine Principle*, but the Bible.

There are many other errors embraced by the Moonies which we could mention, serious errors, errors which support the charge that they are a cult, antichristian, and devilish. There is the fact that Moon himself, the great leader of the Unification Church and the one of whom every Moonie is a devout disciple, is an adulterer and a thief. There is the Moonie denial of salvation by faith alone with its teaching of salvation by works. There is the Moonie denial of the Fall and the spiritual consequences of the Fall for every man, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon included. There is the Moonie corruption of the Biblical teaching concerning marriage and the place of marriage in the life of the church. And many other errors.

It is significant that even the most liberal of Christian organizations, The National Council of Churches, refuses to recognize the Unification Church as a legitimate church. After studying the request of the Unification Church for admittance into the NCC, the NCC concluded: "The Unification Church is not a Christian church because its doctrine of the nature of the triune God is erroneous; its Christology is incompatible with Christian teaching and belief; and its teaching on salvation and the means of grace is inadequate and faulty." The NCC concluded its study by asserting that "the claims of the Unification Church to Christian identity cannot be recognized because the role and authority of Scripture are compromised in the teachings of the Unification Church; revelations in-

voked as divine and normative in *Divine Principle* contradict basic elements of Christian faith; and a 'new, ultimate, final truth' is presented to complete and supplant all previously recognized religious teachings, including those of Christianity." Chris Elkins writes in his book, *What Do You Say To A Moonie?*, "For conservative Christians this pronouncement of the NCC commission is significant, for if they, the most accepting of Christian groups cannot view Moon's theology as valid Christian teaching, how much more should conservative Christians, fundamentalists and evangelicals, resist the distortions of Christianity that the Unification Church works throughout the United States and the world?" (p. 44).

What must be our calling with respect to the Moonies? Certainly we ought not to buy their candy, or their flowers, or whatever else they happen to be selling. Since the Moonies are reluctant to identify themselves forthrightly, you're probably going to have to ask a few pointed questions before they finally divulge their real identity. The apostle John in II John 9, 10 really lays down our calling with respect to the Moonies, and others who hold to the same heresies as the Moonies. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." The Word of God is plain enough here. We are not even to receive into our homes those who like the Moonies (the Jehovah's Witnesses would also fall into this category) deny the doctrine of Christ, deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But are we not to witness to them? This is the witness that we give to them, and it is a powerful and unmistakable witness at that. We do not allow them into our living-rooms and give them the opportunity to proselytize us. Sometimes we think that if we only set them down and argue with them, since we have such a good grasp of the Scriptures, we will undoubtedly be able to out-argue them and prove to them the error of their ways. This is the wrong attitude to assume, and not the one the Scriptures in this case enjoin upon us. When they come knocking at your door, don't invite them into your home, but confront them with their error, warn them against the consequences of holding to their error, and shut the door in their faces.

Undoubtedly the question arises in the minds of parents and office-bearers: "What is the best protection for ourselves and our young people against an organization like the Moonies?"

Many who write against the Moonies say love; love is the way to keep our young people from joining a group like the Moonies. It is often the case

that because young people feel unloved by their parents, who in many instances are wrapped up in the materialism of the 20th century, and unloved by the church and the members of the church, that they turn to the Moonies. In the closely knit organization of the Moonies they feel loved and cared for.

I think that it's not difficult to see that this matter of love and the need to feel loved enters into the picture. The quickest way to drive our young people out of our homes and away from our churches is not to show them the love and concern that they need.

Yet, it seems to me that the matter goes deeper than this. What is the best protection for ourselves and our young people against the seductions of a group like the Moonies? Knowledge, solid, doctrinal knowledge of the Scriptures and the Reformed Faith. How is it possible that so many young people are swept away by the Moonies? It is possible because they do not any longer know the Scriptures, even the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures. Not knowing the Scriptures, they err. They are not spiritually mature men and women, but fickle "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). Our young people, and we with them, must be grounded and settled in the truth. This is our protection against the appeal of the cults. We must know the truth, be convinced of the truth, and be determined to stand on the truth. This will arm us against the fiery darts of the Wicked One hurled at us through an organization like the Moonies. This is why you young people must go to catechism, and learn your catechism, and receive the instruction at catechism. This is why you must go to the preaching services of the church, and this is what the preaching must do for you. This is why you ought to go to Young People's Society, read the *Beacon Lights* and *Standard Bearer*, as well as other good Christian books and magazines. In this way you are fitted with the whole armor of God and equipped to stand in the evil day.

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QUESTION BOX

Cornelius Hanko

The Genealogies of Jesus Christ

A reader asks:

Concerning the ancestry of Christ in Matthew's Gospel and also in the Gospel of Luke: Is this also the covenantal line of the true people of God, or are there unbelievers in this lineage? Among these people are some prominent names; but also some folk which are not familiar names; how is it that the two lists are not the same?

The first question is whether the genealogies as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew and in Luke trace the covenant line throughout the Old Testament, and if so, why are there unbelievers mentioned in that covenant line?

Both Matthew in chapter 1:2ff., and Luke in chapter 3:23ff. trace the covenant line, even though Matthew begins with Abraham and Luke begins (in reverse) with Adam. God's covenant line runs in continued generations. God said to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee *in their generations*." The seed and the generations are not the same, since the covenant seed is born in the scope of the generations. Not the natural children of Abraham are the seed, but the elect in Christ are counted for the seed. Galatians teaches us that Christ is centrally *the* Seed, therefore all those who are in Christ are counted for the seed (Gal. 3:16, 29). Abraham is the father of all believers; therefore the true believers both in the old and new dispensation are the seed of Abraham. That accounts for it that in the line of generations there are also wicked reprobate. Esau was born in the line of generations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet Esau was a reprobate. Also many of the kings of Judah were wicked, such as Rehoboam (Roboam in Matthew), Ahaz (referred to as Achaz — the difference is the

difference of spelling in the Hebrew and the Greek), and Amon, and others. It is surprising that God-fearing Hezekiah is a son of wicked Ahaz, even as the godly Josiah is a son of wicked Amon. One wonders whether they may have had God-fearing mothers. It does become evident that Christ is born from such wicked sinners as we are, and that God gathers and preserves His church purely by grace and in eternal covenant faithfulness.

The second question reads: "How is it that the two lists are not the same?"

Bible students are by no means agreed on the difference between the genealogies of Christ as recorded in Matthew 1:2ff. and in Luke 3:23ff.

Some think that both Matthew and Luke trace the lineage of Joseph as the legal father of Jesus. Others are of the opinion that both give us the lineage of Mary. Still others maintain that Matthew traces the generations of Joseph, while Luke traces the line of Mary. And there are still others who consider Matthew's account to be the lineage of Mary, while Luke presents the lineage of Joseph.

It seems to me, that in the light of all of Scripture, particularly of the Old Testament, we are compelled to agree with the last mentioned, namely, that Matthew traces the lineage of Mary, while Luke gives us the ancestors of Joseph.

The main argument for this position is that Mary must have been of the royal line of David, which Matthew traces through Solomon and the kings of Judah to the captivity, and which continues after the captivity in Zerubbabel and his descendants. Thus the line ends in Jacob and Joseph, Joseph being mentioned as the husband of Mary, even as we read in Matthew 1:16, "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ." Thus the father of Mary was Jacob, while Luke gives Heli as the father of

Joseph.

The prophets spoke of the fact that Jesus would be from the royal seed of David, just as He was from the covenant seed of Abraham. When Jacob blessed his sons he said concerning Judah, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." In II Samuel 7:12, 13 we read that God assures David, "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." This refers to Solomon as a type of Christ, and therefore also to Christ who is the fulfillment of God's promise to David. Therefore we read in verse 14, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." And again in verses 15 and 16, "But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before me. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee, thy throne shall be established forever." This is confirmed in Psalm 89, particularly the verses 24, 19, and 36, and also Isaiah 9:6.

In harmony with the promise spoken by the prophets, true, spiritual Israel looked for the promised King, who as a natural son would restore the throne of David. Long before this, Abraham longed to see His day. Judah spoke of the coming of Shiloh, the bringer of peace, or Prince of Peace. Later the prophet Isaiah declared, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (9:6). The prophet Zechariah aroused the people saying (9:9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Luke 19:38).

The angel announced to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." See also the annunciation to Mary in Luke 1:26-33.

What is even more significant is the fact that the wisemen came to Jerusalem inquiring about the promised King. "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" Whereupon the scribes turned to the prophecy of Micah (5:2): "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth

unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Since Jesus was the royal Son of David the people of His day expected Him to establish an earthly kingdom. See John 6:15; John 18:33, 37; 19:14, 15, 19 and other passages.

From all these passages we must conclude that Matthew gives us the royal line of Jesus ending in Mary.

The genealogy of Luke must refer to Joseph. Since the line of generations in Matthew ends in Jacob and the genealogy of Luke ends in Heli, Scripture gives us no reason to believe that these are both the line of Mary, but does give us reason to believe that in Luke we have the lineage of Christ through Joseph, Jesus' legal father.

In Luke 1:27 Joseph is referred to as being of the house of David. In Luke 2:48 he is referred to as Jesus' father. In Matthew 2:19-23 Joseph assumes the responsibility for both Mary and Jesus. In Matthew 1:20 God Himself addresses Joseph as the son of David and entrusts the virgin Mary and her promised son to his care. This repeated emphasis on Joseph as the legal father of Jesus and of the lineage of David must have its significance in Scripture. Therefore, since the genealogy of Luke continues the line from David through David's son Nathan, rather than through Solomon, there is good reason to believe that this record traces the ancestry of Joseph.

The account of Luke begins with the words (Luke 3:23), "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli."

The question naturally arises, why did Luke insert the words in parentheses "as was supposed"? The meaning certainly cannot be that Joseph was not the father of Jesus, since this would contradict the emphasis that Joseph was indeed the legal father of our Savior. This can only be taken to stress the fact that Joseph was not the natural father, but indeed the legal father of Christ, a responsibility that he assumed when he married Mary (Matthew 1:18-25). Therefore when he and Mary went to Bethlehem to register according to the decree of Caesar Augustus, Joseph did not go merely for his own sake, but also for Mary's sake, and to assume the responsibility of being the legal father of Jesus. In the providence of God Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to the Scriptures (Luke 2:4, 5).

It seems to me that this is the obvious and necessary explanation for the differences between the genealogies of Matthew and of Luke.

Give the gift of the Standard Bearer!

Book Review

GOOD FRIDAY, by Jeremias De Decker; translated from the Dutch by Henrietta Ten Harmsel; Paideia Press, Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada, 1984; 147 pp. \$7.95 (\$9.95 Canada) (paper). (Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema)

From September, 1982, to February, 1983, Miss Ten Harmsel took a leave of absence from teaching at Calvin College to translate Jeremias De Decker's rather lengthy and detailed poem, *Good Friday*. De Decker, born in 1609, a close friend of Rembrandt and a member of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, has been characterized as a biblical pietist and a man with a broad knowledge and understanding of Scripture. As a poet, he was personally deeply involved in his religious writings, which reflect a sensitive earnestness and a strong moral and ethical emphasis. In a prologue and nine headings describing scenes from the Last Supper through the Resurrection, he tells the story of our Savior's suffering during Passion week.

Good Friday is beautiful poetry and easy to read; and the reproductions of etchings by Rembrandt fit the tone of De Decker's poetry and enhance the book. A man of his times, De Decker wrote in the Baroque style of his day, with vivid imagery and paradoxical word-play. For example, in the section, "Christ Accused" (before Pilate) he writes:

O Jesu, all of us, whose sins are very great,
Will need an advocate.
When at God's throne I stand in all my misery,
Let your tongue speak for me.

For you, to don the clothes of Advocate above,
First had to show your love
By letting human courts condemn your guiltless state
Without an advocate.

In "Christ Beaten, Spit Upon, and Mocked":
Here he who speaks to God to heal our wickedness
Stands dumb, without a sound;

Oh, here the Comforter of all stands comfortless,
The Healer wounded here, the Liberator bound.
In "Christ Crucified", just after Christ had cried, "My God, my God, oh, why hast thou forsake me?" he tells what it means for us:

God's loved one hangs today (Oh, pain too deep for words)
Forsaken by God's love,
That he once more might send
God's friendly love on us, who hated God, our Friend!

And in "Christ Buried":

His flesh and bones, however, will not rot —
Oh, surely, surely not!
For God will wake him shortly from his tomb
Not rotting, but in bloom!

The translation is careful and accurate and captures the rhythms of the original (which is printed in the back of the book). Occasionally in both the original and translation, and in a few instances in the translation only, Arminianism creeps in, as in the lines:

He was the Paschal lamb who promised long ago
To suffer for the woe
Of all humanity;
Therefore he had to bleed, be butchered on this tree.

The book is a fresh, inspiring approach to the sufferings and death of our Savior, with surprising insights taken from the whole of Scripture, and I recommend it for devotional and edifying reading.

Take the time to read and study the Standard Bearer.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on January 8, 1986, at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least three weeks prior to the convening of this meeting.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington, has an opening for a teaching-administrator in the Liberal Arts subjects for the 1986-87 school year.

Please send enquiries to: Covenant Christian School, 9088 Northlawn Road, Lynden, Washington 98264, or phone: Peter Adams, (206) 398-2774, or Albert De Boer, (206) 354-5825.

News From Our Churches

November 14, 1985

The response to the conference on "Marriage: For Better, For Worse" was more than expected; so a larger meeting room had to be obtained. I would imagine that materials used during this conference will be made available to those who were not able to attend. When I find out more information about this, I'll write about it.

As many of us know, Synod 1985 decided to raise \$20,000 for a special emergency medical fund for Missionary Houck's son Jeremy. Of this amount \$10,000 is to be collected this year by the churches through various means such as collections, and the other \$10,000 is to be included in the Synodical assessments for 1986. The fund is growing rapidly and the goal of \$20,000 will certainly be reached during 1986. This kind of giving is commendable and shows the willingness of our churches to give faithfully of that which God has faithfully given to us.

The Men's Society of South Holland Church, Illinois, will be studying *The Church Order* during its after recess program. Each article will be introduced by Rev. Engelsma. Our churches are growing in age, and another generation of young men has grown up. Another study of the Church Order will be helpful, therefore, so that there might continue to be an appreciation for the necessity of maintaining good order in our churches. The latest reprinting of *The Church Order* includes the constitutions of the Theological School and the following committees: Theological School, Emeritus, Student Aid, Contact with Other Churches, Foreign Mission, and Catechism Book Distribution; the Rules of Order for Synod; By-Laws of our churches; rules for Synodical Delegates *Ad Examina*; Questions for Church Visitation; several Formulas; the Declaration of Principles; and an Index.

What is "Faith and Fellowship"? You guessed it right — it is the new church newsletter of Faith

Church in Jenison, Michigan. The purpose of the newsletter is not only to be informative and provide opportunity for church members to display their literary talents, but its primary goal is to encourage and strengthen the mutual bond of Christian love in the church. An expression of that Christian love is seen in a note from the Society section of the newsletter where the Senior Young People's of Faith Church has taken a special interest in remembering the sick, shut-ins, and bereaved of the church with gifts, cards, and visits.

A little over a month ago, Rev. K. Hanks wrote a letter about the progress of the church in Pennsylvania. "... Others, who have the same hunger for the preaching, also rejoice that God has brought them at last to a church which takes seriously the calling to watch for the souls of God's people..." The group has finished its second year in good financial condition, an evidence that God has not only blessed them in a spiritual way but also in the things of this earthly life. By His grace they hope to be self-supporting in the year to come.

The Reformed Witness Hour is planning a Christmas series of broadcasts starting December 8. Rev. G. Van Baren will speak on the following topics, "Taxation Without Representation," "No Vacancy in the Inn," "Worshippers from the Fields" (all from Luke 2), and "The Foreign Visitors at Bethlehem" (from Matthew 2). Listen for these broadcasts on the radio station that broadcasts the Reformed Witness Hour in your area. Profs. H. Hoeksema and H. Hanks have finished their series of sermons that will soon be available in sermon booklet form.

The Reformed Witness Hour is produced under the auspices of First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. First Church has also maintained the Radio Choir for over forty-three years. However, the choir cannot continue without more tenor voices. So, tenors in the G.R. area, now is the time to consider using your voice for some radio broadcasts.