

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...It is utterly inconceivable to imagine that a mere body is formed through conception, and that somewhere along the line a soul is added so that the fetus becomes a rational and moral creature, and therefore a person. When does this happen if not at conception? When does this take place if not at the moment when God forms in the womb a new human creature?

See "Moral Aspects of Medical Technology" —page 390

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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.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516

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c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship
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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.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st and the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

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

Loving My Neighbor

Ques. 105 What doth God require in the sixth commandment?

Ans. That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, by myself or by another; but that I lay aside all desire of revenge: also that I hurt not myself, nor willfully expose myself to any danger. Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword, to prevent murder.

Ques. 106 But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?

Ans. In forbidding murder, God teaches us, that he abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that he accounts all those as murder.

Ques. 107 But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?

Ans. No: for when God forbids envy, hatred and anger, he commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness, towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in me lies: and that we do good even to our enemies.

God is love!

Our God lives His own blessed covenant life in intimate communion of love as three persons in the one divine Being. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience intimate harmony and unity, joy and blessedness, as each lives His own complete life in perfect union with the others.

Only God knows and experiences true love in Himself. For God is love! Love is the bond of perfectness. Love is divine!

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." He loves us with an eternal love that impels Him to take us into His heart and life, and into the covenant fellowship of His glory. Therefore He sent His Son into the world, that we may have life through Him.

We were dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, even as all mankind. But GOD, Who is rich in mercy, for that great love wherewith He loved us, has quickened us, and raised us from the dead, and set us at His own right hand in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:1-6).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" We are sons, and in due time we shall be made completely like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!

Herein is love, that He loved us, and has joined us to Himself by the bond of moral perfectness, whereby we are united to one another in righteousness, holiness, mercy, and compassion.

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (I John 4:12).

* * * * *

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

My neighbor is the person next to me, with whom I rub elbows from time to time. He is the one whom God has placed upon my pathway, that naturally and spiritually I may be influenced by my contact with him and he may be benefited by his contact with me.

That neighbor may be miles away, so that our contact is minimal, or he may be as close as the nearest member of my family. He may be a loving husband, a devoted wife, an obedient child, an affectionate brother or sister, a faithful member of my church, a friendly neighbor, a considerate boss, or a willing ser-

vant. But he may also be a tyrannical husband, a cantankerous wife, a stubborn son or daughter, a difficult brother or sister, an unspiritual member of my church, a bothersome neighbor, a demanding boss, a lazy servant, or even an enemy, or possibly a Lazarus who lies at my doorstep, filthy, well-nigh naked, and full of ugly sores.

That leaves us as children of our heavenly Father with the question: What kind of neighbor am I?

I must love my neighbor, each according to his or her relationship to me. A husband loves his wife in a different way than he loves his children, and he gives expression to his love for his children in a different manner than he does to a neighbor. A church member stands in a different relationship to us than does a man of the world. A Lazarus will obviously be treated differently than an enemy. But whatever the relationship may be, the spiritual needs of the neighbor must always be my chief concern!

* * * * *

The sixth commandment requires of us: Thou shalt not kill!

Killing is meant here in the sense of murder. Life is cheap these days. The news media report new murders every day, committed in sheer hatred, revenge, or fuming rage. The thief will take a human life for a few paltry dollars. Husbands dispose of their wives, and wives of their husbands; parents of their children, and children of their parents.

Drunkards endanger the highways, drug addicts stalk the city streets, terrorists endanger the airways. Suicide has become common among teenagers, as well as among adults. The abortion clinics snuff out more lives than the gas ovens of Hitler ever did. An estimated one hundred million unborn babes have been killed, and the murder continues day by day.

That is the kind of world we live in! That is the world that will soon wipe out all those who do not carry the mark of the beast!

Does this sixth commandment apply to me? Am I a murderer? On Sunday when this commandment is read to me in the church, it runs off from me often like water from a duck. Other commandments, yes, but this one rarely gives me pangs of conscience. One minister once wrote, "This commandment is like a drop of water falling on a hot stove. It sizzles for a moment, but soon disappears." We need the reminder of our Catechism that "envy, hatred, anger

and desire for revenge" are also murder in the heart.

Hatred lies at the root of it all. Now it comes to mind, that I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor. Hatred arises out of our old relationship with Satan, whose children we were, who himself is a murderer from the beginning. My sinful inclination is to hate my neighbor whenever he interferes with my plans or ambitions. Actually I criticize God for placing this man in my way. I wish him dead. No, I may not say so, but I do banish him from my thoughts and out of my life, as if he were dead.

This hatred manifests itself in green envy, red anger, and yellow revenge.

Envy. My neighbor has a nicer house, a newer automobile, nicer clothing, or whatever. He holds a position I would like to have, or draws a larger pay check than I do. He has an office in the church for which I am better qualified than he. What an untold misery I bring on myself as I mull over my lot. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain" (James 4:1, 2).

Hot anger. There is a righteous anger, which arises within us in our zeal for God and His cause. But there is also a flare-up of temper, a sinful rage that arises from the old man of sin. Our feelings are hurt, our pride is offended, our ego is crushed.

Desire for revenge. "He can't do that to me." "I'll show him." Forgotten is the admonition of the Scriptures, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

We are all familiar with the expression, "If looks could kill." We make ourselves guilty "in thoughts, words and gestures." Nurturing evil thoughts, making rash judgments, judging a person's motives, all fall into the category of murder. Sinful thoughts surge out in words. It is said that the tongue has slain more persons than the sword. The gossip delights in spreading abroad the fault or sin of others, and always finds a ready ear for his choice bit of gossip. It tickles our pride. Especially when we already somewhat dislike the victim. The trouble is, that whenever I see that person this little piece of gossip comes to mind. Irreparable damage can be done to a person's career or reputation by the wagging tongue. A knowing smile, a raised eyebrow, a sarcastic grin speaks volumes.

As children of God we should give no place to these evils.

* * * * *

My God requires of me that I love Him by loving my neighbor!

I must love my neighbor as myself. Loving myself is not the same as selfishness or self-centeredness, nor does this love gloat about my faults and sins. Self-love means that I love myself as redeemed in Christ, sanctified by His Spirit to walk in thankfulness. That love must be gratefully bestowed on the neighbor!

A husband seeks above all the spiritual welfare of his wife. Parents who love their children are deeply concerned primarily about their spiritual development. Parents may give their children the best home, food, clothing, education, and all the luxuries money can buy, and at the same time neglect their spiritual welfare. A child who meets his parents in hell will not thank them for failing to show him the true values in life.

There are many aspects of this true love for the neighbor, namely, that "we should show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness toward him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good to our enemies."

Scripture urges us to "seek peace and pursue it," which often involves going the extra mile, confessing our sins one to another, or climbing the long, steep grade of pointing another to his sin and forgiving him. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19, 20).

Patience is bearing with each other's weaknesses. We can stare ourselves blind on the faults of others, and forget the patience the Lord must have with us from one moment to the next.

Sincere meekness requires that each one of us regard the other better than himself. When we follow our natural tendency we have an inflated idea of ourselves: if only more people were like us. We fail to see the gifts and talents God has entrusted to others, whereby they serve their own good purpose in the kingdom of heaven.

Love is merciful. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?" (I John 3:17). We think of the cruel servant who was forgiven an impossible sum of money and turned about to demand of his fellow servant the mere pittance that the fellow servant owed him. And then there is a Lazarus somewhere near our doorstep. As Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME."

*Give a gift of
the Standard Bearer!*

Editor's Notes

Summer Schedule. As usual, for the months of June, July, and August there will be but one issue per month. We did not receive the Agenda for Synod in time to give you a preview of the coming Synod. We will, however, try to furnish a brief report on Synod, 1986 and also a report on Seminary Graduation in our July issue. To accomplish this — due to the fact that Synod does not convene until June 10 — our July issue will have to be a little late. In August we hope to publish our third special issue of the current volume-year.

* * * * *

New Publications. From our Seminary we have word of three new publications in which you may be interested. The first is a reprint of *Standard Bearer* articles from Volumes 21 and 22 by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema on the "Clark Case" under the title "The Text Of A Complaint." Price: \$3.00 (62 pp.). The second is also a reprint of *Standard Bearer* articles, from Vols. 19 and 20; these articles are the only in-print writings of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema on this subject: "A Critique of Dr. Cornelius VanTil's 'Common Grace.'" Price: \$2.50 (51 pp.). The third is an edited reprint of an extensive series of study outlines on the Book of Revelation, originally prepared by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema for his "Wednesday Evening Class." There are 51 outlines in this series. Price: \$4.50 (105 pp.). All of these are in soft-cover, plastic ring-bound format. They may be ordered from the Protestant Reformed Seminary Bookstore, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418 or purchased from Reformed Book Outlet in Hudsonville, Michigan.

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Prompt Response Needed. At last we have some positive news about the proposed index covering Volumes 1 to 58 of *The Standard Bearer*. The committee has informed me that the index is ready for printing. First of all, let me tell you that this has been a large undertaking. Included in the index are: 1) an index by text; 2) an index by subject; 3) an index by title; 4) an index of book reviews. I have had the use of a first draft of this index for some months; and I can assure you that it is very valuable. Bear in mind that this index is valuable not only to those who have a complete set of *The Standard Bearer*, but also for those who have partial sets or who are in process of building a set or partial set, or

even for those who have access to a complete set in a church library. Now the committee is at the point of printing this index. Understandably, this will be a very limited edition. But in order to decide on the best format of publication, the committee must have some idea on how many of our readers will be interested in purchasing the index. Estimates of price are from \$25 to \$30 per copy. A prompt response is crucial! You need not commit yourself with finality, only tentatively. But please write NOW to our business office, so that the information can be passed on to the committee. Write: The Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, MI 49516. Publication of the index will depend on your response!

* * * * *

Thank-you. Seminarian and Mrs. J. Mahtani and their twins will soon be leaving us. Mr. Mahtani will graduate, D.V., in June with a special diploma after having studied at our seminary for three years. After graduation, they plan to travel westward and to visit several of our churches, working their way to the west coast, from which they will fly home to Singapore. We bid the Mahtanis a fond farewell and Godspeed in their travels. They have asked me to publish the following note of thanks:

Dear Friends in the PR Churches:

Our three years here are quickly coming to an end! Soon we will return to our home and to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

Before we leave, we would like to express our sincere thanks to you. In no small way you have made our stay here a most enjoyable and memorable experience.

Our thanks go to you as PR churches for the financial support you have given to us during our three-year stay here. We would also like to thank especially Southwest Church and Grandville Church, who have very graciously taken care of all our needs not only, but also have shown to us many expressions of love and concern. Truly we can say that we have enjoyed the communion of the saints in your midst!

Above all we would like to take this opportunity to express thanksgiving to God for the training I have received in your Seminary the past three years. It has been a blessed privilege for me to have been trained by your three professors, and I would like to thank them for their faithful instruction in God's

Word. Especially do I feel that they have led me to a deeper appreciation for the Reformed faith as it has been handed down to the Protestant Reformed denomination.

Beloved, as we leave you, our prayer for you is that God will continue to bless and prosper you in that glorious heritage of the Reformed faith which He has given to you. And that same prayer we ask that you make for us as we return to the ERCS; for indeed that rich heritage is now also become ours to own, to love, and, by His grace, to defend.

Though we must be separated by many miles, may we strive with one mind and spirit to uphold and promote the truth and the glory of our great God; and may His covenant blessings rest with us as we endeavor to serve Him in His kingdom.

Once again, thank you very much! We will miss you people!

*In His love,
The Mahtani family*

* * * * *

1986 Young People's Convention. Elsewhere in this issue you will find an advertisement of the Forty-sixth Annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention. This note purposes to help promote that convention and its program. First of all, it appears to me that the theme of this year's convention, "Being Reformed in 1986: Heritage and Calling," is out-

standing in its timeliness and distinctiveness. And the three aspects of the theme which are to be treated, "In Truth" (Rev. M. Kamps), "In Godliness" (Rev. B. Gritters), and "In Comfort" (Rev. J. Slopesma) have in them the makings of a good convention in which all our young people can profitably participate. Parents, encourage your young people to attend and to participate actively in the convention. In the second place, this year's convention is extending a special invitation to young adults. This can stand emphasis. The average age of conventioners and of young people's society membership has been dropping over the years. Too many of our older young people no longer participate in societies and in Federation and convention affairs. This is to the detriment of all concerned. There was a time when it was not at all unusual for those in their twenties to participate and to give leadership in these affairs. I am well aware of the fact that today most young people marry at an earlier age; nevertheless, it is a fact that many older young people no longer participate. This year's convention would like to help turn that tide. Young adults, make it a point to attend! In the third place, adults, if you are looking for a day's outing, try to attend one or more of the scheduled addresses. Valparaiso University is located a nice day's trip away from the Grand Rapids area, just a bit south of Interstate 94, at the junction of Indiana 49 and U.S. 30, in Valparaiso, Indiana. HCH

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman C. Hanko

Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (6)

Last time we considered the significance of the doctrine of Scripture concerning Christ in our discussion of what is meant by person. Because Christ was like us in all things, an analogy is present between this truth and the truth concerning any child conceived in the womb of its mother.

That a child is born is a great wonder, and is surely beyond our understanding. But the fact nevertheless remains that not just simply a body is formed in the womb of its mother, but a human nature of both

body and soul, and therefore a person. This is true from the very moment of conception. It is utterly inconceivable to imagine that a mere body is formed through conception, and that somewhere along the line a soul is added so that the fetus becomes a rational and moral creature, and therefore a person.

When does this happen if not at conception? When does this take place if not at the moment when God forms in the womb a new human creature? That that fetus is a blob of cells for a given period of time and

then, either gradually or all at once, there is united to it a soul, is incredible. It did not happen that way with the Lord, Who was, you remember, like us in all things, except our sin.

And this is a truth which is born out by the whole testimony of Scripture.

The fact that man was created by God in God's image supports this truth. Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24 teach us that the image of God consists in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. But it is very clear that only man can be God's image bearer. Not an oak tree, or a rose bush, or a Holstein cow, or Brittany spaniel can be an image bearer. None of these creatures can know God, be righteous before Him, and walk in holiness. The reason is that none of these creatures are rational and moral creatures, i.e., formed with a mind and will. But man is different. He possesses a soul; he has a mind and will. He can be image-bearer of God.

It is true that man lost the image through the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. But man did not lose his rationality and morality. He remains a man, though he has only small glimmerings of these original powers. For this reason, he can (and does) bear the image of Satan in his lost state. And he can, by the power of renewal worked by the Holy Spirit, be restored to the image of God in Christ.

It is a wholly arbitrary and man-invented theory to say that a fetus possesses this capability to be image bearer only at a certain point in its development, or perhaps at the moment of birth. Scripture knows nothing of all this human philosophy used to support wicked murder. A fetus is capable of being an image bearer of God from the moment of conception on. In fact, the church has always believed that, in the line of the covenant, the elect children of the covenant, even though miscarried through spontaneous miscarriages, are saved. This would be impossible unless they were also renewed according to the image of Christ. And if they are capable of bearing God's image (or the devil's for that matter), they are rational and moral from conception; and if rational and moral, they are persons.

There are other texts in Scripture which speak of fetuses as persons and apply activities to fetuses which can only be the activities of persons. David speaks of himself as a person when God formed him in the womb of his mother: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Ps. 139:13-16). Rather off-handedly, Jones dismisses this passage as irrelevant; but the fact remains that with the constant use of the first personal pronoun, David refers to himself emphatically as a person as God formed him in a wonderful and marvelous way in his mother's womb. God did not form a glob of cells with "potential personhood"; God did not form a mass of material which would become a person some day; God formed the Psalmist, a person, a man with mind and will, a creature marvelously and wondrously made, one whom it would have been murder to kill from the moment of conception on.

A striking passage is also found in Jeremiah 1:5 where God says to the youthful prophet, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Known of God from all eternity, sanctified by God while still in the womb, Jeremiah was called to the holy office of prophet in Judah. God did not sanctify a blob of tissue with potentials for personhood; God sanctified Jeremiah, known of God eternally, qualified spiritually for his office by God's work. Jeremiah was Jeremiah, a person, a man with body and soul, a prophet on whom God laid His hand from the time when Jeremiah was in the womb of his mother.

Something similar to this is found in the striking way in which Mary was met at the door of her cousin Elisabeth's home in Hebron. "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:41-44). Jones also dismisses this in a rather cavalier fashion: "I am not inclined to follow those who argue that John the Baptist, as a fetus, was filled with the Holy Spirit, nor that John's joy was prompted by the two-week-old zygote of Jesus" (p. 174). Nevertheless, the whole narrative cannot be dismissed that easily. The following elements are important: 1) Elisabeth did not know that Mary was the mother of Christ, and certainly did not know that the child Jesus had been conceived in Mary's womb except by the leap of her baby within her. John's leap informed Elisabeth of these facts, nothing else. 2) Elisabeth herself interpreted this leap as a leap of joy and did this under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And joy is an emotion which only

a person can experience and express. John was emphatically a person. 3) This was the beginning of John's work of announcing the coming of Christ, a work to which he was called and which began prior to his birth. He was especially called to prepare the way for Christ and announce Christ's arrival. He did this in Elisabeth's womb to his own mother. Only a person is capable of that.

Another striking passage is Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Notice: 1) that the Psalmist speaks here of the fact that he was a person already at the moment of conception. His mother did not conceive a blob of tissue, but conceived the Psalmist. 2) Then already he was a sinner; and it ought to be evident that only a person can be a sinner. Emphatically this refers to the very moment of conception.

All the philosophies of men and all the speculation about when a potential person actually becomes a person fall by the way before the clear and unequivocal testimony of Scripture.

We readily admit that the formation of a child in the womb of its mother is a profound mystery. No medical advance of any kind is going to tear away the veil of mystery which hides the wonder of conception and birth. But let it be remembered that the Scriptures teach that, while natural processes are used, God forms a child at the moment of conception. God formed David and Jeremiah. God gave conception, by a miracle, to Elisabeth. And only God can, at the moment of conception, so form a child that it has not only a body but a soul, not only ears and eyes, but a mind and will, not only stomach and heart, but the powers of thinking and desiring; only God can form a person.

To kill a fetus is to commit murder. Induced abortion is murder, cold-blooded murder. And nothing can ever change that.

Two points must yet be considered, points which stand related to our subject. The first is the question whether induced abortion is ever to be approved. Many pro-life people believe that abortion is permissible when a pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. Is this true? While Davis points out that such things are extremely rare, we agree with him when he writes: "As a matter of simple justice, it is the rapist who should be punished, not the innocent child conceived as a result of the rape. . . . It is true that the woman has suffered an injustice; but abortion would represent a further injustice, this time against the unborn child. 'Two wrongs do not make a right'" (p. 155).

Yet, for the most part, the church of Christ through the ages has permitted abortion when a pregnancy threatens a mother's life. With this also we agree. Of course, the case must be clear that the

mother's life would indeed be gravely endangered by a pregnancy gone to full term. And with advances in medical technology, the instances of this are relatively rare. Nevertheless, one faces a unique situation in such a case. It is not now simply a question of abortion, but a question of losing a life — either the life of the unborn child or the life of a wife and mother. And while our judgment is in such matters always imperfect, the child of God can only weigh the relative value of one life over against another; and certainly the life of a wife and mother is, at that moment, of greater importance than the life of a child. One person's life must be sacrificed for the sake of another person's life. This is an extremely hard position to be in, but God sometimes places His people in such positions. Something analogous to this takes place when a parent, at the loss of his own life, rescues his son from imminent death.

The second point which needs briefly to be discussed is the question of whether or not a Christian can, in good conscience before God, join modern right-to-life or pro-life movements. Opportunities are almost always present for the Christian to do this, and he faces the choice of whether he should involve himself in such activities.

It seems elementary that the Christian must certainly make his voice heard as loudly as he possibly can in protest against this great evil. This is surely part of his witness to the cause of God in the midst of a world of sin. He is remiss in his calling if he fails to do this. If he chooses to join with other Christians to sound loudly the truth of God's Word, surely no one can ever criticize him for doing this.

Nevertheless, there are other factors which must be considered in answering the question of whether he should join one of the movements in this country dedicated to the eradication of abortion. Perhaps this can best be illustrated by a personal story. Some years ago I received a call from the National Right To Life Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to participate in the work of presenting a petition to the then president Carter in which a protest was to be lodged against the growing evil of abortion. I told the caller that I would be happy to do this, provided that the Committee gave me the right to express my opposition to abortion on Biblical grounds only, and not on the humanistic grounds which were so often used by right-to-life people. The answer was, "We will think about it and let you know." But I never heard from them again. The point is that the Christian stands on the basis of God's Word and on that basis only. Nothing can move him from that. There he must stand, come what may. If that is in any way compromised, he cannot participate in such movements.

Secondly, it is simply a fact that the movements to rid the country of abortion, as good as the cause

may be in itself, are movements which are determined to use might and force to attain their objectives. They are interested in petitions with millions of signatures, in lobbying in the halls of state and national legislatures, in rounding up votes, in pressuring courts, in picketing abortion clinics, in the might of coercion and political power. This is contrary to Christian principles. The words of God to Zechariah the prophet echo down through history: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (4:6). The Christian may never resort to force or coercion to gain his ends. He may never make use of the carnal weapons of carnal warfare. He may never put his trust in "chariots and horses." He is called only "to remember the name of the Lord his God" (Ps. 20:7. See also Ps. 33:17-20).

All this is closely connected with the notion that this present evil world can somehow be transformed into a kind of Paradise, a heaven here below. This is the fond but illusory dream of the post-millennialists. And with this dream they think it not wrong to resort to the use of carnal and earthly weapons, for their heaven is carnal and earthly. But the child of God knows: 1) that only the power of the gospel can change the wicked hearts of men; 2) that we must look to that city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, for the full deliverance from this evil world. His weapons are the weapons of the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ. And that gospel will always save the church, though it be a remnant according to the election of grace, a hut in a garden of cucumbers, a besieged city (Is. 1:8, 9).

ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

Evangelism Is Reformed Women Elders

Evangelism Is Reformed

The Rev. Robert Grossmann, Associate Professor of Ministerial Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Orange City, Iowa wrote an excellent article under this title in the April 1986 issue of *Mid-America Messenger*. In our times there is much emphasis on the Social Gospel, Arminianism has made alarmingly deep inroads into Reformed Churches, and theological liberalism has all but won the day. Grossmann contends, and rightly so, that only the truly Reformed can do evangelism biblically and effectively. We quote the article in its entirety with permission.

While there are some, usually in the Arminian camp, who would argue that being Reformed and being concerned with evangelism cannot naturally be associated with each other, and even are in principle opposed to each other, we would say that the two cannot properly be separated from each other. Indeed, we hold that only the truly Reformed in doctrine can do evangelism biblically and effectively.

The argument that disassociates evangelism from being Reformed is usually based on the idea that the doctrine of predestination makes evangelism unnecessary. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

As R. B. Kuiper points out, election demands evangelism because "all the elect must be saved," and "the gospel is the means by which God bestows saving faith upon them."

The present situation with respect to evangelism in the western world is that never have so many been "evangelized" with so little effect upon their personal lives or on the lives of the nations in which they live. That fact alone makes it necessary that the church once again examine just what it is that is being called "evangelism." Considering that modern methods of "evangelism" amount to little more than a popularity poll for heaven versus hell ("Vote now, come forward while heads are bowed!"), it is amazing how many do *not* come forward. It is our contention that modern "evangelism" in the western world has never escaped the badly Arminian presuppositions of Charles Finney, the inventor of the "altar call" method.

Interestingly and importantly, the most spectacularly effective results ever recorded in the history of American evangelism belong to the ministry of a man almost totally unknown in our day. The ministry of Asahel Nettleton from 1812 to 1842 was blessed with the entrance of between fifteen and twenty thousand true believers into the churches of New England, who for the next fifty years were the pillars of their congregations. None of them had come forward for an "altar call," for this was against Nettleton's principles. This happened long before the advent of

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radio and television, at meetings no larger than those normal for a small New England town. Not surprisingly, the Rev. Mr. Nettleton has received little acclaim from the world, even from that part of the "Christian" world which claims to be interested in biblical evangelism. However, there are presently two biographies of him available: *The Life and Labours of Asahel Nettleton* by his contemporary Bennet Tyler (1975; Banner of Truth Trust, Box 652, Carlisle, PA 17013); and *God Sent Revival* by John F. Thornbury (Evangelical Press, Box 2453, Grand Rapids, 49501).

It would be hard to overestimate the adherence of Asahel Nettleton to classical Reformed Theology. When asked what a man could do to be "born again," Nettleton agreed with Jonathan Edwards that a man can do no more to effect the work of the Holy Spirit than a windmill can do to make the wind blow. To stand on the hill waiting is equivalent to standing in the presence of the preaching of the Word of God, but to then presume to direct the work of the Sovereign Spirit of God is both foolish and sinful. In answer to the further question as to whether perhaps such a man might pray for the Holy Spirit to regenerate him, Nettleton quoted James 1:6-8. Since such a man is by definition an unbeliever, he is by nature double-minded: "Let not that man, again I say, let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord."

It is clear that Nettleton's productivity as an evangelist is the result of God's blessing upon his biblical theology and principles, not a blessing in spite of them. Therefore the main aspects of those principles should be of great interest to the Reformed community truly seeking the salvation of the nations.

What Nettleton *did* do is preach the wrath of God against sinners, and the necessity of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This is in clear contrast to the present-day invitations to "dedicate your life to Christ," or to "invite Jesus into your heart," neither of which appear in the Bible at all. This call to true repentance (see II Corinthians 7:9-10 on the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world), which is almost always absent and seldom very serious in today's "gospel," is the heart of the biblical good news.

No religion except biblical Christianity takes sin seriously enough to realize that God's punishment of it is inevitable and that therefore man's greatest problem is *not* meat and drink *nor* war and peace, but God's anger against sinners. Only when the point is driven home that unbelievers will taste the fires of hell far more keenly than the "now generation" savors a Pepsi, will the gospel of Christ crucified make absolutely heavenly sense. Only when our unbelieving neighbors know that we Bible-believing Christians around them actually expect the gates of hell to welcome them to their final place of unrest, will we evangelize them with the Gospel of Jesus and Paul.

It is to the preaching of *this* sinner-saving, God-glorifying and devil-defying biblical Gospel that we who hold to the historic Reformed faith must dedicate ourselves. This requires above all that we do not hide our Reformed light under the twin Arminian bushels of fundamentalism or modernism, but that we place it high upon a candlestick that it may give

light unto all.

To this we add two comments: 1) Arminianism is incipient modernism and 2) Belonging to the "Arminian bushels" is the error of Common Grace's well-meant offer of the gospel.

Women Elders

In spite of all the rhetoric and decisions of its synods this issue will not die in the Christian Reformed Church. According to a news report in *The Banner* (April 28, 1986):

Classis Rocky Mountain has asked a Colorado church to reconsider its decision to use both men and women as elders.

The classis, meeting in early March, told Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Fort Collins, Colo., that the use of women elders could not be affirmed because the Christian Reformed Church has not opened the office of elder to women. Classis urged the congregation to be patient and to report back to classis after reevaluating its decision.

Immanuel CRC is not currently using women as elders, but the church decided, after four years of discussion and research and by a majority of 78 percent, to allow women to serve as elders. Several women were nominated in 1985 to be elders, but in a June congregational meeting none were elected, said the church's report to classis.

Since the time they studied the issue and voted to allow women on the consistory, however, church members have expressed concern about the congregation's relationship with the rest of the denomination, so Immanuel brought the issue to classis, said Immanuel elder Larry Kieft.

According to Kieft, the church chose to nominate women because:

- the church's growth has caused it to use "anyone with commitment to Jesus Christ" in ministry;
- families joining the church are young, educated couples in which the women have functioned as equals with the men. Some of the women have been elders and deacons in other denominations.
- a majority of the church's leadership has favored allowing all qualified members to hold office;
- the church's experience of having women serve on the council has been very positive.

Immanuel's classical delegation asserted that "our loyalty to the CRC is not the issue here. . . . Agreement on every polity issue is not the prerequisite for loyalty and love. . . . Real unity is based on our theological unity around Reformed theology and unity of purpose and mission. We believe our stand is ethically correct and necessary for our witness in this community."

This is not an issue of mere "polity." The issue in all this is what does one do with the Scriptures which clearly forbid women to preach, teach, or rule in God's church. (Cf. I Timothy 2:8-15.) Noteworthy is the fact that, according to the report, neither elder Kieft nor Immanuel's consistory make any appeal to Scripture or the Reformed Confessions to support their actions.

Good Morning, Alice (11)

Gise J. Van Baren

Preparing Alice for bed at night came to be quite a routine. First, there were the prescribed exercises. Each finger and toe, the arms and legs, all must be moved the proper number of times. These exercises, too, were not to develop muscle strength, but rather were to stretch muscles enough to prevent or minimize painful cramps. Then, thick socks were put on Alice's feet after lotion had been soothingly applied to her legs. Next, each arm and leg had to be placed in a position of her liking, with a pillow under her knees — since she could not move them even an inch. Her head must be set in such a position that she could breathe easily. It must be in this position that she would remain through the entire long night.

Good Morning Alice:

It seems so long since we've shared together. It has been a long five days. Even though I had every intention of getting up early to write, I was just too tired.

We have experienced the death of a loved one. Death, when it comes, makes us think of what lies beyond the grave. Only when we are assured of salvation can we say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have also thought a lot about when Paul says, "For me to die is gain." To be ready, and more, to desire death, to receive life, that "gain" — is difficult.

In our flesh we cannot do it. Only through the Holy Spirit can we truly desire to be near unto Him and be willing to give up all our earthly attachments.

As difficult as it is, it does us good to ask ourselves if it is our one desire, above all else, to be with the Lord.

Tomorrow we'll go back to where we left off, so please read Is. 35 which, interestingly, has to do with that wonderful gain we've been talking about.

With love, Your friend

After all of this lengthy process, Alice was not always happy with the final outcome. Relatives could

have put forth their best effort to make her perfectly comfortable for the night; and Alice would agree that she was ready to sleep. The intercom would be placed in its proper position, final good-byes were spoken, and the lights turned out — then the relatives would quietly leave, trying not to disturb the sleep of John and Judy. But not infrequently, within minutes of their departure, the light would go on in her room again. Alice would have called John — for in the final analysis, only he seemed to be able to adjust her to her satisfaction. John would re-position her arms, legs, and then her head. Finally, all would be right and Alice could sleep.

Good Morning Alice:

I've just been reading Isaiah 35. It's strange that I had chosen that passage the day before the death of a loved one.

Take time to read the chapter before, and see God's judgments on unbelievers — they are to dwell forever in judgment, cursed of God.

The beloved of God, however, will forever experience His blessed Presence as they see the glory of the Lord.

I love verses 5 and 6: it comforts us that all the infirmities (and wicked characteristics too!) we now have will be perfected and it will be unto our souls as water breaking out in the wilderness and streams in the desert — unbelievably refreshing! A place only for those made clean and holy by Christ's blood.

Yes, Alice, we will come with songs and everlasting joy given to us by our heavenly Father. We will take hold on that which we so long for with joy and gladness and nevermore sorrow or sigh.

What a beautiful promise!

Read the chapter again, and rejoice in that eternal blessing promised to you.

In Him for Whom we wait, Your friend

Please read Psalm 116:12-13

Those evening "good-byes" became ever harder — especially for Alice. No doubt the night was the worst for her — even though someone was always on call. She could not move through the night. She

could not scratch any itch or chase away any insect which she could easily feel. Only with difficulty could she call out loudly enough to be heard through the intercom. So it was that when, before leaving at night, a passage of Scripture was read, and prayer spoken, tears inevitably filled her eyes. She could no longer speak, but could hear and understand everything well. Prayer and Scripture are particularly appropriate when one faces physical separation and death. Doubtlessly, the very reminder of this fact made Alice face the reality of her own situation. Tears often filled our eyes too.

Good Morning Alice:

What a beautiful morning! The kids are off to school and it's a little later today. The sun is shining gorgeously and it's so still and peaceful outside.

Psalms 116:12-13 just stuck out at me yesterday when I was choosing a text for today.

God is so good to us. All we have to do is shut out all worldly selfish thoughts and desires, and we can see what God has done for us in our lives. Where and what would we be without His grace in our lives?

Verse 12 says, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" What can I give God? Nothing! Everything I have and am are His. Then verse 13 gives the beautiful answer. I will take the cup of salvation. I will take hold of that salvation He has given me and call upon the name of the Lord. I will give all back to Him. Do you see what that means? He has delivered me from the bondage of my sinful self and now with all of my being, my heart, my mind, my tongue, my hands, my eyes, and all of my time, I will call upon Him. I will live for Him.

Love, Your friend

Please read Rom. 1:9

It surely would not be true to state that the family always joyously carried out its task of caring for Alice. She was often SO demanding and not always easily satisfied. She seemed not to understand that each had other responsibilities besides her care. She seemed to expect someone nearby to answer her every beck and call. And for some of the relatives there was the question, why couldn't we please her as quickly and easily as did Brother John? But then we'd have to face the question, "What would we do under similar circumstances?" Could we not put up with some of these seemingly unreasonable demands — understanding the complete helplessness of Alice — and her resulting frustrations and fears?

Good Morning Alice:

This is another verse that shows so clearly my lack in prayer. Paul tells the Romans that God is his witness that without ceasing he remembers them always in his prayers.

Paul had such a love for others. When I think of others, it means that I have to stop thinking of myself. I'm not always so good at that. Sometimes I get very pre-occupied thinking of all my sins and weaknesses. I just wonder: if I strive to remember others, wouldn't it follow that being busy helping and praying often for others, there would be less room for my old nature to sin?

And Paul says — without ceasing! We know that does not mean that every moment Paul was in constant prayer for the Romans, but that in whatever he did, preaching, traveling, and making tents, he always had the spiritual strength of the Romans in his thoughts; and brought their spiritual welfare before God everytime he came unto God in prayer.

What a lesson! How I fail!

We must learn to remember, long for, and pray always for the needs of others.

With love, Your friend

Please read Romans 1:32

Helpless indeed! The strange fact of ALS is that the muscles become utterly useless — but the sense of touch is, if anything, enhanced. Alice could feel any fly or mosquito that crawled on her. Often we noticed how her eyes would roam carefully over the whole room — and if any insect were spotted, those same eyes would let us know. Nor would she be happy until she was sure that every insect in that room would be killed — before we could leave. There were, however, those times when we were sure that she just imagined the presence of an insect, for we could not find it. Or did she, sometimes, use the presence of this imagined bug to keep us in the room with her a few minutes longer?

Good Morning Alice:

Once in a while it's good to stand back and take a little look at my life as a whole to see if there are areas where I'm so used to doing something that I just don't see it as sin.

A minister had a sermon on Rom. 1:32 a while back, and it was an eye opener to me.

Verses 27-32 of this chapter are a description of the world, but it does us good to see if we are guilty of these things. The sermon stressed our enjoying the sins of others and therefore sinning ourselves. How often isn't this true?

You can hardly pick up a magazine that doesn't have an article in it about one sin or another, and how quickly we read it and therefore enter into "enjoying" that sin!

How often do we watch television not even thinking that every sin we watch makes us sin ourselves when we continue watching it and don't turn away.

This makes one really wonder — what can I do?

I am convinced this is a sign of persecution of the saints — we can no longer enjoy those things we once could — and of the last times when sin abounds.

What we can do is to turn closer and closer to God,

and turn from all those things which make us sin.

Quite a difficult task, but possible through the Spirit that is in us.

Til tomorrow, Love, Your friend

Please read Psalm 130

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Ronald J. Hanko

God Is Faithful (1)

We have seen again and again in the first six Commandments of the Law that the Ten Commandments are an enduring revelation of the will of God for our lives, not only because they are given by an unchanging God, but because they themselves reveal the eternal glory of God. Each Commandment is rooted and grounded in one or more of the virtues and attributes of God Himself.

The Law is not, therefore, first of all some kind of social or political instrument for the improvement of society, but rather a means to praise and thank our great God. It shows us how we, chosen, redeemed, and sanctified by grace, may offer ourselves a living sacrifice to God.

In order, then, to understand the Seventh Commandment we must first understand what Scripture says about God's faithfulness, for in the Seventh Commandment God teaches us how to confess and praise His faithfulness in deed as well as in word. This is of supreme importance. In learning about marriage and about the sexual side of man's nature, the things of which the Seventh Commandment speaks, we must be absolutely sure that we are not guided by expediency, by the corrupt desires of the flesh, or by the wisdom of the world, but by the knowledge of God Himself. The devil and wicked men are all too happy to be our teachers in these matters. If we listen to them our life in relation to the Seventh Commandment can only be hellish. God must be our Teacher and His glory our instruction.

Only then will we live a life that is pure and holy and fitted for His glory.

The truth that God is faithful is very closely connected with all that we know of God's covenant. That is certainly the reason why marriage, the main subject of the Seventh Commandment, is called in Scripture a "covenant." It is striking and significant, too, that there are two Commandments so closely related to the truth of the covenant, this one and also the Fourth. That is indeed an indication of the importance of the doctrine of the covenant in Scripture. Nevertheless, the Seventh Commandment, though also related to the doctrine of the covenant, commands obedience from a different viewpoint than the Fourth Commandment. In obedience to the Fourth Commandment we enjoy the great blessing of the covenant, Sabbath rest with God in Christ. In obedience to the Seventh we learn the wonder of grace which brings us into and keeps us in the fellowship of God's covenant and of the intimacy of our relationship to Him.

In Scripture God reveals His own faithfulness to us, His people, by picturing His relationship to us in Christ as a marriage. We find this picture especially in the first two chapters of Hosea and in Ezekiel 16. And these passages emphasize not only the blessed intimacy of God's relationship to His people in Christ, but also His abiding faithfulness to them.

Thus we read in Hosea 2:19, 20, "And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee

unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."

This faithfulness of God is one aspect of His immutability. He reveals His immutability or unchangeableness in all His works, but toward His people He reveals that immutability in His faithfulness to them. The passages in Ezekiel and Hosea very beautifully show us that faithfulness of God. There the church is pictured in her sins as an adulterous wife. This picture is so apt exactly because the great sin of the church in every age is the sin of idolatry. She forsakes God and loves, follows, and obeys someone or something beside Him. Ezekiel points out the heinousness of the church's sin when he says, "And (thou) hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery which taketh strangers instead of her husband!" (16:31b, 32).

God's faithfulness to His people is revealed, therefore, in the fact that He does not put away His people for their sin or seek another wife, but remembers His covenant and takes them back into His favor and fellowship time and again. It is of this that we sing in Psalm 103:

Tho' we oft have sinned against Him
Still His love and grace abide.
(Psalter 280:3)

His faithfulness means, then, that His purpose to dwell with His people never changes, that His love never ceases, that His mercies never fail, and that He forgives always. That faithfulness is new every morning not because God has changed, but because before morning comes we have sinned against Him once again and gone a-whoring from Him, only to be forgiven without measure and restored rather than rejected.

That the faithfulness of God is revealed in the Seventh Commandment is without doubt the reason why the wicked so flagrantly live in disobedience with respect to this precept. Their uncleanness, their disregard for the covenant of marriage, and their desire to wallow in the filth of their own fleshly lusts can only be the fruit of their unfaithfulness to God Himself, that is, that they have all gone aside and no longer seek after God. Other sins have at least this justification, that a man profits from them as far as this life is concerned. But adultery and fornication do not even have that justification and are committed simply for the sin's own sake and out of hatred for God. That is Paul's point in I Corinthians 6:18. It is also the reason why the wicked in all their sin are so often characterized as fornicators and adulterers by Scripture (cf. I Pet. 2:9, 10).

Our obedience to the Seventh Commandment, on the other hand, is the inevitable fruit of the faithfulness God shows to us. Only a person who has himself

experienced the covenant mercies and unchangeable faithfulness of God can ever really keep this commandment.

So we see here once again that the knowledge of God is something eminently practical. The solution to our marriage problems, the great secret of a happy marriage, even of a happy life outside of marriage is not to be found anywhere but in the knowledge of God. Therapy, counselling, "how to" manuals, and conferences are not in themselves any solution either to the trials and difficulties of marriage or to the temptations of single life. Purity and holiness and therefore also happiness have their only foundation in a clear knowledge and experience of the faithful love of our covenant God. That is the reason why God, in speaking to His betrothed, the church, tells her over and over that she shall "know the Lord" (Ezek. 16:62, Hos. 2:20). That will be the cure for all her whorish tendencies, and the beginning of her faithfulness to God. That will be her peace.

But God's faithfulness is not only the source of our faithfulness; it is also the pattern for our faithfulness. We must act in and toward marriage as God acts toward us. To put it another way, we need to know that not only passages which speak of marriage and chastity are important as far as a proper understanding and practice of sexual purity are concerned, but all of those passages of Scripture which speak of God's dealings with His church. If we as husbands and wives, for example, are to learn how to be faithful to one another, we must not just go to such passages as Ephesians 5 for a quick lesson, but must learn from all the Scriptures what God has done for us in Christ. Even Ephesians 5 is not so much a marriage manual as a reminder of that great truth — that we must love in marriage as Christ loves the church and the church loves Christ.

We must also remember, when striving to confess God's faithfulness to us by obeying His marriage ordinances, that God is faithful first of all to Himself. This is the reason why God's faithfulness is always revealed to us in the way of strictest justice, that is, in the way of atonement and satisfaction for sin in Christ. He does not deny us only because He cannot deny Himself.

This too is an important principle as far as our obedience to the Seventh Commandment is concerned. It means simply that we must forsake all adultery and fornication for God's sake. Our faithfulness to marriage, whether married or unmarried, must be above all and first of all faithfulness to God Himself. This is abundantly clear not only from all the passages which speak of the calling of husband and wife, but even of those passages which speak of the calling of the unmarried. The chastity of the unmarried and the faithfulness of the married to one

another must always be "in the Lord" and for the Lord's sake. We know that the terrible diseases which ravage the life of man when he insists on giving full rein to his lusts are the judgment of God, but it is not out of fear of these diseases that we seek to live a clean life. We obey the Seventh Commandment for God's sake. When the ungodly men forsake their lusts for fear of the consequences they do not obey God and praise His faithfulness, and their "obedience" is an abomination in the sight of God. We may be sure that when one cesspool has become too polluted even for them to wallow in that they will seek another.

The lesson that we may learn from this is that all our unfaithfulness, whether in or outside of marriage, begins with unfaithfulness to God. Sexual "problems," fighting and bickering between husband and wife, adultery, the temptation to satisfy the fleshly lusts outside of marriage, all these things have as

their deepest root, spiritual unfaithfulness to God, to His Word, to communion with Him in prayer, and to the spiritual exercises of faith.

We recognize, therefore, in the intimacy and love of married persons the gracious gift of God, Who has given them the opportunity to confess His own amazing faithfulness, longsuffering mercy, and love even in their relationship to one another. We do not think as the Roman Catholic Church does that a single life is somehow more holy than a married life, or that the intimacy of married life is somehow unclean in the sight of God, to be despised or neglected among His people. It is the great means that God has given, that we may constantly testify with all our life that His is a

... faithfulness that never dies;
Established changeless in the skies."
(Psalter 241:2)

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

James D. Slopsema

The Baptism Form

Infant Baptism (2)

In our previous article on infant baptism we saw from the baptism form that whereas our children are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so also are they without their knowledge received unto grace in Christ. This truth is evident from the fact that God establishes His covenant of grace with believers and their seed. This the baptism form demonstrates by calling our attention to Genesis 17:7 and Acts 2:39.

Having laid down this very important truth, the baptism form proceeds to call our attention to the command of God to Old Testament Israel to circumcise their children. Says the form, "Therefore God formerly commanded them to be circumcised,

which was a seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness of faith."

We ought to notice, first, that the Old Testament rite of circumcision is called here "a seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness of faith."

In Romans 4:11 we read that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." The idea here is that by faith in Jesus Christ we are righteous before God. This is the great truth of justification by faith alone without the works of the law. And according to Romans 4:11 circumcision was in the Old Testament a seal of that righteousness by faith. It was through circumcision that God sealed or guaranteed to all and every believer in the Old Testament that in the way of his faith he was righteous before God, justified and thus an heir of life eternal.

For that reason, circumcision was also a seal of God's covenant in the Old Testament. For at the heart of the covenant is the righteousness which is by faith. God draws near to us in His covenant fellowship and friendship only on the basis of the perfect righteousness which is ours by faith in Christ. Being, therefore, a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, the rite of circumcision was in the Old Testament also a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace.

Now the baptism form calls our attention to the fact that in the Old Testament God commanded this seal of His covenant to be administered to all the children in Israel. We read of this in Genesis 17. In verse 7 we read of the wonderful promise of God to Abraham to establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed. Then in verses 9-14 we read that God commanded Abraham to keep this covenant by circumcising every man child born into his generations. Every man child must receive the sign of the covenant in the form of circumcision when he was eight days old.

According to the baptism form the basis of this command is to be found in the fact that God promised to establish His eternal covenant of grace with Abraham and his seed in their generations (cf. Genesis 17:7). This in turn meant that the seed of Abraham, even as children, were received unto grace in the promised Christ. On that basis they were to receive the sign of the covenant in circumcision.

We have already seen that not all the natural descendants of Abraham were elect of God and thus true members of God's covenant. Born into Abraham's generations was a twofold seed: an elect, spiritual seed as well as a reprobate, carnal seed. Born to Abraham was not only Isaac, but also Ishmael. Born in Abraham's generations was not only Jacob, but also Esau. There was always a twofold seed. And God's covenant was with the spiritual seed alone. They alone were received unto grace in the promised Christ.

Nevertheless, because God had established His covenant with Abraham and his spiritual seed, God desired that all the seed of Abraham, the spiritual as well as the carnal seed, receive the sign of the covenant in circumcision.

And there was good reason for this.

God desired the true spiritual seed of Abraham to receive the sign of the covenant to serve as a means of grace to strengthen their faith in the promised Savior. When this spiritual seed, even as children, were brought to faith by God's grace, their circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith, served as a sure testimony of God to them that even as children they were righteous before God in the way of their faith. This served as a powerful means to

strengthen the faith of God's little saints in the Old Testament.

But God also had a purpose in the circumcision of the carnal, reprobate seed born into Israel. The fact that the carnal seed also received the sign of the covenant did not detract from circumcision. For also here circumcision served the purpose of God. It served to harden the hearts of the carnal seed, even in their childhood. The sign of the covenant they bore in their flesh served to turn them against God in bitter hatred so that they might fill the cup of iniquity according to the purpose of God's reprobation.

The baptism form also calls our attention to the fact that Christ embraced the little children of Israel, laid His hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10). The line of thought followed by the baptism form is this:

1) God established His covenant with Abraham and his seed in their generations so that Abraham's seed, even as children, were received unto grace in the promised Christ.

2) Therefore, God commanded that all the children born in Abraham's generation (Israel) receive the sign of the covenant in circumcision.

3) Therefore, Christ also embraced these children, laid His hands on them and blessed them.

We can be rather brief on this particular point of Jesus blessing the little children. Quite obviously Jesus blessed the children of believing parents. These parents showed their faith in Jesus by following Him and desiring that Jesus bless their children. Jesus complied with this request to bless their little ones because, said He, "Of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). In other words, Jesus blessed these children because among these children Jesus discerned the true seed of Abraham with whom God had established His covenant and to whom, therefore, also the blessings of the covenant belonged. Hence, the blessings, which God had signified and sealed in the circumcision of these little children, Christ at this point also proclaimed to them.

Now the baptism form comes to perhaps the key argument to establish the validity and necessity of infant baptism. Having established the fact that the children of Israel in the Old Testament were to receive the sign of God's covenant in circumcision, the baptism form argues that baptism is come in the place of circumcision. Therefore, infants of believing parents in the new dispensation are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant.

The baptism form does not prove that baptism has come in the place of circumcision; it merely asserts this as fact. This assertion, however, is easily demonstrated from Holy Writ. Thus, for example, both baptism and circumcision point to the same spiritual

realities. Baptism is a sign and seal of the remission or forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38) as well as spiritual renewal (cf. Romans 6:4). But circumcision in the Old Testament carried with it the same significance. It too spoke of a righteousness before God which includes the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom. 4:11) as well as spiritual renewal (cf. Deut. 30:6). And both of these spiritual realities, the forgiveness of sins and spiritual renewal, are what comprise the washing away of sins depicted so graphically in both circumcision and baptism. In addition to this the Bible identifies both baptism and circumcision by using them interchangeably. This it does, for example, in Colossians 2:11 and 12: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

From all this we are led to conclude that there is but one covenant of God throughout all history, the covenant of grace with Abraham and his seed. In the old dispensation this covenant was limited primarily to the natural descendants of Abraham; in the new dispensation it embraces also the Gentiles who are adopted by God's grace into the covenant as spiritual children of Abraham.

In turn this wonderful covenant of grace has essentially but one sign and seal. The form of this covenant sign changes from one dispensation to the next. Nevertheless, there is essentially but one sign and seal of this covenant. In the old dispensation the sign of this covenant was circumcision. Christ had not yet come to establish the covenant in His blood. Hence, God ordained circumcision to be the seal of the covenant. Circumcision was performed as a matter of cleanliness and hygiene. It also involved the shedding of blood. As such it was a very apt sign of the washing away of sins in the blood of the promised Christ. But now the Christ has come. He has shed His blood to wash away sin and realize the covenant. Hence, the sign of circumcision falls away. With the shedding of the blood of atonement, the shedding of blood, also in circumcision, forever loses its significance for God's people. In the place of circumcision God has ordained the sign of baptism. It is essentially the same sign as circumcision. For it too graphically portrays the washing away of sins in the blood of Christ. Circumcision and baptism are essentially one.

Now according to the baptism form, since baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the sign of God's covenant, children of believing parents are to be baptized. Even as the children born into natural Israel received the sign of the covenant in the old dispensation in the form of circumcision, so also now

in the new dispensation the children of spiritual Israel are to receive the sign of the same covenant by being baptized. They are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of God's covenant. This baptism will have the same effect that circumcision had in the Old Testament. For the true spiritual seed who receive baptism, their baptism will serve as a means of grace. However, when the sign of the covenant comes upon the carnal, reprobate seed, it will serve to harden their hearts according to the purpose of God's reprobation.

Finally, the baptism form instructs us that "parents are in duty bound, further to instruct their children herein, when they shall arrive to years of discretion."

The years of discretion referred to here are the years when our children are able to discern and understand the spiritual realities implied in baptism. And let us not underestimate the understanding of our children. At a very young age our little children can begin to understand the realities of sin, the meaning of Christ's death to wash away sin, the meaning of baptism, and many other spiritual truths that comprise their salvation.

When children arrive to these years parents are duty bound to instruct their children in these truths. This is not first of all the duty of the church or the Christian school, although they too certainly must instruct our children in these things. The task of instructing children in the spiritual realities implied in baptism is first of all and primarily the obligation of parents. God has called parents to train up their children.

This instruction is very important. For God uses the faithful instruction of parents along with the good instruction parents provide for their children in the church and the Christian school to bring their spiritual seed to faith in Jesus Christ and thus to the salvation which is signified and sealed in their baptism.

Let us as parents not be slothful in training our children. But let us press on in zeal and dedication, anticipating on the basis of God's promise great things in our children.

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful gift
for the sick & shut-in.
Give the Standard Bearer!*

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Thomas C. Miersma

Scripture Interprets Scripture: Grammatically

We have been considering the principle laid down in Scripture and taught us also by the reformers, that Scripture is its own interpreter. Thus far we have focused our attention upon the words and phrases of Scripture and upon doing what are called word studies. The purpose of such study is to listen carefully to the text of Scripture and to submit our understanding to the Word of God. This is also true of the study of the grammar of the text.

The word grammar may well bring to mind much that we learned in school about the structure of the English language, the distinctions between nouns and verbs, adjectives and adverbs, prepositional phrases and various kinds of clauses. It may bring to mind also such things as diagramming sentences and other such devices which serve to analyze what is written. These tools, terms, and devices which serve to teach good English composition also have a place in Bible study with our English Bible.

We believe in the verbal, word for word, inspiration of Holy Scripture. This includes not merely the words but also the grammatical form of the words of Scripture. On the basis of this principle we require that our ministers not only know the Biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew, but that they also use them. While it is not possible to bring directly into English the grammar and forms of these Biblical languages, nevertheless our King James Bible as a faithful translation does reflect them in English. For the student of the English Bible the study also of the grammar of the text is a means to understand more clearly and carefully the Word of God.

There are limitations to this approach as we are studying a translation and not the original. Nevertheless the analysis of the grammar of the English text can at the very least serve to place before our minds more clearly the main thought of the text and the various subordinate elements which illuminate and expound that main thought. Determining the subject, verb, and object of the sentence of the text will usually give us this main thought. Diagramming the text also will help to set visually before our mind the various elements of the text and their relationships. As these tools are available to us, and also taught in our schools there is no reason not to use them in Bible study.

Someone may well respond at this point that this is all fine for my children or grandchildren who are in school but I am long out of school and have forgotten most of these things and they were difficult and uninteresting at the time I studied them. What, barring a refresher course in English grammar or borrowing my children's textbooks, am I supposed to do? In the first place, the idea of spending some time reviewing or relearning some of these things is not as idealistic as it may sound. It is essentially no more difficult than using a cookbook or a repair manual as a reference tool. True, this may involve some effort in an area in which we are not perfectly comfortable or at home. But God has also given us minds for the purpose of using them. If our concern is for more meaningful Bible study and understanding of God's Word, this is certainly worth the same kind of effort we would bestow upon the other affairs of life.

In the second place, however, there are also other means available. In part, the grammatical study of the text of Scripture involves using what we already

know and simply paying attention to the text before us. In addition to studying the words of the text and their meaning, we can add to that study careful attention to the various terms of the text which serve a grammatical purpose. This involves noting the various connections in a passage between verses and sentences, and considering their relationships. This is not difficult. For example, in one of the epistles of the New Testament, when a verse begins with the word "for" it often indicates that the verse is giving a reason for or an explanation of some aspect of the preceding verse. Noting these grammatical connections is a matter of paying attention to what we read.

Here again our English dictionary can also serve as a useful tool. It will give us not only the meaning of words but their grammatical use and importance as well. It will do so without a refresher course in English grammar. It is especially the small words which we think we know well and would not ordinarily look up in a text which are often grammatical terms which draw relationships between verses and words in a text. Looking them up in the dictionary has a different purpose than word studies with dictionary and concordance, but the procedure is the same and may be as fruitful or more so.

To use an example, the English word "of" is probably so familiar that we might ordinarily spend little time with it. But this small preposition has a wide variety of different meanings, as will be plain from a good dictionary. This word reflects an important grammatical relationship in the original languages, and a clear understanding of a text can depend on it. The expression "the righteousness of God" can have a number of different meanings in Scripture, all dependent on the meaning of that word "of." It can refer to God's own righteousness, that righteousness which belongs to or is possessed by God as a divine attribute. It can also refer to that righteousness of which God is the author or source, of which He is the subject and we are the recipients or objects. Looking at the meaning of this word "of" in a dictionary will make this clear. In the example mentioned, "the righteousness of God," the importance of this in understanding the opening chapters of the book of Romans is crucial. It was the perception that this expression in Romans did not refer to the divine attribute, God's righteousness, but to a righteousness which God gives to us, that led Martin Luther to an understanding of the truth of justification by faith. In a sense we may say that the Reformation itself was rooted in this discovery of the meaning of this one word in Romans.

This kind of study belongs with word studies as an integral part of it. The more you do it the easier it becomes. The use of a dictionary in this way con-

sistently will also result in a better understanding of Scripture as a whole, and of English grammar as well, so that we read the Word of God with more clarity and understanding. As Scripture interprets Scripture, such study also needs to be confirmed by using our concordance to see whether Scripture also confirms the results of our study.

It may be well to emphasize that such study will also raise certain problems and questions. While the study of Scripture in this way is spiritually profitable and rewarding, it also has certain limitations. In the first place, we must keep in mind that the study of a translation is not the study of the original text. Our King James translators have done an excellent job of rendering into English the Word of God. But there are things which nevertheless can never be fully translated from one language into another and elements of grammar which one language has which do not exist in the same form in another. This is true of our English translation of the Word of God as well. This does not mean that our Bibles are not trustworthy or that they are unreliable, but it does mean there are limitations.

In the second place, we are ourselves limited in our understanding. Our study is imperfect by reason of sin. This means that two children of God studying the same passage may come to different conclusions on *minor* details of a passage. Within the boundaries of the whole teaching of the Word of God, there must be room for differences of interpretation. By this is not meant that the meaning of Scripture itself is relative, but only that our understanding is imperfect. Nor does this mean that the main lines of the truth of God's Word are unclear or that the doctrine taught in Scripture is open to question. The truth of Scripture is plain and clear, a matter of faith or unbelief, and not a matter of lack of clarity in Scripture or understanding it.

Furthermore, the proper place for such Bible study is not in isolation from the church, or the study of fellow saints but exactly in the communion of the saints and in the fellowship of the church. This means too that the child of God may use the commentaries and other tools which are the fruit of the Spirit's leading in the church, and are the work of faithful servants of God. The fact is that doing our own faithful Bible study will also make such tools as commentaries more meaningful and useful as well, for we will more clearly understand the issues being discussed in them.

It is exactly in the way of such faithful Bible study, in the communion of the saints, that God leads His church to develop the truth of His Word more clearly and to understand His Word more deeply. Thus He guides His church by His Word and Spirit into all truth.

IN HIS FEAR

Arie den Hartog

The Life of Self Denial

A life of self denial, this is the absolute requirement for those who would be the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our last article we considered something of what is involved in true self denial. Self denial is something quite different from merely denying to ourselves certain legitimate pleasures and pursuits on this earth. It is not the monk who lives a life of asceticism, poverty, and deprivation and self-inflicted torture that practices true self denial. In doing all of these things he can utterly fail to deny himself. None of these things are in themselves required of the Lord. Many who do these things are still utterly self seeking and self glorying. Emphatically if we are to be true disciples of our Lord we need to deny OURSELVES. The old monster of self within us must be put down and destroyed. This could happen for the Christian only at the cross of Christ. Our old self-seeking, self-gratifying, and self-promoting nature had to be crucified with Christ. Jesus is for the Christian the supreme example of self denial. We deny ourselves only when we take up our cross and follow Him. If God is to be truly central in our lives, if our whole life is to be lived to the glory of God, we need to begin by denying ourselves. Our glorious Reformed doctrine teaches us this. Does our life as Reformed Christians manifest this? Self denial is the great and constant requirement of the Christian life in every area and department. Because of the sinful nature that remains with the Christian until the day of his death, he needs to be constantly on guard against the old monster of self again arising within him. Let us consider now a few of the most important areas of our Christian life where self denial is so absolutely essential.

Consider first of all the whole area of our life in the Christian home. From the beginning, no truly

Christian home can ever be established without man and woman denying themselves. Those who are contemplating marriage ought to consider this very seriously. Let us not begin our marriages after the vain and evil philosophy of this world but according to the standards of the Word of God. Paul exhorts the Christian man in marriage to give himself for his wife even as Christ gave Himself for the church. (See Ephesians 5:23.) What a tremendous requirement this is! How many even who call themselves Christians completely fail to do this! How many men are in the final analysis only self seeking and egotistical and vain! Let us check our lives, men, whether this is not true. Much of the trouble in marriages today actually comes from this. In years gone by, ungodly men sought to satisfy their own lust and desire for vain glory by taking several wives to themselves. This is not so common today anymore, though this is still the chief reason for divorce and remarriage, the great evil that destroys so many homes. Husbands often cruelly use and abuse their wives for the satisfaction of their own lusts and to exalt themselves. In doing this they seek to justify themselves in that God has given them the position of authority in the home. But how evil and self seeking all this is. Other husbands give themselves over almost totally to pursue their careers to the virtual neglect of their wives and children. They boast in the hard work they do and in the achievements they accomplish. They claim to be doing all of this to provide for their family. But in many cases they do all these things only to seek their own advancement and glory in the world. Of course men must work hard to support their families. God requires this of us men. But this must all be done in true self denial or it will actually have evil rather than good consequences for the family. As men we must constantly give ourselves for the true welfare of our wives and family. We must seek greater things for our family than only meat and drink and clothing because life consists in

much more than this. We must above all be concerned for the spiritual welfare of our family. We must be concerned about dwelling with our wives as the Lord commands us. We must spend much time and energy to nurture our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We may not even put our careers before this. There will be times when men have to forego job promotion and advancements because of the higher concerns of spending time with the family and seeking their spiritual welfare. The Christian husband may not leave to his wife alone the great burdens and responsibilities of raising the family and keeping the house. He has to deny himself to fulfill his God-ordained role and responsibility. He may not spend his time pursuing a career or, worse than that, entertaining himself with selfish sports and leisure while his family is neglected. To deny ourselves as husbands means that we realize that there are many things we cannot do which, though they are in themselves perfectly legitimate, take us away from our great responsibilities towards our wives and children. We need constantly to examine our lives and everything we do as men and judge whether it is truly being done out of a spirit of self denial and not one of self seeking and self glorying.

The woman's God-ordained role in marriage is also one that demands self denial as one of the chief requirements. The whole world today teaches the woman to be self seeking and self exalting. She is urged to seek after self realization by seeking her own career and occupation outside of the home and independent from her husband. She is exhorted to liberate herself from the bondage of the home and raising of a family. The God-ordained role of keeping the home is portrayed as being the most shameful and humiliating role a woman can have. All this teaching appeals to the self-seeking, evil nature of the ungodly woman. For this reason the philosophy of woman's liberation has caught on so quickly and has totally changed the thinking and life style of the modern-day woman. In contrast to all of this the truly godly and Christian woman must be prepared to live in self denial for the glory of her Lord and Savior and for the welfare of her family. Bringing forth the children of the covenant requires self denial. The godly woman must be ready to suffer pain and sorrow, great hardships and trials. She must be like Hannah who earnestly prayed to the Lord for a child and then vowed to give him to the Lord. There are few areas in life that require such great self denial as feeding, caring for, and raising children. Children make tremendous demands upon the mother. No one will deny that the common tasks which a woman has to perform every day in the home can totally drain one's energy. They can often involve drudgery. It is true that a woman's work in the home is never done. She has to work hard from early morning till

late at night. She receives very little honor and praise, especially not from the world, for all the hard work she does. But the Bible pictures the life of the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 in exactly this way. This virtuous woman gives her whole life to care for her husband and family. This is true self denial, far exceeding any performed by the nun in the convent or the monk in the monastery. God is glorified by such a life of self denial. A woman who so sacrifices herself brings great blessing to her family and has a very great role in the kingdom of the Lord.

Children have to be taught self denial in the Christian home. Our children are conceived and born in sin. This becomes evident almost immediately at birth already, when you see how demanding and selfish little babies are. "Me first" is the mark of the sinful child. Most of the rivalry that exists in the home between children is due to the awful sin of self centeredness. How proud even little children can be of themselves. This must not be encouraged by parents as something good and cute. Children must be taught that selfishness is a great evil before the Lord. They need to be taught to give way to each other and to share with each other. They need to be taught to put themselves always last, and never to be proud or self seeking. Any parent knows that these are hard lessons for children to learn, as hard as they are for adults. It takes a lot of grace in our lives to overcome self centeredness. We must teach our children to be humble before the Lord, to obey their parents, and not to seek their own will but the will of the Lord in their life. Children must always have before them the godly example of self-sacrificing and self-denying parents who are prepared to sacrifice their all for the Lord's sake and for the true spiritual welfare of their children.

Let us also consider what self denial is required of us in connection with our calling and place in the church of Jesus Christ. Of which church are we members; with which church do we stand together; and where do we serve the Lord together with our fellow saints? This will be determined by our willingness to deny ourselves. It is rather easy to belong to one of the large modernistic churches of our day. Little true holiness of life and obedience to the Lord is required in many churches today. In the large churches of our day there will be many that stand with us. In many cases membership in such a church is even considered to be a mark of honor and prestige. But to belong to a small and faithful church of Jesus Christ which boldly and courageously defends and preaches the truth of the Word of God no matter what men say, such church membership will require self denial. Our age is one of great apostasy, not one of great revival movements. We are living in the last days which were prophesied of by our Lord. The

true church today will be small. It will be despised and ridiculed by practically the whole world. Her members too will be despised, even more so by so-called Christians from other churches than by those who are openly heathen and ungodly. Belonging to such a church is hard, it requires self denial. The Christian in self-denying love for the Lord is convinced of his calling to stand for the truth and righteousness of God and joins himself to such a church and to people of like-minded faith and purpose.

The church is the place where the Christian serves the Lord. It is not only the place where he receives the blessings of the Lord. It surely is the latter too of course, but it is also the place where he serves together with his fellow saints and for the benefit of his fellow saints. This too requires self denial. The Christian has to be prepared to make large financial sacrifices to support the church. He therefore often has to be prepared to forego many of the luxuries which his neighbor has. The Christian has to give much time and energy to serve the Lord in His church. He therefore has to cut down on his leisure time, if not exclude it altogether, in order to have opportunity to serve in the church. This is especially required of those who have the calling and responsibility to be office bearers in the church. Elders and deacons have to spend many nights out attending to important meetings and visiting the people of God in their needs and afflictions. All this they have to do after a day of hard work on the farm, in the office, or factory. Often the temptation will be to stay at home and enjoy a relaxing evening with their family. But they may not yield to this temptation. For the good of the church and her members they need to deny themselves and be willing to spend and be spent and to exhaust all of their resources. But also the ordinary member of the church has to deny himself. He too has to be busy visiting the sick, helping the needy, and encouraging the lonely and down-hearted. Every member of the church has to have the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, not seeking only his own things but also the things of others. Every sincere member of the church of Jesus Christ has to be involved in society meetings and Bible study groups with his fellow saints. He has to be prepared to sacrifice his time and energy to prepare himself for these meetings. He has to study the Word of God. He has to read Christian books and be aware of the issues of the day that are facing his church. There will be times when he has to sit up late after work to study and prepare himself so that he can make his contribution for the welfare of his fellow saints according to the talents which the Lord has given. How many churches today are going apostate and the ordinary people are not aware of what is happening! They are too busy with selfish cares and pleasures

of the world to spend time in the careful study of the Word of God. They are not concerned about their responsibility to help preserve and defend the truth and righteousness of God in the church. To be concerned about these things we need to know how to deny ourselves. We need to be prepared to receive opposition and even scorn sometimes from some members of our own church.

All of us as Christians have the calling to be living personal witnesses of the truth of God. We all have the calling to communicate the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to this world of sin and darkness. We have to be concerned about our unbelieving neighbor and bring the gospel to him. Often we fail to do this. Often we remain silent when we should speak and testify. Opportunities to be a witness for our Lord pass us by. What is the chief reason for this? For most of us we are seldom threatened with physical persecution from our ungodly neighbors. Most of us are not yet in the situation where we really have to suffer and even die for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many faithful saints who have gone before us have sacrificed their very life for the sake of the gospel. But for us so often the main reason why we remain silent is simply that we are ashamed to testify. We fear for our own honor and reputation among men. We refuse to deny ourselves. But we must for the Lord's sake. We must follow the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and also the many great saints and martyrs that have gone before us. Our Lord Jesus exhorts us to confess His name courageously and boldly before men, not fearing the shame and persecution of men. Only then will He also confess our name before our heavenly Father. It is so easy to go along with the ungodly conversation and life style of this world. To be different in this world, to live in holiness and consecration to the Lord in this world, we need to deny ourselves. Are we prepared to do this?

We could of course go on to speak of many more things in connection with our calling to deny ourselves. Let us examine our own lives day by day. How much do we do every day for our own glory and advantage? How much of our life each day is truly lived in self-denying love and consecration to the Lord? May God give us all the grace to be more faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Book Review

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE BIBLE, by E.W. Johnson; Sovereign Grace Publishers (Pine Bluff, Arkansas), 1984; 103 pp., \$3.69 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The author of this book is the pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. It is perhaps best to let the author himself state the main theme of the book:

May I repeat the theme of this study? I am not basing the canon of the Bible, of the Old Testament or the New, on historical evidences. The canon of the Bible must be found in that logical deduction which the child of faith must draw from II Tim. 3:14-17, that if the sacred writings were given by our sovereign God that His chosen people, called to be saints, might profit from them, surely He has brought His church to receive those writings as of authority among them (p. 33).

The argument of the author is not very clear on this matter; sometimes it appears as if he is merely arguing what the church since the Reformation has always said, namely, that Scripture gives testimony of itself that it is the Word of God; other times his

argument seems to be taking off in different directions. However that may be, the author deals with other pertinent and related subjects such as the inspiration of Scripture, the question of the correctness of the "Received Text," and other matters. There is one historical error of some importance found on p. 4 where the author writes:

Papal authority has not determined the canon of the Scriptures. We know this because the canon of the Old Testament was established before the popes came on the scene, and the popes since the Council of Trent (1545 - 1563) have attempted to include the apocrypha in the canon of the Old Testament, which the church that is truly universal has never included.

The fact of the matter is, as the author ought to know, that the Canon of Scripture was officially set forth by the Council of Hippo (393) and the third council of Carthage (397), both of which included in the canon the Old Testament apocrypha. The Reformers, as we know, rejected these books as canonical and the church since then has agreed. But the "truly universal church" nevertheless held this position for over a millennium.

News From Our Churches

David Harbach

In March of this year, Rev. den Hartog received a Rev. and Mrs. J. Klamer into his home. Rev. Klamer is a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church (Liberated) in Holland. What was interesting to Rev. den Hartog was how Rev. Klamer had dealt with some of the same questions we have faced in Singapore, such as the questions of the place of our Confessions in the work of missions and the principles of doing mission work. Rev. Klamer labored in Indonesia for ten years before there were any real converts, due in part to the fact that the people were very backward. This made our missionary realize how very small our hardships are compared to what other missionaries and their families have endured for the Lord's sake.

The Youth Fellowship of the church in Singapore has had between twenty and thirty members studying

the Heidelberg Catechism. Pastor Lau teaches them the catechism while the two pastors and a couple of elders take turns giving the messages for the meetings.

Rev. den Hartog made an interesting hospital visit when he visited a Burmese diplomat who has terminal cancer. This opportunity arose because one of the nurses of the church in Singapore witnessed to the man.

Rev. den Hartog received another invitation to speak for a youth group outside of the church. This is the second time this has happened for two different youth groups. In both of these groups there is one leader who is very interested in the Reformed Faith. Both of these brothers have attended the Reformation Day Lectures. They have been reading Reformed books and desire to bring the Reformed Faith into the churches where they are members.

Remember Singapore Camp Day of 1985 in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area? Well, Byron Center

David Harbach is a teacher at Adams St. Prot. Ref. Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Protestant Reformed Church Evangelism Society is sponsoring another camp day with an emphasis this time on evangelism. Rev. Ron Van Overloop has agreed to speak on the importance of personal evangelism, along with another missionary who will speak on mission work as corporate evangelism. If you desire to camp with them, they have reserved

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 15, 1986, our parents and grandparents,

Rev. and Mrs. George Lanting,

celebrated their 40 years of marriage. We are thankful to God for the many years given to them in caring for us and instructing us in our covenant God. As they have experienced the blessings of God's grace and mercy in the past 40 years, we pray that His love will continue in them for the rest of their years together.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deut. 7:9).

Ruth Vander Warf
Matthew, Chad
Jim and Jan Lanting
Jessica, Emily, Alison,
Seth, Abby
Dave and Jan Lanting
Bill and Jan Lanting
Elizabeth, Bryant, Katie
George Lanting

Dan and Dianna Lanting
Melissa, Aaron, Keith
Tom and Jeanne Venhuizen
Annalise
Phil Lanting
Ed and Mary Stouwie
Kevin, Rachel
Steve Lanting

a section of Hungry Horse Camp Ground near Dorr, Michigan for August 6-9. If you have a desire to be a part of this camp day then call Ardith Oomkes at 616-698-6697 or Ellen Kamminga at 616-878-1444.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 11, 1986, our parents and grandparents,

John and Anna Pfau,

will, with God's consent, celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We congratulate them and express our deepest gratitude to God with the words of the Psalmist — "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

We pray for God's continued blessing upon them for the time He spares them for each other and for us.

John and Arlene Pfau
Brenda and Scott Bultema
Shirley, Dan
Paul and Irene Pfau
Matt, Paula

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington, has an opening for a teacher for Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the 1986-87 school year.

Please send inquiries to: Covenant Christian School, 9088 Northlawn Road, Lynden, WA 98264, or phone the school office: (206) 354-5436, or call Al DeBoer, (206) 384-4148.

46th Annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention

July 28 - August 1, 1986

On the Campus of Valparaiso University

Valparaiso, Indiana

(Junction of Indiana 49 and U.S. 30)

Theme: "Being Reformed in 1986: Heritage and Calling"

Speakers: Rev. M. Kamps, Rev. B. Gritters, Rev. J. Slopsema

Registration at South Holland Protestant Reformed Church

A SPECIAL INVITATION TO YOUNG ADULTS

[For information, call (312)895-8549 or (312)596-3113]