

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SPECIAL ISSUE ON REGENERATION

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

—John 3:3

CONTENTS

Meditation —	
Begotten Again Unto A Lively Hope	98
Editor's Notes	101
Editorials —	
A Little Lesson In Dogmatics	101
The Order of Salvation	103
Passed From Death Unto Life	104
Regeneration and Total Depravity	106
Regeneration and Assurance	108
The Arminian Conception of Regeneration	110
Regeneration and Sinlessness	112
Regeneration In The Line Of The Covenant	115
Directory, Protestant Reformed Churches	118
News From Our Churches	119

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.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave., S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418Church News Editor: Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

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.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Church
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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

Herman Veldman

Begotten Again Unto A Lively Hope

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."
—I Peter 1:3

This word of God is a song of praise: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This glorious, joyful song of jubilee the inspired apostle

would lay upon the hearts of the church of God throughout the ages, the church of elect strangers, strangers because of their election and persecuted

in the midst of the world.

In this text this song of praise is based specifically upon the wonderful fact that we have been regenerated, begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The church of God sings because of its regeneration. O, there may be those who say that one's regeneration belongs to the mysteries with which we must not concern ourselves, but the inspired writer here lays this song of jubilee upon the church of God, the entire church of God throughout the ages. He would have the people of God, all the people of God, know that they have been begotten again unto a lively hope, would have them sing of the assurance of their everlasting salvation.

* * * * *

We have been begotten again unto a lively hope. The apostle here is speaking of our regeneration. That we are born or begotten *again* is implied in the word *regeneration*, although the word as it appears in the original emphasizes the idea of being born from above. Of course, our regeneration is a being born again and also a being born again from above. We are born *again*. Hence, this is our second birth. Our first birth was from below. The organism into which we were born the first time, whereof Adam is the head, is a dead body or organism. Because of Adam, our representative or judicial head and also our organic head, we are born, by nature, dead in sin and in trespasses, guilty before God, and spiritually full of sin and darkness. This truth belongs to the heritage which the Lord has entrusted to our churches. May we never lose it! By nature we are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can we be. We are dead in sins and in trespasses. Hence, to enter into the kingdom of God we must be born again. And we must be born again from above. There is no power upon the earth which can possibly regenerate us. There is no power of human persuasion, no invitation through a general, well-meaning offer of the gospel (as is generally and erroneously proclaimed today) which can translate a dead sinner out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God and of His dear Son. May we ever maintain this!

This regeneration is the work of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The author of this regeneration is the Triune God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ He caused Christ to be born of the virgin Mary, enabled Him to suffer and die as our atoning Head upon the cross of Calvary, suffering in perfect consciousness the eternal wrath and indignation of God, raised Him

from the dead and exalted Him into the highest heavens with all power, glory, and honour. It is this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who regenerates us again and from above. To Him alone must we ascribe all praise and honour. He alone is the God of our salvation.

Besides, we have been born again and from above unto a lively hope. This lively or living hope is therefore the fruit of this regenerating work of the living God. Although the word *hope* in Scripture has also an objective meaning, referring to the glory of heaven as it will be realized in the new heavens and the new earth, here in I Peter 1:3 the word must be understood subjectively, as living in our hearts, the fruit of regeneration. This hope is certain, never doubts, is the operation of a firm, clear faith, even as it, with sure confidence, takes hold of the future. Of this hope the apostle declares rather peculiarly, that it is a living hope. The hope of the children of God is a living hope, a hope that is characterized by life, comes forth out of life, and is itself a power of eternal life, the principle of the life of the heavenly perfection of God's covenant. The hope of the world is a dead hope (the world, of course, also hopes) — this hope is vain, always puts to shame. Fact is, the hope of the world comes up out of death, is the fruit of darkness, is actually death and darkness itself. Hence, the hope of the world always therefore cleaves to death, seeks sin and death. But the hope of the elect strangers, the people of God, is a living hope. It comes out of life; the fruit of regeneration; this hope itself lives, is the principle of the love of God in our hearts. And it is also a living hope because it cleaves unto eternal life, reaches out unto the eternal renewal of all things, is the expectation of the crown of righteousness and of victory, gives the child of God peace, courage, and strength in the midst of all struggle and battle, to look forward, in the midst of suffering, to the blessed day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

We are begotten again, we read, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the means of our regeneration.

We must understand this resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We understand that Jesus, arising from the dead, did not simply return to this earthly life. He did not arise, for example, as did Lazarus, who later died a second time. Jesus, however, arose into heavenly life, went through the grave, did not return from it to this life. He said farewell forever to this earthly life, is now exalted above all that is earthly.

This, however, is not all. Jesus did not merely arise as a man from the dead. It was no individual that arose from that grave. But Jesus Christ is risen

from the dead. His Name is Christ, the Anointed, anointed of God Triune to be the Head of Zion, standing at the head of all the brethren. And He is Christ Jesus, the anointed Saviour, Jehovah as the God of our salvation.

This headship of the Saviour must be understood in a two-fold sense. He is, first of all, our Head in a juridical, legal sense. As such He represents us, assumes our place, our state is reckoned unto Him, but also His merits are ours, according to divine imputation, merited for us. He is also our Head in the organic sense. We, therefore, stand with Him in a living relation. He lives and also we live, as Head and as the members out of and through Him.

Now we can readily understand how we have been begotten or born again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, or, literally, through this resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we can understand why this resurrection of Jesus Christ stands in the center of the preaching of the apostle. On the one hand, this is true as far as the Saviour's resurrection from the dead itself is concerned — Jesus' resurrection is centrally the resurrection of the church. Christ's resurrection is the manifestation of the fact that Zion has the right to eternal life — what Christ receives belongs also to His people. But, what is more, the resurrection of Christ is also the life's principle of our resurrection. Christ arose, not merely to possess that life for Himself. But He arose, too, that He might pour out His life into us. Christ's resurrection is, therefore, in principle our resurrection, our life. Raising Christ from the dead the Triune God centrally realized in Christ eternal life for us, and He raised Him to be the glorified Head of Zion to pour out that life into us.

So the congregation of God is begotten again. God has begotten us and that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This means nothing less than that the resurrection of Christ is the means effecting this regeneration in us. This can be understood only if we bear in mind that the resurrection of Christ, as realized in our hearts, effects our regeneration. When this resurrection of Christ, out of the death of deaths, the deaths of all the people of God, out of the curse of our sin into the glorious communion of God's covenant, is realized in us, becomes a fact in us; when that resurrected Saviour works in our heart, dwells there, then you have the regeneration, the quickening of the people of God. And, therefore, this regeneration has for its fruit the living hope. Indeed, this work of God's grace is not merely the reviving of the dead sinner, merely restoring to us our former state of obedience and life which we had in Adam. But the elect strangers are begotten again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Im-

manuel. That resurrection of Christ was heavenly. And the life in us is now heavenly. And, therefore, we have been begotten again through this resurrection of Christ Jesus unto a living hope, the hope of life heavenly and immortal.

* * * * *

We have been begotten again, we read, according to His abundant mercy. The mercy is the source of this wonderful work of God.

The mercy of God is an operation of His love. When the object of that love of God finds itself in misery, then this love reveals itself as mercy, that is, as an inner urge of hearty sympathy and pity to deliver the object of that love out of that misery. This is surely true of the love of God. The Lord loves His children eternally. For a while these children are in great misery. So the love of God reaches out to them as an urge of great mercy. The Lord must deliver His children.

And this mercy is abundant. What the apostle means is that this mercy has a great content. God reveals this great, rich, abundant mercy when He quickens and delivers them through regeneration. We are begotten again according to, in harmony with, the wonderful love of God. What an abundant mercy! Fact is, we are dead by nature. This mercy of God does not merely quicken us, but it works in us a living hope, the principle of eternal, heavenly life. It gives us the forgiveness of all our sins, leads us not merely out of death, but into heaven. It is an *abundant* mercy; hence, we have such a rich regeneration. Soon this rich mercy will wash all tears from our eyes, we shall receive double for all our suffering, and it will give us a glory everlasting and incomparable.

And the purpose of all this? This: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must praise God, speak well of Him, declare His greatness. And the text clearly teaches us that we must bless God the Father exactly in the virtue of His abundant mercy. This includes everything. This means that our misery, our death, had a place in God's eternal wisdom. This explains our alienage, our suffering, our persecution in the midst of the world. Why all this misery? That all things may culminate in the praise of God's mercy, in His redeeming love. God alone could save us, nothing else. To Him be all the praise and the glory, now and forevermore.

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

Editor's Notes

New Feature. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a new feature: a directory of all of the Protestant Reformed Churches, together with their locations, their time of services, and a telephone contact number. This directory will not appear in every issue, but will appear a few times per year. It is placed for the convenience of our readers who may be traveling in various parts of the U.S. or Canada, as well as for any non-Protestant Reformed readers who might wish to visit one of our churches.

Later we hope to publish a directory of our Protestant Reformed "Outreach" in which will be included the addresses of our Home Missions.

* * * * *

Special Issue. This is the first of our three scheduled special issues for the current volume-year. In it we begin a projected series on "The Order of Salvation." We welcome as guest writers in this issue the Rev. Robert C. Harbach and the Rev. Carl J. Haak. HCH

EDITORIALS

A Little Lesson In Dogmatics

As was stated in my Editor's Notes, this issue is the first in a planned series on "The Order of Salvation," sometimes referred to in dogmatics by its Latin name, the *Ordo Salutis*. And in Reformed dogmatics this "Order of Salvation" forms the chief contents of the entire fourth main division of dogmatics, namely, Soteriology.

"Now, prof," I hear someone say, "don't throw around those big terms; you'll go way over my head. Remember, you're writing for the *Standard Bearer*; you're not teaching dogmatics at seminary."

Well, let me give you a little lesson in dogmatics, or Reformed doctrine. Or rather, let me refresh your memory about a few things which at least many of you must have learned in catechism at one time or another.

First of all, then, there is Soteriology, the doctrine concerning *salvation*. This is the fourth of the six main divisions of dogmatics. Let us fit it in the scheme: 1) The doctrine concerning God (Theology). 2) The doctrine concerning man (Anthropology). 3) The doctrine concerning Christ (Christology). 4) The doctrine concerning salvation (Soteriology).

5) The doctrine concerning the church (Ecclesiology). 6) The doctrine concerning the last things (Eschatology).

In the second place, however, we must not think that in this neat scheme we have six equal divisions. For the last five divisions are really to be viewed as *subordinate* to the first division, Theology. In other words, in all of these divisions we are really dealing with the doctrine concerning God, with the knowledge of the God of our salvation. Thus, Anthropology is indeed the doctrine of man, but it is concerned with man as a work of God and in relation to God. Christology is indeed concerning Christ as the Son of God in the flesh, but as the revelation of the God of our salvation. So, too, Ecclesiology is about the church, but that church as the realization of God's eternal purpose of election and as the perfecting of God's tabernacle, where He dwells with His people in covenant fellowship. And Eschatology deals with the final and full revelation of Jesus Christ and with the perfection of all things, but only as the finishing and perfecting of the works of God.

Now the same is true of Soteriology. It is con-

cerned with the doctrine of man's salvation, but with that salvation as the *work of God*. It "treats of the work of God through Christ whereby He realizes in the hearts of the elect His covenant, by making them partakers of all the benefits of that covenant as they have been merited by Jesus Christ our Lord," (H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 437).

It is precisely at this point that the Reformed faith is distinctive. Scripture and our Reformed confessions emphasize that this work of salvation is from beginning to end the work of *God*, and of *God alone*. Pelagianism, among other things, taught that man is still capable by nature of obeying the law and entering into eternal life through his own work. Grace is only assisting grace. Semi-pelagianism holds the same position principally, though in a more subtle way. While it spoke of quickening and assisting grace whereby man might convert himself to his own justification, it also taught that man must assent to and cooperate with that grace, and he is able to reject it. Synergism, taught by Philip Melancthon in the early history of Lutheranism, believes in the possibility of salvation for all men and teaches that the will of man cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation. This became the historic position of Lutheranism. Arminianism is principally Semi-pelagian, as our Canons of Dordt also insist, and teaches that grace is resistible, so that it depends upon man, not God, whether he will receive that grace or not. It also denied the perseverance of the saints, and taught that saving grace may be lost.

Over against all these the Reformed faith insists that salvation is from beginning to end the work of the God of our salvation in Christ, and not in any sense the work of man. God through Christ by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ sovereignly and efficaciously applies unto His elect people all the benefits which Christ merited for them. And this is the plain teaching of Scripture. Romans 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Or again, Ephesians 1:3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" From God through Christ all the spiritual benefits of salvation are imparted unto and flow into the elect through the operation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.

Meanwhile, we should not forget that the blessed

truth of the gospel is greater and richer than any system of dogmatics and any system of arrangement that we may devise. Thus, for example, from a certain point of view, all of what we include under the doctrine of salvation (Soteriology) may also be classified as the doctrine of Christ (Christology). For rather commonly a distinction is made — perhaps you recall this from your own catechetical instruction — between the work of Christ *for* us (His incarnation, His suffering all His lifetime, His atoning death, His resurrection, His exaltation at God's right hand) and the work of Christ *in* us (His imparting to us all the blessings of salvation). But, you see, the work of Christ *in* us is that which is included in the doctrine of salvation (Soteriology) and includes all the blessings of salvation which are included in the so-called Order of Salvation. Or from still another point of view, this doctrine of salvation may be construed as the doctrine of the church (Ecclesiology): for it is through the imparting of the blessings of salvation, and that, too, in connection with the means of grace, that the Son of God by His Spirit and Word gathers His church. Or from still another point of view, it may be viewed as the doctrine of the last things (Eschatology): for that doctrine of our salvation after all includes our final glorification and the life everlasting, but the latter are always treated, of course, under the doctrine of the last things.

So you see that the truth of the gospel is always greater and richer than any system which we may devise. The system is only for the purpose of helping us to understand something of the riches of the blessed truth of the gospel of our salvation. And thus it is with our proposed series of special issues also: they purpose to help us to understand and to appreciate what great things God has wrought in our salvation!

HCH

*During this busy
Holiday Season
take the time to
read & study the
Standard Bearer!*

The Order of Salvation

As we stated earlier, the subject of the Order of Salvation is going to be the subject of our next several special issues. We must, therefore, say a few words about this Order of Salvation.

First of all, what is meant by it?

The order of salvation is the arrangement or order in which the various blessings of salvation are applied to the elect, but in himself lost and dead, sinner.

In the second place, what is that order?

Through the centuries there have been various suggestions made in this respect. Some have suggested that saving faith is first. Others have insisted that the calling is first. Still others have held that justification is first. We shall not enter into a lengthy discussion of the rights and wrongs of the various orders which have been suggested. This would take us too far afield. Permit me to answer this question very briefly by quoting the conclusion which Herman Hoeksema reached in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 450, 451: "We must therefore keep to the subjective line of the application of the salvation in Christ. It is also necessary to distinguish between what is wrought in our subconsciousness and what is wrought in the consciousness of the sinner. In this regard we can certainly speak of and distinguish between regeneration in the narrowest sense and in the broader sense of the word. In the latter sense regeneration includes calling and even conversion. In the first sense no one can ever see the kingdom of God without being born again: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3:3). On the other hand, we can also speak of a regeneration through the Word of God: 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth' (James 1:18). Through the calling in the fullest sense of the word the regenerated sinner is translated before his consciousness from darkness into the marvellous light of God. Through the same calling he attains to a conscious faith, to the consciousness of his justification, to the adoption of children and peace with God. And, once more, through the same calling by the Word he is also sanctified and enabled to bear fruit unto good works. Bearing all this in mind, we reach the following conclusion in regard to the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation): 1) regeneration; 2) calling; 3) faith; 4) conversion; 5) justification; 6) sanctification; 7) preservation and perseverance; 8) glorifica-

tion." And this is the order which we will follow in our special issues, with the exception, of course, that glorification (which belongs, after all, to the doctrine of the last things) will not be included.

This raises a third question which we must briefly consider, namely: how is this order to be understood, as an order of time or an order of logic?

In answer to this question, we may note, in the first place, that it is easy to see that there is a time-aspect to this order. From a certain point of view one blessing follows another in time. Without getting into a complicated discussion of this matter, let me point out that this time aspect becomes very evident both in connection with our preservation and perseverance and our glorification. Our preservation and perseverance continue to the end of our life on earth; and our glorification certainly takes place following upon our preservation and following upon all the other blessings of salvation. It is the last great blessing of grace! And yet, in the second place, it should be evident that the order is one of ideas and logic rather than one of time. For in the deepest sense of the word, all the other blessings of salvation are implied already in our regeneration. For in our regeneration we receive the gift of *eternal life*! That implies and includes all the blessings of grace even unto our final glorification.

Finally, we may raise the question: why should we study and contemplate this order of salvation?

It really should not be necessary to ask this question. The answer is, in the first place, that the child of God may learn to understand something of the wonderful riches of his own salvation, of the work which God works in him. In the second place, that he may learn to understand *himself* as a child of God saved by grace, may learn to understand his utter dependence upon sovereign grace. And, in the third place, that he may learn to show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. For it is for this very purpose that God called us! (I Peter 2:9, 10) HCH

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

Passed From Death Unto Life

John A. Heys

Every detail of our salvation was eternally planned and decreed in God's counsel, and thus every aspect and detail of that salvation was decided by God before a single creature was brought into being. That which is required for us to obtain the right to that salvation, namely, the blotting out of our sins, and the presentation to God of a complete fulfillment of His holy law on our behalf, took place at the cross of Christ, and thus long before we were born.

Nevertheless at an eternally decreed moment of time in our lives the work of salvation is begun *in* us. Sovereign, eternal, and unchangeable election unto salvation, and that cross of Christ, took place *outside* of us. These belong to our salvation, and without them there is absolutely no hope of salvation for us. But because of the very nature of salvation, there must be a work *in* us. Do we not read in John 3:3 that we cannot even see the kingdom of God until and unless we have been born again? And being born again is not something that takes place outside of us but in us. All the wonders and blessings of salvation we are going to enjoy cannot be received and experienced until and unless we are born again. And that work of God whereby salvation is begun in and brought into us is called regeneration. Regeneration, then, is that work of God's grace whereby we begin to taste our salvation for the first time: that is, whereby for the first time we have the work of salvation begun *in* us.

That rich and comforting truth is presented to us in Scripture in several ways and by means of different words other than the word regeneration. In fact, the word regeneration appears in Holy Writ only twice. And the first time it appears, it does not refer to our salvation from sin and its punishment. In Matthew 19:28 it refers to the recreation of heaven and earth wherein we will enjoy fully the salvation of our bodies and souls. The only time the word appears in Scripture as referring to salvation from sin and its punishment is in Titus 3:5, where we read, "Not by works which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

Now the Dutch word for regeneration, namely *wedergeboorte*, presents to those who know the Dutch language a clearer picture of what regeneration is. The term begins with the word "again," and is followed by the word "birth." This is in harmony with the truth in John 3:3 that except a man be born again he cannot even see the kingdom of God. Regeneration is a rebirth. It is implanting in us of a new life. Therefore it is the beginning of a new life in us, if you will, the beginning of salvation *in* us. And there are many, many passages in Holy Writ where regeneration is called a rebirth. However, Scripture presents the truth of regeneration in several other ways.

In Deuteronomy 30:6 we read: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Here regeneration is not only presented as a work in the heart, but one that brings forth an entirely new activity, namely loving God with all the heart. In Ezekiel 36:26 we read, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put in you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Here again the idea is that something new, something we did not have before, is put in our hearts.

The New Testament presents regeneration very richly with many words that speak of regeneration bringing us a new life. Besides all the passages which speak of one being born again, we find Paul in Romans 6:13 speaking of "those that are alive from the dead." In II Corinthians 5:17 we are called "new creatures"; and in Ephesians 2:10 we are called "God's workmanship created unto good works." Surely being created means that we get something we never had before, something that did not exist in us.

Now to appreciate all this we must bear in mind that salvation is more than deliverance from the punishment of sin which we deserve. In fact if that is all that belongs to salvation, and we are to get enraptured only about the wonderful life our bodies will have, then we are only interested in what every unbeliever, the devil and all the fallen angels, would like to have. No, regeneration is a work that God performs inside of us so that we can

begin to flee from sin and to love Him with all our hearts.

Sad to say all this has been denied; and universally regeneration has been presented as nothing more than reformation. That is the Pelagian and Arminian view which is so widely taught today. That we are spiritually dead by nature is denied. God does not give us something we do not have, but by the preaching moves us to live differently with the life we had from birth. We do what we did not do before, but not because we were given a new life. We are instructed, encouraged and urged by the preaching to make use of what always resided in our souls but we failed to use. Regeneration is no realization of a basic change *in* us but a change of conduct with what we always had but did not use. It is working in man a change of mind and will but not a giving to him the power and desire to do so. The power is there, so Pelagianism maintains. What is needed is that man is moved to use what he already has.

All this is in plain violation of what Scripture teaches us. As already pointed out, Paul in II Corinthians 5:17 speaks of the child of God being a new creature, not merely one with a new spiritual life-style. He also in Philippians 2:13 states, "For it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." Clearly this verse teaches us that God works something new in us, and does not merely move something that is in us to get going. What is more, it speaks of God working this new life, and with it that will to do of His good pleasure. And since He works it in us, the plain meaning is that we do not have it of ourselves and by our first birth. To underscore this truth is the word of I Corinthians 4:7, where Paul writes, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Notice first of all that this passage teaches us that there is definitely a difference between those born the first time and those born again. A spiritual difference is what Paul has in mind. And we had better also consider the fact that he speaks of us having received something others do not have, something all men have not from their first birth. The difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that the believer received the gift of a new life, while the unbeliever has only the life he received as a descendant from fallen Adam. And the word of God stands: that Adam died the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit. He died spiritually. Yes, physical death began in his body that day, but that day spiritual death was complete. That is why God stated that He would put enmity in Adam's heart and in all the hearts of the seed of the woman. Adam did not have it. He had nothing good to give to his descendants. And this becomes plain in his first son Cain.

Adam and Eve received a new spiritual life. They were regenerated, and this became evident in the instruction which they gave to Abel. The difference between Cain and Abel is due to the fact that Abel received a new life and Cain did not.

The preaching of the gospel can never have a spiritually good effect on a man until and unless he is born again. That some believe and that others do not is due to the fact that it pleases God to give some a new spiritual life and not others. Some see the things of the kingdom of God, and others do not, because God regenerates some and not others.

A very beautiful statement in the Reformed creeds about regeneration is found in the Canons of Dordrecht, Chapter III-IV. Article 12, where we read: "And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture, and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid."

Here, plainly, we have what is called regeneration in the narrower sense. (Sometimes regeneration is spoken of also in a wider sense.) But here take note of the fact that the Canons speak of something new, of being taken out of death and being given life; and that it all comes from God. We do not assist God. He works it in us. He does not bring it to us. We do not reach out and accept what He invites us to get. He works a new life in us; and working in us does not simply imply that it was not there at our first birth. It means that God places in us that which goes against the grain as we are by nature. God does not place it in front of us. He works it in us. It is His work that explains that we can and do believe. We are not hungering and thirsting to will and do that which pleases God, and then He sets it before us to take and to satisfy a desire that began in us. Rather, very plainly, Paul teaches us here that we do not have the will, and therefore the doing, of what pleases God and must be given it by God. By the work of regeneration God implants in us a new life. Regeneration is for us a passing from spiritual death unto spiritual life. Jesus Himself said that in John 5:24.

But as stated in passing a moment ago, we can speak also of regeneration in a wider sense. In that sense regeneration includes the calling, conversion, and faith, which stand in very close connection with regeneration as a rebirth. And there is no denying of the fact that as important as that rebirth, or implanting of a new life in us is, it is essential that we be called, converted, and engrafted into Christ by a true and living faith.

We can understand this by bringing before our minds the figure of a seed being implanted in the ground. That seed has life in it. But to grow and bring forth a plant and fruit, it requires moisture in

the soil and warmth of the sun, as well as the implanting of that seed. Without these that seed will remain dormant. And if this continues for a long time, that seed will die. If there is moisture but not heat, it will rot.

This can never, no never happen with regeneration. God Who regenerates sends the moisture and rain in the right proportions and causes what He has implanted to become active and bring forth fruits of righteousness. The moisture and warmth of His Word causes the child of God in whom that seed has been planted to take hold of Christ as his Saviour. And it does make sense to say that regeneration includes all that which God does to the child of His, which activates this new life. And we may then correctly speak of regeneration in that wider sense.

We find this truth beautifully stated in the Belgic Confession, Article XXIV. in these words, "We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation

of the Holy Spirit, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin."

Plainly this Reformed confession presents regeneration as including the calling, that is, "the hearing of the Word of God," and the fruit of regeneration, namely, living "a new life and freeing him from the bondage of sin," which plainly is conversion and sanctification. And though the article does not literally speak of the engrafting into Christ by a true faith, that too can be included in regeneration in the wider sense.

But the basic truth of regeneration is that we who are born dead in trespasses and sins are quickened, that is, made alive spiritually by a work that in every sense of the word, and from its very beginning, is God's work of grace in us and upon us. Regeneration is a truth of Scripture that teaches us that we owe God thanks for causing us to pass from spiritual death unto spiritual life.

Regeneration and Total Depravity

Thomas C. Miersma

The truth of God's regenerating grace, that spiritual renewal and new birth which God works in our hearts by His Spirit, affords us as believers a rich measure of comfort and consolation. As justification is the answer of God's grace to our guilt before the judgment seat of God, so also regeneration, as the first work of God's grace in our hearts, is the answer of God to our spiritual and moral pollution, to that total depravity of nature which is ours according to our first birth after the flesh.

Man is born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). This spiritual depravity is rooted in our nature which we received from our parents, and ultimately from our first parents, Adam and Eve, through the fall. The result is that we are born after the flesh, according to Scripture,

and are fleshly or carnal. It is thus that we confess with David in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." By that first and natural birth we are born spiritually dead, our nature is utterly polluted with sin. We are prone by our sinful fleshly nature to hate God and our neighbor, and are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined unto all evil (Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A's 5 and 8). Man who was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, became through the fall a dead sinner, devoid of God's image and spiritually of his father, the devil. He is and continues to be a man after the fall, a man with a mind and heart and will. But he has become carnal man. Spiritually he is wholly ruined. His mind is darkened and blinded spiritually, so much so that he can neither see nor enter the kingdom (John 3:3-5). His will and all the desires of his heart are corrupt, so that he wills to sin, delights in iniquity and is in bondage to sin and the devil. In

Thomas C. Miersma is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

the depths of his heart, the very spiritual center of his nature and out of which are the issues of life, enmity and hatred against God are found and reign in him and over him. That spiritual and moral pollution pervades the whole of our nature as carnal man, as born after the flesh, so that it fills every part of our nature completely. We are depraved by nature and the extent of that depravity is total and complete in every respect. Nor is it the case that carnal man merely does that which is sinful, but he is incapable and unable to do any good in himself. He is dead, spiritually and morally.

It is exactly in the face of the reality of our spiritual and total depravity by nature that the Word of God sets before us the wonder of God's grace in regeneration. By that work of God which is wrought in the depths of our hearts we are born again. This birth is a spiritual resurrection from spiritual death involving a spiritual renewal of our nature at its center. God by His grace takes away the hardened stony heart of our depraved nature and gives us a heart of flesh, a heart soft and pliable, to love Him and do His will (Ezekiel 11:19, 20). By regeneration God circumcises and cuts away the pollution of our sinful heart (Deuteronomy 30:6). By it He washes and cleanses us by His Spirit (Titus 3:5), baptizing us with His Spirit into Christ's death and raising us up by the power of His resurrection that we might live a new and holy life (Romans 6:3, 4; I Peter 1:3). This is a spiritual, heavenly rebirth so that we are no more *by nature*, but are *by grace*, no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit, having been born of the Spirit (John 3:3-5).

This change which God works in the depths of our hearts does a number of things. It takes away the root of depravity in our hearts, writing there the love of God. It gives us eyes to see and enter the kingdom, ears to hear and believe the gospel, and spiritual feet to begin to walk before God in all good works. It gives unto us the power of faith as a seed planted in the heart which under the preaching of the gospel grows into the conscious activity of faith through the Spirit. In its essential character it involves a fundamental spiritual renewal of our nature at its center. As such the regenerated child of God is become spiritual man. He is no more totally depraved: the depravity of his nature has been cut off at its root, in the heart. He is made a new creature in Christ and has put on Christ that He might dwell in him by His Spirit. The elect regenerated child of God is no more dead by living; he has been quickened. Moreover out of the fountain of God's grace and by the continual operation of the Spirit within him he is continually sustained in that life, renewed and strengthened. He shall never die (John 11:25, 26).

That work of God which is begun in us immediately as a creative work of God in our hearts, without the use of means, is objective in character. It is a change first of all in our nature, not in our experience. Under God's grace, the call of God by the preaching of the gospel, it bears the fruit, however, of a new life in Christ in our experience.

This does not mean that that work of God is perfect in us. We are yet *in* the flesh though we are not *after* the flesh. The work of regeneration in our hearts is a spiritual renewal of our nature. That renewal must yet be perfected and will be when also our bodies are raised from the dead in the resurrection. Then the earthly and fleshly tabernacle in which we now dwell will become the glorified spiritual body of the resurrection. It is exactly this reality which leads to the struggle between the old man of sin and the new man in Christ, between the flesh and the spirit in the life of a child of God. From the viewpoint of eternal glory, that principle of regeneration and its activity is a small beginning, manifested in the small beginning of new obedience which is ours (Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 114), but from the viewpoint of what we were by nature it is life from the dead.

It is in the light of that objective and unchangeable gracious reality of regeneration and the presence also of our sinful flesh that we must also understand our own experience of this grace of God in its power within us. The dead do not know they are dead. It is the living, regenerated child of God who has the mind of Christ, the light of His grace and spirit, who says from the heart, ". . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22, 23). He it is who beholds that he is dead in himself, though he be no more in himself. It is the living who know that they were once dead, and would be dead in themselves. The spiritual knowledge of our sin and misery belongs to the fruit of regeneration, wrought by the preaching of the Word, and God's grace working by the law upon the regenerated heart. The result is that while the regenerated child of God is no more dead, nor is he totally depraved, yet we may well feel as if we were so, for sin is present with us and depravity, though not total, cleaves to us, for in our old man of the flesh dwelleth no good thing (Romans 7:18). It is important therefore in this matter of regeneration carefully to distinguish the reality of it and our experience of its fruit. Failure to do so can lead to and has led to the error of antinomianism, to the idea that the blessings of salvation are only imputed unto us legally but leave our nature unchanged so that we remain totally depraved and dead in sin. It can

lead also to spiritual discouragement in the Christian life because we behold continually the greatness of our sin and seem to see so little of the life of Christ within us. We are not to confuse, therefore, total depravity with the knowledge of our depravity by nature in our regenerated experience.

It is not the unregenerated dead sinner, the unclean in heart, but rather the regenerated child of God who sees and beholds his misery and sin, the pollution also of his flesh, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness and life. It is he who has been

purified in heart, who beholding his sins prays with David in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." It is he who is born from above who exclaims with Paul in Romans 7:14, ". . . I am carnal, sold under sin . . ." and longs to be delivered from the flesh. For though depravity always cleaves unto us, and our conscience testifies that we are still inclined to all evil, yet in Christ we are righteous before God and justified, and by the grace of regeneration we are made new creatures in Christ, to live out of Him.

Regeneration and Assurance

Carl J. Haak

We can know our regeneration. We can be assured of our being born from above and thus be assured that "now are we the children of God" (I John 3:2). Assured that we are born again by the will of God, we will also be convinced of the love of God towards us (I John 4:16), and possess the perfect hope that one day we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:3). Assured of our regeneration, we will also live in holiness and as dear children be imitators of God and walk in love (Eph. 5:1).

One can know his regeneration. Regeneration is an act of God which is known in our consciousness, in our experience. Assurance of salvation is part and parcel of the experience of all who are born again. The regenerated in this life "are enabled to believe with the heart, and love their Savior" (Canons 3+4, Art. 13).

This truth, namely, that assurance is always given to the regenerated, is an important one to grasp. Often the question surfaces in the Christian life: how can I be sure? It is a question which assumes many different forms. At times it can be asked in bitterness and doubt — doubt concerning our own salvation. At other times lethargy and indifference grips the soul, and we ask whether Christ is real to me, whether I am truly a Christian.

Sorrows and depression can cover us as a dark, stifling blanket, cutting off all light; and God seems far away. We repeat with the Psalmist, "The thought of God gave me no peace, But rather made my fears increase:". Questions such as: "How is my heart towards God?" "Am I interested in Christ?" leave us unsettled. There is inward emptiness. Things are not right. We wonder whether God dwells in us and we in Him (I John 4:15). Can we have assurance? Does assurance belong to every child of God?

Yes. Assurance is part of regeneration. Assurance is the conviction of faith that we are of the truth (I John 3:19): that Christ has died for me and I belong to Him as His possession (Rom. 14:8). It is to be persuaded that He will keep me unto that day (II Tim. 1:12). It is to possess our souls in peace. Christian assurance leads both to comfort and a daily, sincere, godly walk of life, in which the hands do not hang down in despair (Heb. 12:12), but are strengthened unto every good work (II Thess. 2:17).

Now all that assurance, as by faith we lay hold of Christ, is included in God's work of regeneration. When He regenerates, God imparts the grace of assurance, that is: every one regenerated is brought to the assurance of his salvation. Those regenerated by the Spirit of God are brought by the Spirit to the personal confidence of belonging to Christ (I Cor. 6:20). No, it does not mean that their lives are

devoid of repeated struggles, weaknesses, falls into temptation, sins, etc. (Canons 5, Art. 5). The regenerated Child of God experiences trials a-plenty and lamentable falls into folly. But God does preserve the regenerated in the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and membership in Christ (Canons 5, Art. 9). By the way, there is much comfort worked by an understanding of the creeds, especially the Canons of Dordt, which are written in a pastoral manner. Have you read them? Can you use them both as sword to defend the truth of sovereign grace and as spiritual balm to soothe your troubled heart from fears and doubts?

We state as a spiritual fact that the regenerated are given the assurance of salvation in this life, not so much from our experience that this is so; but on the basis of the Word of God that tells us it is so. Christian experience is important, but it is not the infallible rule. Our experience of the Christian life is interpreted by the Scripture and must conform to it.

Jesus meant nothing less than this by His words; "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and wither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). This certainly means that regeneration is sovereignly worked, for no man regulates the wind nor directs it, but God causes it to blow; so regeneration is not regulated or controlled by man but by God's own power. But the Savior's words also teach us that God's work of regeneration performed in us becomes known to us in this life; we are brought to the spiritual realization that we have been regenerated. Though the wind cannot be regulated by man, though it is mysterious in its nature, man knowing nothing of what controls it, yet the presence of the wind is unmistakable. The effects of the wind are plainly evidenced in the earth. The presence of the wind blowing upon your face is felt and known. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. God's secret but powerful work of quickening us who are dead lies beyond the reach of our understanding (Canons 3+4, Art. 13). But the transforming results of God's work are plain. Regeneration, though profound, is not a work of God which lies hidden in the heart, unknown to us. The grace of regeneration will always become evident to the believer. We will not be born again and remain unconscious of it in this life, but always it is something which the Spirit makes known to us. As a mother feels the life conceived in her by its stirrings and evidences, so the child of God is brought to know his new birth by evidences: namely, sorrow for sin, love for Christ, submission to God, etc.

Still more, we must remember that regeneration is part of the Golden Chain (or Unbreakable Chain)

of our salvation (Rom. 8:29-30). We cannot discuss this in detail, but regeneration may be called in a certain sense the first work of God in the saved sinner, but a work necessarily followed by conversion, faith, sanctification, and glorification. God does not start a work and leave it uncompleted. When He starts by implanting the new man in Christ in us (Eph. 4:24), He continues to lead us to conscious faith, repentance and ASSURANCE of salvation. Philippians 1:6 says this so beautifully: "Being confident of this one thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Or we find the same in Psalm 138:8: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

Regeneration is the beginning of God's work in us which must include assurance. Therefore we believe and confess that the regenerated are brought to assurance, i.e., God will and does make known to us that we are His begotten children in Christ, and thus heirs of salvation (Rom. 8:16).

But how do I know that I am regenerate? Perhaps you struggle with the question of assurance? It may be that you are plagued with crippling doubts at times, or experience such trials which would shake you from the full assurance of hope? (Heb. 6:11)

We may have the assurance of our regeneration by knowing the spiritual fruit of the new birth in our lives. They are:

1. The regenerated heart is made soft to the Word of God (Ez. 36:26, 27). The mark of the unregenerate is a heart which is as a stone to God's Word and as a sponge to sin. The Word of God does not penetrate the old hard heart. The Word bounces off and does not strike to the heart to move one to cry out: "God be merciful! I thank God!" But it remains hard, indifferent, careless and finally hostile to the Word of God. The regenerated heart is made soft to the Word; made as a sponge to the Word to soak it up. It can be penetrated by the Word and brought under conviction (II Tim. 1:12).

2. The regenerated heart is moved to godly sorrow over sin (II Cor. 7:10). Again, the unregenerate knows nothing of true sorrow over sin before God, only a self-pity over consequences. But the regenerated heart is a burdened heart, a heart which knows the guilt of sin, a heart which is appalled when it sees how vile flesh is.

3. The regenerated heart delights in heavenly things (Col. 3:1-4). The affections of the born again heart are directed toward God and His kingdom and the beauties of salvation in Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" is now their joyous confession. The love of God is their governing prin-

ciple. Now their language is "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Ps. 139:17). And again, "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee" (Is. 26:8).

4. The regenerated heart is submissive to God's will. In our depraved state our will is rebellious and says: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" But He worketh in us both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13). The regenerated one's desire is to be subject to Christ and obey Him. "Have thine own way Lord!" Oh yes, there is always the struggle against our own wills. So often when we pray, "Thy will be done," we really mean, "Thy will be done as long as it is my will, my way." By grace the regenerated pray with their Lord: "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

These four will be found in all those regenerated by the Spirit of Christ. Experiencing them we are

assured that we are sons and daughters of God and eagerly await the day when He shall appear and we shall be made like Him.

Do you possess the assurance of regeneration? Remember concerning doubts and fears that we can be so soft with ourselves. Our flesh loves to wallow in doubt and sit in self-pity, rather than take up the Word of God and read, read, read until our hearts are comforted. The regenerated are assured of the new birth not by a mysterious voice from heaven, not by some emotional happening interpreted to be a sign from God, but from "faith in God's promises, which He hath most abundantly revealed in the Word for our comfort . . ." (Canons 5, Art. 10).

Thanks be to God for the new life in Christ, graciously given and certainly made known to us. Praise be to God that we who are regenerated by the Spirit of God are "enabled to believe with the heart, and love their Savior" (Canons 3 + 4, Art. 13).

The Arminian Conception of Regeneration

Robert C. Harbach

The theme, in the title above, we, in our Protestant Reformed Churches, understand to be in sharp contrast to the Calvinistic (or the Reformed) conception of regeneration. It is the latter point of view we must and always do presuppose in our theological stance and thinking. So, at the outset, we quote from Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, out of the article, Regeneration, p. 395: Regeneration "is an *irresistible*, or rather *invincible* work of God's grace, Eph. 3:8 . . . It is an *instantaneous* (immediate, RCH) act, for there can be no medium between life and death It is a *complete* act, and perfect in its kind; a change of the whole man, 2 Cor. 5:17 It is a (divine, RCH) act, the blessings of which we can never finally lose, Jn. 13:1." The Arminian will not tolerate this conception.

Robert C. Harbach is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

His conception is documented in what has been called "a textbook of Wesleyan Arminian theology," had in Dr. Thomas N. Ralston's *Elements of Divinity*, chapter 34, entitled, "Regeneration." This book, of boasted "classic" Arminianism, states that there are conditions, and there is cooperation, in this work of God on the part of the sinner within the process of the new birth (p. 424). Some of these conditions, for example, are that we must "seek, ask, knock, come to Christ, look unto God, repent, believe, open the door of the heart, receive Christ, etc. . . . All of these are spoken of, and urged upon us, as conditions of blessings of salvation, of regeneration . . . without which (conditions) we cannot expect these blessings." Notice that there is first of all quite a list of conditions required of us, the performance of which will then be followed by the blessings and benefits of Christ's salvation. But is it not obvious from Scripture that among the

blessings of salvation it is also blessed to be able to and actually ask, seek, knock, and come to Christ? These, too, are blessings of and in salvation; so also to repent, believe, receive Christ and look unto the Lord. These are not conditions which indicate the "how to" obtain salvation. They are some of the blessings within our so great salvation.

Then Ralston asks, "are there any passages that say we cannot come, cannot believe, seek, etc.?" The question amazes us, for of course there are such Scripture passages. See Jn. 5:40; 6:44, 65; 12:39-40; Ezek. 36:26, 27. Can a heart of stone ask, seek, pray, believe, come to Jesus, or subject itself to the law of God in its incurable state of enmity against God? In its total moral inability to be so subject? Rom. 8:7; Jer. 17:9, marg. Furthermore, none of these so called "conditions" (really *blessings* in God's covenant) are "of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," (Rom. 9:16). "But," says Ralston of this verse in Romans 9, "Whoever interprets this of personal and individual regeneration can hardly have examined the passage carefully and candidly." A careful, candid look at it will bring to notice that in "it is not . . .," the "it" refers not to regeneration as such, but to the truth and mercy of unconditional election, which is the ground and guarantee of regeneration. Yet one of the main points of Arminianism is, "No unconditional election!" Then that would mean "no regeneration!" For regeneration, faith, repentance, etc., are *fruits* of election!

Another instance of conditions to regeneration Ralston finds in Ps. 51:10-12. But this would mean that getting a clean heart is a condition for having a clean heart (424-426). What the psalmist is stating here, though, is that out of a regenerated heart he confesses his double sin of adultery and murder, together with the defilement of these sins, praying for cleansing, for continuance of the consciousness of the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit of regeneration. He prays, too, for restoration, not of a lost salvation, but of the lost joy of his salvation.

To consider yet another Arminian source on this subject assigned us, we turn to Billy Graham's book, *How To Be Born Again*. Billy Graham himself does not admit so openly to being an Arminian as Ralston had done. But he certainly is at the top of the list of contemporary "evangelical" Arminians. He conceives of personal and individual regeneration as contributing and "helping to make this world a better place . . ." (145). But *this* world is not necessarily a better place because of the presence in it of regenerated souls. The true church is better for this, and those souls are the better for it. But as for "this world" — it is so incurably bad that nothing less than eternal judgment and renewal by fire is destined for it, 2 Pet. 3.

Then on page 150 of this book, Graham's Arminianism stands out more glaringly. "The context of John 3 teaches that the new birth is something that God does for man when man is willing to yield to God." Almost in the same breath he adds, as though with afterthought, or, by the way, I have to tell you, "that man is dead in trespasses and sins." That former statement of his, just quoted, is not true at all. No Scripture, including John 3, puts the will of *man* first before something (anything) *God* does! See John 1:12-13; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11. Then as for his following true statement, how is it possible for the spiritually dead to "yield to God"? Can the dead fulfil all kinds of conditions? Can the dead "accept" Jesus as Savior? Did Lazarus *as a dead* man come forth to Jesus? All other Arminian evangelists and preachers say much the same thing when speaking anent the new birth. A Pentecostal evangelist is frequently heard, these days, using such language as: God will work in you the new birth, "if you let Him." Graham put it this way, "Any person who is willing to trust Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord can receive the new birth now," (152). This is saying, in only slightly different words, "You can be born of God, if you let Him."

Involved here is actually a wicked conception of faith. It implies that faith originates with man. Some say, or imply, that every man naturally has faith; he need only be persuaded to place it in the right object. Also implied is that faith is a "condition" which God has put within the power of man to fulfil. This means that man's so called "free will" (which is really a *slave* to sin) in spiritual things (saving things) is always first. So then faith and conversion are prior to regeneration. This error flows out of the wicked doctrine that all God's saving mercies are preceded by the acquiescence and approval of the free will of man.

Graham suggests other pre-requisites unto salvation. Example: Jesus offers Himself as the power available to live a great life! Also: Christ stands at the door of your heart, but you must open it. Then the Lord will work in you the new birth (155). In fact, with respect to all these conditions, "repentance is *first*, and absolutely necessary, if we are to be born again" (160). Or, BG puts it this way, "You must make a choice — you must choose to believe" before you may experience the new birth (162). We reject this false doctrine as it is expressed in our Canons of Dort: that it is "in man's power to be regenerated or not," (III-IV, Rejection of Errors, VIII). See also Graham's book, pp. 163, 169.

How different the truth is in the plain, clear, exact wording of Scripture! First, take John, chapter 3, which is divided into two parts. The first part, verses 1-11, contains *not a word about believing*, but

deals entirely with regeneration, God's initial work of grace in the heart of the elect sinner. In His regenerating work, as this section of John 3 teaches, God alone is active; man is completely passive. The second part of the chapter, verses 12-36, is full of the activity of faith as seen in the regenerated sinner's act of believing. The relationship between these two parts of John 3 is that of the root to the fruit. Regeneration is the divinely implanted root; faith, the inevitably produced fruit. Therefore, faith cannot be a condition necessary to the realization of regeneration. Whatever Christian graces are in view, regeneration is always the cause of them; they follow regeneration as the effect.

As for John 1:12-13, notice that "as many as received Him," whenever that was, and do now, at this moment, "*believe* (present tense: continue to believe) on His name," *were* already, prior to this experience of theirs, born of God! This puts regeneration first, as the root is always first before the fruit; and *then* faith (belief) appears as the fruit, and not otherwise.

Consider John 5:24: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that *heareth* My word, and *believeth* on Him that sent Me, *hath* (keeps having: the *underscored* words, are all present tenses) everlasting life, and shall not come (comes not) into condemnation (judgment), but is passed from death unto life" (*has* passed out of death into life!). Why anyone *hears*, *believes*, and so *has* and *keeps having* (present tenses) everlasting life is because he *has* already *passed* (past tense) out of death into life! Regeneration is a spiritual resurrection, which, as these tenses show, has already occurred in the case of those who do now hear, believe, and have now, and keep on having, everlasting life. Again, regeneration is the root; and faith and the activity of faith are the fruit. These are deadly shots out of the "canon" of Scripture, which devastate the error of Arminianism. There is *very* much more ammunition in the magazine of Holy Writ. But it is hardly necessary for any more shooting at this point. After all, there is such a thing as "over-kill."

Regeneration and Sinlessness

George C. Lubbers

It is well to grasp at the outset the central point of our subject. There are the terms "regeneration" and "sinlessness." The term regeneration refers to the initial implanting of the elect sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, making him alive with Christ. This term is also called being born again, or to be born from above, or born anew (John 3:3). It is to be born of water and of the Spirit; thus only can a man or woman enter the kingdom of heaven! The term "sinlessness" refers in this context not to the natural man, but to the sinlessness of the born again Christian. In the language of the Bible sinlessness is that a man nevermore misses the mark; when sinless, he perfectly loves the Lord his God, with *all* his heart, with *all* his mind, with *all* his soul and with *all* his strength and loves his neighbor as

himself (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:34-40). Such is the great commandment in the law!

The point in this essay is whether the regenerated and spiritually renewed child of God can live a sinless life after his regeneration and before his dying in the Lord, when he shall have perfectly died unto sin and have entered into the perfection of the glory of the saints in the coming age.

To this we will answer with an unequivocal: by no means! Even after we have been ingrafted into Christ we still are taken captive by sin. We daily stumble in many things. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect man*, and able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). This no Christian has ever been able to accomplish. The mouth ever overflows from the fulness of the heart! Daily we are taught to pray: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). Jesus adds the very

arresting and sobering warning, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14, 15).

Concerning the position of the Reformed Churches concerning the sinfulness of the regenerated saints we do well to remember and also underscore the carefully worded distinction which our fathers of Dordrecht make in article 1 of the Fifth Head of Doctrine, which reads:

Whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the *dominion* and *slavery* of sin in *this* life; though not altogether from the body of sin, and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world.

Such is our position concerning the sinfulness of the perfect imperfect saints in this world! This is also the position of the Confessions in Heidelberg Catechism Questions 113, 114 (which you may look up in your own Psalter). Meanwhile it must not be forgotten nor overlooked that there are no good works of sanctification possible except in those who are justified by faith in sovereign grace and love. Thus we read in the Belgic Confession, Article 24:

We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the *bondage of sin* . . . it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith, which is called in Scripture, a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works, which God has commanded in his Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are sanctified by his grace . . . it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works; otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good, before the tree itself is good.

However, the gates of hell would ever assail this comforting truth of the Gospel of Christ. Christ already warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, didn't he? And a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. There have ever been those in the church who would try to have the saints believe that in this life they *can* already live as sinlessly as do the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). It is important to notice that the Greek perfect passive participle *teteleioomenoon* indicates that these spirits of the just have been made "perfect," in the sense that they are now in a completed state of perfection after their entrance into the presence of the firstborn church registered

in heaven's number, in the presence of the myriads of festal angels before the great white throne of God. Then we will have been perfected! We will have arrived at the complete resurrection out of the dead (Phil. 3:11).

We cannot treat very exhaustively in our refutation of the error of those who all called Perfectionists in the vocabulary of the theologians. We will need to limit ourselves to two texts to which these teachers of error appeal.

The first text which we will need to study carefully is I John 3:9: "Everyone (whosoever) is born (hath been begotten) of God *doth not commit sin*: for his seed remaineth in him: and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God." This looks like a *prima facie* statement which any perfectionist can rightly quote to sustain his teaching that the reborn children of God no longer *can* sin. Now we can very well rest our case by quoting another verse or two from this very letter of John to prove the very opposite. We might simply quote I John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

There you have it, someone may exclaim: the Bible contradicts itself. It says yes and no to the same thing. But does the Bible here teach two very opposite positions in this matter? We think not. Let us attend to the following.

We must hold that both are true and that they form a grand and complete statement of the truth. He who teaches both of these in their unity has the truth in him; he is led by the Spirit of truth, the truth of the gospel. He that denies either of these denies them both. Notice that in I John 3:9 John is speaking in a definite textual context. In verse 3 John teaches us that there is a definite class of people, the believers in Christ, who have the hope in their hearts to see God as He is in all His purity, to see God, who is light, in the face of Jesus Christ. Yes, we are now the children of God. Behold the manner of the love of God in which we became such children! It was a love which reached us in the cross, where our sins were blotted out forever in one sacrifice in the end of the ages, and in which we are called the children of God. But it is *not yet* manifested what we shall be. There is a *not yet*. We do *not yet* see Jesus glorified and all things subjected unto him (Heb. 2:8). That must wait till the revelation of Jesus Christ in the last day (I Peter 1:13). Hence, we are saved in hope, a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefilable, and which fadeth not away. Such is the teaching of I John 3:1-6. Christ came to take away our sins as the *sinless* One. As reborn children of God we have the mind and will of Christ.

When you suggest to the children of God that they continue in sin that grace may abound, they answer with an unqualified: God forbid! This is expressed positively: "Every one who has this hope in him *purifies* himself as God is pure." Notice that John does not write: "Let him purify himself," still less "He *has* purified himself as God pure," but John writes in the present tense, indicative mood. It is a *fact* that the hoping christian purifies himself; this is not true merely of *some* believers, but of every one who *has* this hope upon God. Such a one has not yet attained to perfection; daily he has reason for cleansing himself in the blood of Jesus. He does not say: I have no sin. He knows and confesses that he does have sin cleaving to his best works. He does not deceive himself, as do the teachers of perfectionism, but he has a true and proper self-knowledge of his sinful nature, his sinful flesh, and so instead of merely *saying* something about himself, he rather *confesses* his sins (plural) with the publican in the temple, and scarcely daring to raise his eyes he says daily, "O God, be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:9-14).

Yes, John writes that those born out of God *cannot* sin. How can one sin, truly will to sin, who has a delight in the law of God after the inward man? (Rom. 7:22). In what law does the Christian delight? In the law of God which is merely a law which accommodates itself to meet us in our relative and imperfect capacity to keep the perfect law of liberty? Such is the position of the Romish Church, Methodism, Arminians and all Pelagianism. None really stand with the publican in the temple. This publican had a delight in the law of God. He saw that God is light and that there is no darkness in Him at all. He measured himself by the absolute and only standard: the law of God as given to Adam in paradise and as promulgated from the holy mount by God Himself and as written with his own finger. That is the law which God has now written upon the tables of our fleshly hearts (I Cor. 3:1-4).

Hence, according to the inward, reborn man, he cannot sin. He has the seed of the love and grace of God in him. As David, he has not any rest in his bones when he has sinned, until he makes confession and exclaims, "O, the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned."

We must briefly also take a look at what the Apostle writes in I John 5:18: "We know that whosoever is born of God *sinneth not*, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." If we take this passage out of its context, then we can make it into a statement which says: the reborn saint is positively sinless in this life. No, not merely: he *can become* positively sinless, but it is then a statement that everyone that

is begotten of God *does not* sin. He fulfils the law of God, the perfect law of liberty perfectly. However, notice the following:

1. That the apostle speaks of two kinds of sins. There is a sin unto death (*pros thanatos*), but there is also a sin which is not unto death (I John 5:16). For a sin which is unto death, John does not say the church must pray for a sinning member. He is beyond reach as are those who deny that Jesus is the Son of God, who are antichrists, (I John 5:5; I John 4:2-4).

2. He that confesses the Son of God has life. He does not sin in regard to a sin unto death. For him prayers can be made; he is one who has the faith which overcomes the world (I John 5:4). He loves God and loves the brother. He loves those who were begotten of God as one who himself is begotten of God. He is one of the fellowship of the saints. Hence, he does never sin unto death. He never *can* sin willingly, denying the Godhead of the Christ; he *can* never turn to idols, but he clings to God in Christ. Yes, then he daily sins sins not unto death, and these he confesses, but he cannot sin the sin unto death by trampling under foot the Son of God counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, wherewith he was sanctified, thus doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.

Everyone who is begotten of God does not sin such a sin unto death, where there remains no sacrifice for his sins. He constantly confesses: "We know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we might know the truth, and we are in the truth, even in His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 5:19).

Such is the sinlessness of those who are regenerated.

The answer of Scripture is unequivocally: this union is unconditionally and absolutely the work of God's grace in Christ Jesus. By grace are ye saved! That implies, too, that by grace, and by grace only, you are incorporated into Christ, so that you become one plant with Him.

When we say this, we proclaim nothing new. But we do wipe the dust of oblivion from a very old, very fundamental, and very precious truth. And we do claim that this truth is in dire need of a new emphasis over against many false representations, not by modernists, but by those who claim that they preach the doctrine of salvation by grace. For very many directly teach, or indirectly leave the impression by the way they preach, that this first touch of the soul of the sinner with Christ is accomplished upon the will and choice of the sinner. Yes, they admit, Christ is our salvation; and the soul must be united with Christ in order to receive salvation.

But if this union is to be accomplished, the sinner must come to Christ. The Savior is willing to receive him, to come into his heart, to join that sinner unto Himself; but the sinner must first come. He must accept Christ. Or he must be willing to receive Him. Or he must long and pray for this coming of Christ into his heart. And it seems that very sensational preaching, accompanied preferably by a heart-touching hymn and by begging and praying on the part of the preacher, is especially considered to be conducive to persuade the sinner to come to Jesus, to open the door of his heart, and to let Jesus come in. In last analysis, the union of the soul with the living Lord depends not on efficacious grace, but on the will of the sinner!

But, first of all, how absurd and utterly impossible is this presentation of salvation! If it were true, no man would be saved! For according to Scripture, the natural man is in the flesh; and the mind of the flesh is death. It is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Man is dead in sin and misery. He can neither perform nor will that which is good. He loves iniquity, and he is a slave of sin. He

loves darkness rather than light. He cannot see the kingdom of God. Such is the natural man. Such is every man before that union with Christ is established of which we made mention. Do you expect that man to open his heart to Christ? Do you insist that this dead sinner must come to Christ before Christ will come to Him? Do you still maintain that this darkened sinner must at least long for Christ, hunger and thirst for Him, seek Him, ask for Him, before his soul can be united with the living Lord? I reply that if such were the truth, then could no man be saved. For before the sinner is united with Christ he can neither come to Him, nor long for Him, nor seek Him, nor utter the weakest prayer beseeching Him to come into his heart. But thanks be to God, this is not the truth! Salvation is not of man, nor of the will of man; nor does our union with Christ depend on man's consent. "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) Again: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." (John 6:65)

H. Hoeksema, The Wonder of Grace, pages 37,38

Regeneration In The Line Of The Covenant

Cornelius Hanko

The Scriptures speak of baptism as "the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost," as in Titus 3:5. In Romans 6:3, 4, we are told, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The figure is obvious. By our first birth we are members of the human race, enemies of God and strangers to the covenant and promises, without God in the world. But by the riches of God's grace, who gave Christ unto the accursed death of the cross for us, we are plunged with Christ into His death, buried with

Him in baptism, whereby we are separated from the world and dead unto sin, in order to be raised with Christ in newness of life as children of the covenant and heirs of salvation. We are born again as new creatures in Christ!

Thus the apostle Peter speaks of being born again, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. Christ, who administers the sacrament through the church and His ambassador in the church, gives us the sign and seal that we are new creatures in Christ. We live, yet no more we, for Christ lives in us, which we experience through faith in Him, I Peter 1:23-25.

This applies to infants and little children as well as to adults. Those who deny infant baptism are blind to that fundamental truth of God's covenant,

Cornelius Hanko is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

that God never deals with us as mere individuals, but that He gathers His church organically, that is, in the line of the generations of believers and their spiritual seed. According to this basic doctrine, children are also regenerated in the line of the covenant. It is in that conviction that we present our children for baptism, since children are also included in the covenant of God!

This truth is plainly expressed in our Baptism Form as the basis for infant baptism. There we read that, even "as they without their knowledge are partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ." As proof for this, the fathers refer to the promise given to Abraham, Gen. 17:7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Then the fathers point out that this promise did not apply to the natural seed of Abraham in the old dispensation, but to the spiritual seed of him who is the father "of all believers," born to him in the line of continued generations. Therefore they quote Acts 2:39, where Peter on the day of Pentecost says, "For the promise is unto you (who have just confessed their faith in Christ Jesus), and to your children, and to all that are afar off (the elect to the ends of the earth), even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Circumcision was the sign of the covenant in the old dispensation, which was changed by Christ into baptism in the new dispensation, so that even as children were circumcised in the dispensation of the shadows, children are now baptized in the dispensation of the fulfillment. Reference is made to Mark 10: "Therefore Christ also embraced them, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them."

It is exactly for that reason that the apostles baptized whole households. God never deals with us as mere individuals. He does not establish His covenant with us in the abstract, but as we are concretely involved in our families in the midst of this world. We are included in God's covenant as fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters in the household of faith, with the use of all our gifts and talents in the service of our God, and to live as true members of God's church. Thus Paul assures the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*." God caused His Word to be preached to the jailer and his household, and he "was baptized, he and all his, straightway," Acts 16:31-33. When Lydia confessed her faith in Christ, she also was baptized with her household, Acts 16:15. Psalm 127:3 tells us, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Jesus says: "Suffer the little children to come unto

me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God," Mark 10:14. Parents are duty bound to instruct and admonish their children in the promises and precepts of the Lord, in the assurance that God continues His covenant in the line of continued generations among those who believe in Him and walk in His fear.

The fact, nevertheless, remains that not all baptized children are saved. Scripture and experience teach us that God's predestination of election and reprobation runs through the line of the covenant. That was evident already in the instance of Jacob and Esau. That is also expressed in Romans 9:6-8: "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

Thus we face the question: If this is true, why does God require that *all* our children be baptized? How is it possible to present all of our children for baptism, and to have the ambassador of Christ pronounce over each one: "John", or "Mary", (as the case may be) "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." How can it be said that each child is baptized into the covenant relationship of God and His church?

To this question various answers have been given.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper maintained that we baptize our children on the assumption that they are all regenerated before birth. Since baptism is a sign of regeneration, we take for granted this particular child who is presented for baptism is already regenerated and therefore has the right to be baptized. The objection to this view is that by this theory of presumptive regeneration we are assuming something which we know is not always true. That may be true of many, even of most of the children that are baptized, but certainly not of all. It is not all Israel that is of Israel. Besides, it is not said that every elect child is already regenerated before birth, and that this never takes place later in life.

Closely related to this former view is the contention that we baptize all the children of believing parents by a judgment of love. Since the possibility that they are regenerated is greater than that they are not, we think the best of each baptism child and regard it as an elect. The church is built out of those within its fold. Therefore we regard and treat all the children born in the church as covenant seed as long as they do not prove the contrary. It is granted that this is no infallible guideline, since both Scripture and experience teach us that all baptized

children do not walk in the way of the Lord. It is admitted that the true and full power of the sacrament is experienced only by the believers. This view says nothing about the negative effect of the sacrament upon those who perish in their sins.

There is also the view of Dr. Schilder and his followers, who make a distinction between the objective promise and the subjective embracing of the promise. In the objective sense, God promises eternal life to each baptized child, assuring him, "I will be your God." Should that child die in infancy or in early childhood, when he was not in a position to reject that promise, he is saved on the basis of it. But if he does not embrace that promise when he comes to years of discretion, he becomes a covenant breaker, and is lost. Among other objections, this is obviously the Arminian theory of free will applied to the sphere of the covenant.

It is obvious that those who hold the aforementioned views are confronted with the fact that, since election and reprobation run through the covenant line, all baptized children are not saved. An attempt is often made to assure parents, particularly parents whose child dies in infancy, that this child is in heaven. Sometimes an appeal is made to the "judgment of love", sometimes to the fact that the child was not in a position to reject the promise. But it still remains a fact that no one can say with absolute certainty that a particular child is taken to glory. Objectively, God seals the promise of His Word that those who are born again are righteous in Christ and heirs of eternal life. Subjectively the Holy Spirit seals this promise to the heart, not of the parent, but of the regenerated child, already in infancy. Since God gathers His church in the line of the covenant, the fathers have contented themselves with the negative statement, "Godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy," Netherlands Confession, Article 17.

The question still must be answered, why must all children born in the sphere of the covenant receive the sign and seal of baptism?

The answer is that baptism, accompanying the preaching of the Word, and along with the Lord's Supper, is appointed of God to be a *means of grace*.

Means of grace, as we know, are the means used by the Holy Spirit in the church to apply the gifts of grace which are in Christ Jesus to the hearts of God's regenerated saints. The chief means of grace is the preaching of the Word, which is signified and sealed by both the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Thus, even as the preaching of the Word has a two-fold effect, as a savor of life unto life and savor

of death unto death, so also the sacraments have this two-fold effect. This is evident from the Form for the Lord's Supper, in which we are admonished to examine ourselves: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." What is true of the one sacrament is also true of the other. The child baptized and reared in the sphere of the covenant has the greater responsibility to walk in God's fear. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36, Hebrews 6:7, 8.

Thus it is our privilege, but also our obligation to present our children for baptism. It is our obligation, because at baptism we vow to instruct and bring up our children in the doctrines of the holy

continued on page 119

 **Reformed Book Outlet**
3505 Kelly
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426
1-616-669-6730

a not-for-profit outreach emanating from
Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

**FROM NOW
until
CHRISTMAS**

25% OFF

ON ALL R.F.P.A. BOOKS
including the newly published

**THE MYSTERY OF
BETHLEHEM**

by Herman Hoeksema

Let us help you build your religious library
— at discount prices.

Studies in Genesis

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Now Available for the Introductory Price of
\$18.95 (add \$1.50 if you want it mailed).

A 900+ page commentary.

Order Now for Christmas Giving.

Send your payment to Dennis Dykstra,
3228 Chestnut, Grandville, MI 49418.

Introductory price expires on January 1st.

Directory, Protestant Reformed Churches

(For our readers who may be traveling or may wish to visit one of our churches in their area.)

<p>Covenant Prot. Ref. Church 454 Pulis Ave. Franklin Lakes, N.J. (Meeting in United Methodist Church) Services: 11:30 & 7:00 Phone: (201) 790-4732</p> <p>Byron Center Prot. Ref. Church 8840 Byron Center Ave. Byron Center, MI (Meeting in Byron Center Chr. Jr. High School) Services: 9:30 & 5:00 Phone: (616) 878-3255, 534-1927</p> <p>Hope Prot. Ref. Church 1580 Ferndale, SW (Corner of Riverbend & Ferndale) Walker, MI Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (616) 453-3253, 453-2524</p> <p>Kalamazoo Prot. Ref. Church 4515 Green Acre Dr. Kalamazoo, MI Services: 9:30 & 6:00 Phone: (616) 381-3385, 349-4420</p> <p>Randolph Prot. Ref. Church 229 Hammond St. Randolph, WI Services: 9:30 & 2:00 Phone: (414) 326-5642</p> <p>Hull Prot. Ref. Church 1204 Third St. Hull, IA Services: 9:30 & 7:00 (May to Sept.) 9:30 & 1:30 (Oct. to April) Phone: (712) 439-1326, 439-1283</p> <p>Hope Prot. Ref. Church Isabel, SD Services: 9:30 & 2:00 Phone: (605) 466-2450</p> <p>Hope Prot. Ref. Church 1307 E. Brockton Ave. Redlands, CA Services: 10:00 & 7:00 Phone: (714) 792-0307, 792-4923</p>	<p>First Prot. Ref. Church 2800 Michigan St., NE (1/2 Mi. SW of I96/M44 interchange) Grand Rapids, MI Services: 9:30 & 6:00 Phone: (616) 247-0638, 245-4339</p> <p>Southwest Prot. Ref. Church 4875 Ivanrest Ave., SW Grandville, MI Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (616) 532-6876, 532-4846</p> <p>Faith Prot. Ref. Church 7194 20th Ave. Jenison, MI Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (616) 457-5848</p> <p>First Prot. Ref. Church 290 E. 18th St. Holland, MI Services: 9:30 & 6:30 Phone: (616) 396-8303</p> <p>Pella Prot. Ref. Church 410 Franklin St. Pella, IA Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (515) 628-4747</p> <p>Doon Prot. Ref. Church 6th Ave. & N. 2nd St. Doon, IA Services: 9:30 & 2:00 Phone: (712) 726-3382</p> <p>Loveland Prot. Ref. Church 709 E. 57th St. Loveland, CO Services: 9:30 & 6:00 (Oct. to May) 9:30 & 7:00 (June to Sept.) Phone: (303) 667-1347</p> <p>Lynden Prot. Ref. Church 108 Beernink Lane Lynden, WA Services: 10:00 & 8:00 (summer) 10:00 & 2:00 (winter) Phone: (206) 354-4337</p>	<p>Southeast Prot. Ref. Church 1536 Cambridge, SE Grand Rapids, MI Services: 9:30 & 5:00 Phone: (616) 452-7047</p> <p>Grandville Prot. Ref. Church Wilson Ave., SW Grandville, MI (Meeting in Grandville High School) Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (616) 538-2575</p> <p>Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church 5101 Beechtree Ave. (1 Blk. East of Public High School, 32nd Ave.) Hudsonville, MI Services: 9:30 & 7:00 Phone: (616) 669-0755</p> <p>South Holland Prot. Ref. Church 16511 South Park Ave. South Holland, IL Services: 9:30 & 6:00 Phone: (312) 333-1314, 596-3113</p> <p>Trinity Prot. Ref. Church 214 Barker-Clodine Rd. Houston, TX Services: 9:30 & 6:00 Phone: (713) 492-0844</p> <p>Edgerton Prot. Ref. Church 3rd & Maple St. Edgerton, MN Services: 9:30 & 7:30 (March to Nov.) 9:30 & 2:00 (Dec. to Feb.) Phone: (507) 442-4441</p> <p>First Prot. Ref. Church 11533 135th St. (Mt. Zion Lutheran Church) Edmonton, Alberta, Canada Services: 11:15 & 3:00 Phone: (403) 455-9803 (also a service in Trinity Lutheran Church, 5259 49th St. Lacombe, Alberta, 7:30 P.M. on 2nd & 4th Sundays of month)</p>
--	--	--

REGENERATION *(continued from page 117)*

Scriptures to the utmost of our power. It is our privilege, because baptism reveals to us the wonder of God's grace, whereby He assures us: "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee." It is only sovereign mercy that God gives us a place in His church and covenant, and privileges us to bring up our children in His fear. If God chooses even one of our children as His own, we can only marvel at His mercy multiplied! That we may be instrumental unto the gathering of His church and the coming of His kingdom is a privilege far too great for us to comprehend! That we may stand before the great white throne in that great day of days and confess: "See us, Lord, and the children Thou hast given us, for we are Thine!" is a wonder that far exceeds our fondest imagination. To God be the glory forever!

*Remember your friends,
family and neighbors
with a special gift
of the Standard Bearer!*

*Give a gift of the
Standard Bearer today.*

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

December 1, 1986

Candidate Charles Terpstra has accepted the call extended to him from our congregation in Pella, Iowa. We are thankful that God has provided a place for him in our churches. This call also means that there was to have been a special meeting of Classis West in South Holland for his examination on November 19.

Rev. Slopsema has also accepted the call he received from Hope Church in Walker, Michigan.

Since Rev. Slopsema will soon be leaving our church in Randolph, Wisconsin, the consistory there has made a trio of the Reverends Arie denHartog, Steve Houck, and Tom Miersma. A special congregational meeting was held November 10, with Rev. Arie denHartog being called to come over and help them.

At the end of October, Professor Decker spent some time in Lynden, Washington, but he wasn't there for a vacation. He was there for several reasons. He delivered a Reformation Day Lecture on the topic "The Foolishness of Preaching". The morning after the lecture he spoke at Covenant School's chapel exercises. And on Sunday he

preached twice to the congregation at Lynden. While he was there he spoke to a gathering of young adults, comprised of the Monday evening catechism classes, on the important subject: "The Seminary in the Life of the Churches", a speech which I am sure dealt with the need for students in the Seminary. This is the first time that I have heard of this being done in our churches. It seems as if it would be worthwhile for all of our churches to consider. What better way to acquaint our young people with the urgent need we all have for laborers in God's kingdom than to hear it straight from a seminary professor.

And somewhat connected with the information above, we learned from First Church in Grand Rapids, that in harmony with the decision of our 1986 Synod, as found on page fifty-two of the *Acts*, the Council has requested nine of our denominational consistories to release a pastor for six to nine months to assist Rev. Bruinsma as a co-laborer on the Jamaican mission field. To date they have received seven negative replies. These consistories feel that they cannot be without the services of their pastors for this length of time. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest," Matt. 9:37-38.

Ben Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Reformed Witness Hour Committee is happy to report that they have finished the addition of two new stations for broadcasts. One station is KARI AM out of Blaine, Washington. This broadcast will reach the Lynden area. Saturday, November 8 at 6:00 P.M., the first program was scheduled to be aired. The other station added is out of Edmonton, Canada. The committee is also continuing to work toward adding other stations in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Ripon, California areas.

Rev. Van Overloop will continue his series on the book of Joshua through December 14. After this Rev. Kamps will give a series for Christmas.

Rev. G. Van Baren gave his congregation a few details of his recent visit to the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. The highlight of that trip was in taking part, along with Prof. Hanko, in the ordination of Jaiki Mahtani into the ministry.

Rev. Van Baren also stated that on Sunday, November 9, the saints in Singapore split into two congregations for the first time, with Rev. Lau Chin Kwee serving as pastor of the original group and Rev. J. Mahtani serving as pastor of the new group of between forty and sixty souls. They have been able to find a meeting place at the American School, a school which teaches American children who are in Singapore. This school has an auditorium which, according to Rev. Van Baren, can seat two hundred people. The only drawback seems to be that the

church was only able to obtain a one year lease. But for now their needs are met.

From Loveland, Colorado we ran across an item of interest. The Program Committee of their School Board has begun to gather material for the celebration of their Twenty-fifth School Anniversary. The committee asks that anyone who is willing to share any ideas, pictures, or other items of interest concerning their school, past and present, please contact either Steve Ezinga or Leon Griess.

And from Holland, Michigan we found that Rev. Miersma underwent surgery for a broken arm he received in a fall. He remained a patient in Zeeland Hospital for one week, so this was no ordinary broken arm. In his absence Holland's pulpit was supplied by Professors Hoeksema and Hanko, and by Candidate C. Terpstra. It is assumed that Rev. Miersma has now once again resumed his duties. One just wonders how a minister gestures while preaching with a broken arm.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 22, 1986, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. MENNO POORTENGA, celebrated 40 years of marriage. We give thanks to our Heavenly Father for the love, guidance and instruction they have given us. May God continue to bless and keep them in the coming years.

"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." (Psalm 128:6).

Don and Sally Poortenga
Terry Poortenga
Tim and Bonnie Poortenga
John and Marcia Boersma

Don and Jann Bruinsma
Wes and Cindy Poortenga
Ron and Bev Bultema
and 18 grandchildren

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 3, 1986, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. ART BLEYENBERG, JR., will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them and would like to thank them for the years of love and covenant instruction they have given us. It is our constant prayer that God will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. Yea thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." (Psalm 128:1, 6)

Ethel Mains
Arvin and Rose Bleyenbergh
Arnie and Charlotte Bleyenbergh
Bill and Jeanette Bleyenbergh
Alvin and Betty Bleyenbergh
Larry and Carla Kane
Jim and Gloria Bleyenbergh

Bob and Barb Bleyenbergh
Art and Mary Bleyenbergh
Gene and Elaine Bleyenbergh
Gary and Jackie Bleyenbergh
58 grandchildren
2 great-grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sympathy to Gerrit Holstege and Arnold Haveman in the death of their sister and sister-in-law MRS. JOHANNES BOSCH.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

Henry Boer, Pres.
Dave Pohler, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 14, 1987 at the First Prot. Ref. Church, Grand Rapids. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk at least three weeks prior to the convening of this meeting.

John Huiskens
Stated Clerk