

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

All this applies to us as well. Confessing and denying Jesus before men is not something that pertains only to the preaching. Each one of us either confesses or denies Jesus every day by the words we speak and the kind of life we live. Hence, also to us Jesus says, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

See Meditation, p. 242

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MEDITATION

James D. Slopsema

Confessing Christ Before Men

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.

But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.
Matthew 10:32, 33

These words were spoken by Jesus to His twelve disciples as He sent them out to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These words of Jesus were intended to en-

courage the disciples. For they would meet hatred and opposition as they brought the gospel. They would be delivered to the councils; they would be scourged in the synagogues; they would be brought

before governors and rulers. To encourage His disciples in the face of this persecution, Jesus laid down a fundamental principle of the kingdom: whosoever confesses Jesus before men, him will Jesus confess before His father in heaven. But to serve as a warning, the opposite is also true: whosoever denies Jesus before men, him will Jesus deny before the father in heaven.

All this applies to us as well. Confessing and denying Jesus before men is not something that pertains only to the preaching. Each one of us either confesses or denies Jesus every day by the words we speak and the kind of life we live. Hence, also to us Jesus says, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

THE MEANING

If we will discover what it means to deny Jesus, all we need to do is to reflect on Peter's denial of Jesus.

In the courtyard of Caiphas the high priest, while Jesus was being tried before the Sanhedrin, Peter was approached on three different occasions. And each time the charge was the same, "You were with him, weren't you? Your speech betrays you. You are a Galilean. You are one of Jesus' disciples." And each time Peter denied it, "I don't know what you are talking about. I don't even know the man". This Peter even confirmed with cursing and swearing. Thus, the very words of Jesus were fulfilled, "This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

When Peter denied Jesus he denied any connection with Jesus. He claimed not to be Jesus' disciple. He repudiated Jesus' teachings. He wanted no part of Jesus' salvation. He wanted nothing to do with the kingdom of which Jesus spoke so much. In disgust he separated himself in every way from Jesus.

And so we may say that to deny Jesus is to deny any association with Jesus. It is to deny that Jesus is your Lord and Master. It is to deny that you are His disciple, who loves Him, serves Him and adheres to His teachings. To deny Jesus is to deny that Jesus is your Savior and that you possess His salvation. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, who is He? He's a stranger to me!

To confess Jesus is just the opposite of this. To confess Jesus before men is publicly to acknowledge that there is indeed a very close relationship between you and Jesus Christ. It is to confess that

Jesus is your Savior to whom you cling by faith. By faith you possess and enjoy His wonderful salvation. Jesus is also your Lord and Master whom you love and serve as a disciple. His teachings you embrace. His cause you champion.

Those who publicly and openly confess these things confess Jesus before men.

Do you confess Jesus before men?

THE DIFFICULTY

It is difficult to confess Jesus before men.

This is true because, first, confessing Jesus before men involves not just what we say but also the kind of life we live.

It is often said that actions speak louder than words. It is very easy to talk. It's an altogether different matter to live in harmony with what you say about yourself. In fact, what some people say with their mouth they completely contradict by the kind of life they live.

The same is true of confessing Jesus before men. Confessing Jesus doesn't simply involve what you say; it also involves how you live. If we will confess Jesus we must not only tell others verbally that Jesus is our Savior, we must also live as those who have been saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. If we will confess Jesus we must not simply acknowledge verbally that Jesus is our Lord and Master, we must also live as those who have bowed the knee to Christ. We must not only say we are Jesus' disciples. We must live as disciples. And if our lives do not, in fact, conform to the testimony of our mouth, then we by our very life deny Jesus before men.

Not so simple a matter is this confessing Jesus before men when we bear in mind that it is a confession that must be made by the very way we live!

Nor is confessing Jesus easy if we bear in mind that it must be done *before men*.

The world hates Christ. They hated Christ while He was on the earth and lived among us. His own generation opposed Him, mocked Him, slandered Him, and finally when given the opportunity murdered Him on the cross. And the world still hates Christ. The ungodly have no sympathy whatsoever for the cause and kingdom of our Lord. They despise all that stands for Christ.

It is before those men that we must confess Christ. And when we do that the world will hate and oppose us even as it did Christ. This is what Christ Himself told His disciples. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

How difficult it can be to confess Jesus before men.

And for that reason many fail to confess Him but rather deny Him.

How little, for example, do we speak of Christ and the great salvation we have in him with others either in the church or outside the church.

How little difference there often is between our life style and that of the world. We hesitate to be different for the scorn it will bring. In fact, to gain the approval of others we are much inclined to be as the world. Worldliness is creeping more and more into the church today. And in the process we deny Jesus. We deny that He is our Savior; we deny that He is our Lord. We deny Jesus just as really as Peter did in the court yard of Caiphas the high priest.

THE RESULT

Whosoever shall confess Jesus before men, him will Jesus confess before His Father in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Jesus before men, him will Jesus also deny before His Father in heaven.

Jesus' confessing or denying one before the Father in heaven has to do with the intercessory prayers of Jesus to God the Father in heaven. As High Priest Jesus appears in heaven before God the Father continually in prayer. And in those prayers He will either confess you or deny you before the Father.

If Jesus confesses you before the Father, He claims you as His own. He points out to the Father that you belong to Him. You are one that God has eternally given to Jesus. You are one whom He has purchased with His precious blood. And claiming you as His own, He in turn presents all your needs to God the Father and asks that God bless you in your needs — to forgive your sins, to empower you to live a holy life, to comfort you, to strengthen you, to provide for all your needs. And because those prayers of Jesus are based on the perfect work of the cross, God hears them. And God blesses us in our needs.

How important it is that Jesus confess us before the Father. That heavenly confession is our salvation.

If, however, Jesus denies us before the Father in heaven, then He denies that you belong to Him or have any connection whatsoever with Him. He

denies that you were ever given to Him of the Father. He denies that you were purchased with His blood. He will tell the Father that you are a stranger to Him. And therefore He will pray for your destruction.

How horrible if Christ denies you before the Father.

Such a denial will seal your doom!

Whosoever shall confess Jesus before men, him will Jesus confess before His Father in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Jesus before men, him will Jesus also deny before His Father in heaven.

Of course!

How can it be any different!

All Jesus is doing is presenting the facts to the living God.

Those who confess Jesus before men do so exactly because they belong to Jesus Christ. They are those whom the Father has given to Jesus to save. They are those whom Jesus has purchased with His own blood. The fruit and therefore the proof of that fact is that they now confess Jesus before men. Consequently, Jesus confesses them before the Father in heaven and brings down upon them the blessings of their salvation.

But those who deny Jesus before men do so exactly because they do not belong to Jesus. They have not been given to Jesus by the Father; nor have they been purchased with His blood. They are still in their sin and can do nothing but deny Jesus. Then Jesus will deny before the Father.

Confess Jesus before men.

And when it becomes difficult to confess Jesus before men, then remember that whosoever shall confess Jesus before men, him will Jesus confess before His Father in heaven.

And when you fail as did Peter, then do not despair. Remember that Peter went out into the night and wept bitterly. In the way of his repentance Peter was restored by Christ Himself on the day of the resurrection. And Peter went on to confess Jesus before men faithfully and boldly as a man of God.

Let us also confess Jesus before men.

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

Editor's Notes

A couple changes should be noted which begin with this issue. First of all, the Rev. G. Van Baren takes over, for the rest of this volume-year, in *All Around Us*. We thank Prof. Decker for his contributions and welcome the Rev. Van Baren back to this department. Secondly, the Rev. A. den Hartog takes over *In His Fear* from the Rev. B. Gritters — also for the rest of the current volume. Thanks to Rev. Gritters, and welcome to Rev. den Hartog.

* * * * *

As you know, the Rev. den Hartog has left the Singapore mission field and is now in the pastoral ministry in Randolph, Wisconsin — in many ways a

radical change for him and his family. But the Rev. den Hartog left a bit of his heart in Singapore. That undoubtedly accounts, at least in part, for the fact that before he writes for *In His Fear*, he is contributing a final article about Singapore and the church there.

* * * * *

Publication News. From the RFPA there will soon appear a paperback edition of *Calvin's Calvinism*, a significant work of John Calvin which has long been out of print. Watch for later announcements!

HCH

EDITORIAL

Why Evolution? (3)

In trying to understand Dr. Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day*, it is difficult to figure out which came first in this case, the chicken or the egg. That is, was his view of Scripture first? And did this view of Scripture make room for his evolutionist scientific theory? Or was his evolutionism first, and did this necessitate his view of Scripture? I suspect it was the latter, even though in his book he deals first with his view of Scripture.

However that may be, when one reads *The Fourth Day* he comes increasingly under the impression that Van Till's view of Scripture is that of unbelieving higher criticism. This is true not only with respect to the Genesis narrative, as we shall see; but it is true with respect to the whole of Scripture. According to him, Scripture is culturally conditioned; and the cultural conditioning of the Old Testament Scriptures comes from Israel's neighbors in the world of the Old Testament. The ghost of Dr. Ralph Janssen, who was deposed in 1922 for his higher critical views, stalks the halls of learning

at Calvin College.

All of this becomes abundantly clear long before Dr. Van Till gets rid of the historical account of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and specifically of the creation account. The latter does not come until Chapter 5. But his higher critical views become clear already in Chapter 2, "The View From Palestine." How does this take place?

First of all, after mentioning the fact that one's vantage point in viewing the starry heavens is important, so that it makes a difference, for example, whether one views the stars from London or from Lima, in December or in July, he introduces the notion of cultural conditioning as follows:

But there is another very important way in which vantage point controls what we perceive in an upward gaze: our cultural heritage and historical context influence how we mentally interpret or understand what we visually discern. Because of our particular training, we twentieth-century Westerners assign a meaning to astral objects and celestial phenomena quite different from the meaning given to those same

objects and phenomena by people who lived in Palestine three thousand years ago.

In light of this, if we truly wish to discover what we might (or might not) learn about celestial luminaries from the Bible, we must spend some time in preparation. Just as vigorous athletic activity should be preceded by stretching and warm-up exercises, so also serious Bible study ought to be preceded by mental exercises that stretch our awareness and warm up our intellectual curiosity. In preparation for viewing the celestial sphere through the lens of Scripture, we should take a few moments to familiarize ourselves with the historical and cultural context in which the Bible was written, particularly the context in which the Old Testament teaching concerning the stars as God's Creation was formulated. (pp. 20, 21)

What do we get from this approach?

Things like the following:

- On the basis of archeological evidence, the region of Jericho was occupied as long ago as 8000 B.C.

- "Culture and technology experienced very significant development during this period. The Sumerians (in Mesopotamia) developed writing even before 3000 B.C. And ancient Mesopotamians made tools and decorative objects of bronze and copper with great skill." But see Genesis 4:19-22 (about the time of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam") and Genesis 11:1-9.

- "The Bible, drawing from the memory of the Hebrews as it was preserved primarily in oral tradition . . . is far more concerned with providing religious history and with presenting a testimony to the reality of divine action and leading."

- An ignoring of the 480 years between the Exodus and Solomon (I Kings 6:1) and a placing of the Exodus at 1280 B.C. and Solomon at 960 B.C.

- A Hebrew concept of the heavens which can be understood only in the light of concepts held by Israel's neighbors in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine.

But Dr. Van Till's higher critical view of Scripture and his preference for relying upon historical data other than Scripture and upon the "practical astronomy" of ancient nations with respect to "celestial timekeepers" comes out most clearly in the next section of this chapter. This is most clear in the following paragraph, pp. 25, 26:

The one time period in common use today that has a less obvious astronomical basis is the week of seven days. For the purposes of establishing and regulating cyclic periods of labor, commerce, or religious ritual, most cultures appear to have adopted a period of time between the day and the month. Beginning in the third millennium B.C., the Egyptian civil calendar was based on a year of 365 days — twelve months of thirty days each, plus five additional days. The month

was further divided into three "decades" of ten days each. But evidence suggests that the Egyptians also divided the lunar month into periods of seven or eight days. The old Assyrian calendar may have divided the month into five periods of six days each. Various Mesopotamian calendars placed special emphasis on those days marking each quarter of a month. To this day we take note of the lunar cycle of phases at each quarter of the period: new moon, first quarter moon, full moon, and third quarter moon. To the nearest whole number, these phases are separated by seven days, suggesting that the convention of the seven-day week is tied to observation of the moon. Some scholars, however, hold that it is more likely that the choice of a seven-day calendric unit was based on a symbolic meaning assigned to the number seven than on a lunar cycle. In Israel, the liturgical calendar was firmly based on a strict seven-day cycle. The fact that such a cycle periodically gets out of synchronization with the lunar phases was considered a matter of little consequence. Perhaps Israel wished openly to defy association with the numerous pagan astral religions practiced by its neighbors, a matter we will touch on later in this chapter.

This is what happens when one ignores and does away with Scripture!

Does not Genesis 1 teach us concerning the various astronomical cycles? God created the lights to divide the day from the night and to be "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." God created the sun and the moon to rule the day and the night. He also created the week of seven days. But Dr. Van Till does not want to accept Genesis 1, as he makes clear in a later chapter.

But nowhere does he more blatantly manifest his higher critical view than in the last sentence quoted above: "Perhaps Israel wished openly to defy association with the numerous pagan astral religions practiced by its neighbors" No Reformed Christian should ever allow a statement like that to come from his pen! Israel wished to defy association with the numerous pagan astral religions? What is the source of Israel's religion? Israel or Jehovah? From whom did all the regulations of the Levitical law, regulations which involved days and weeks and months and years, come? Israel or Jehovah? From whom did defiance (if that is the term to be used) of the "pagan astral religions" come? Israel or Jehovah? Besides, how unrealistic is Van Till's view in the light of the history of Israel! If there is anything that becomes plain from that history, it is this: Israel, if left to themselves, would never "defy pagan astral religions"! On the contrary, if left to themselves, they were always ready to worship all the host of heaven and to outdo the heathen in their idolatry. In other words, Van Till is wrong here — and in defiance of Scripture — on two counts: the origin of Israel's religion and the history of Israel's religious practice. HCH

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Herman Veldman

The Apostles' Creed (13)

Our Heidelberg Catechism begins its discussion of the Confession of the Apostles' Creed in regard to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in Lord's Day 11. And we begin by calling attention to the distinctive character of this Lord's Day. In Answer 29 we read that "we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other." It is well to lay all emphasis upon this truth. We will have opportunity to call attention to this later in connection with Answer 30. As far as the thirtieth answer is concerned, Question 30 reads: "Do such then believe in Jesus the only Saviour who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?" And the answer begins with the statement: They do not. This is very decisive. We have no compromise here. In the answer we read the following: "for one of these two things must be true, that either Jesus is not a complete Saviour, or that they who by a true faith receive this Saviour, must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation." And although it is true that the fathers composed this Lord's Day principally to refute Roman Catholicism, it is still very pertinent today. Today we hear sentiments to the effect that the bible is time-bound, that its truths apply only to the day and age when it was written, that the truths which were true when the apostles wrote them do not necessarily apply today. This is not true. The circumstances may and do change, but the truth (and this also applies to heresy) remains the same. The error of Roman Catholicism is, after all, the error of the human heart. And our evil heart will always give expression to the same heresy. Throughout the ages the truth of God is and remains absolute.

Question 29 is unique and must not escape our

attention. This question reads: "Why is the Son of God called *Jesus*, that is a Saviour?" This question is very pertinent. We do well to note what is not asked in this twenty ninth question. The fathers here do not ask, "Why is Jesus called the Son of God?" It is true that this is asked in Question 33: "Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God?" However, this is asked in Question 33 only after the Heidelberg Catechism asks in Question 29: "Why is the Son of God called *Jesus*, that is a Saviour?" Besides, notice that in Question 33 we read: "Why is Christ called, not merely the Son of God, but the only begotten Son of God?" Here, however, in Question 29 we read: "Why is the Son of God called *Jesus*, that is a Saviour?"

Imagine if the question were asked: "Why is Jesus called the Son of God?" In the first place, the question then simply assumes that He is Jesus. It is either overlooked or ignored that, according to Scripture, He was called Jesus, and that He was called Jesus by God. Man did not call Him Jesus. The Saviour received His name from God. And when they speak of Jesus they simply refer to that historical person who is known in history as Jesus of Nazareth. This, then, is simply the name by which He is known in history, the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It does not occur to them that this Babe of Bethlehem received His name from God. In the second place, that this Jesus is called the Son of God can be interpreted in many ways. That He is called the Son of God does not necessarily mean that He is the Son of God. It may merely mean that He is *called* that, called that, of course, by men. The name Son of God may be merely a title, an honorary name. Also the Arians called Him the Son of God. They did not consider Him really to be the Son of God, coequal and coeternal with the Father

and the Holy Spirit. But He was given this title because of His high nobility. They considered Him to be tremendously gifted, a very noble creature, higher than Adam, created ages before Adam but nevertheless created, and therefore a creature. And then, as that particularly gifted creature, he assisted in the creation of the world. Does not the Bible say that the world was made or framed by the Word of the Son of God? And so, because of his high nobility and tremendous gifts, the honorary title of the "Son of God" was conferred upon him. Of course, the "Son of God" of the Arians, who denied the eternal Sonship of the Son of God, was not really such an honorable creature after all. It is surely not honorable for a mere creature to assume the name Son of God. It is surely not honorable for a mere man to assume this title and then be called a very noble creature. For a creature to permit himself to be called Son of God is the horrible sin of blasphemy. This, however, is not the question asked here in Lord's Day 11.

Jesus is also called the Son of God by the modernist. Modernism speaks very highly of this Jesus of Nazareth. Modernism, however, is Manism, Humanism. Modernism denies the living God. Modernism exalts man. Modernism denies the living God in Christ. It denies that Jesus is God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Modernism also denies God in the work of salvation. The modernist proclaims that man is able to save himself. This teaching is earthy, wants nothing to do with God, with His Christ, with the kingdom of God, of Christ and of heaven. Modernism seeks this world, would establish an earthly kingdom, without God, without Christ, and without the results of sin but, of course, maintaining sin itself. Indeed, they give to Jesus of Nazareth the honorable title of the Son of God, but they are anti-God, anti- His Christ, anti-, against His kingdom.

Question 29 reads: "Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is a Saviour?" The meaning of the name Son of God is beyond the shadow of any doubt. Confessionally, in connection with the question, "what sort of a mediator, deliverer, then, must we seek for," we read in Answer 15 of our Heidelberg Catechism: "For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous, and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is one who is also very God." In Question 17 we read: "Why must he in one person be also very God?" In Question 13 we read: "Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God, and a real righteous man?" And then we also have Question and Answer 33. Question 33 reads: "Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God?" And the answer reads: "Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children

adopted of God, by grace, for his sake." From Scripture we quote only three passages, although many more could be quoted. Isaiah 7:14 reads: "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Is he not born of a virgin, without the will of man? Is His name not called Immanuel, God with us? Besides, is not His name called Jesus, which means: Jehovah saves? Then there is Matthew 16:16: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And to this the Lord adds in verse 17: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Indeed, more can be quoted, such as John 1:1, 14 and also 1 John 5:20. But this may suffice to establish that the name Son of God, according to our Confessions and Scripture, means that He alone is the Son of God, that He is God Himself, the second person of the divine Trinity.

This establishes the unique character of this twenty-ninth question. The Heidelberg Catechism here does not prove or establish that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Catechism simply assumes it; our fathers here proceed from the fact that He is none other than the eternal Son of God. And now I add at this time that only the Son of God could be called Jesus. This has already been established in preceding Lord's Days. Only the eternal Son of God, as God with us, can save us out of all our sin and misery and death and lead us into the eternal life of heavenly immortality. If this Saviour be a mere creature, and you confer upon him the honorary title Son of God he, as a mere creature, can never lead us out of death into life. The question reads: "Why is the Son of God called Jesus?" We therefore assume that He is the Son of God. This is not merely a title. The name denotes Him in His essential significance.

Even as Question 29 is unique, so also the calling here of this Son of God, called Jesus, is unique. He is called Jesus. Now it is certainly true that He is or was not called Jesus by man. How unique, also in this respect, the Word of God is here! We do well to notice what we read here. The Son of God is called Jesus. Everything depends upon that name. He is called Jesus already at His birth. In fact, he is called Jesus already before His birth. This name was revealed to Mary at Nazareth by Gabriel and also to Joseph in a dream. He is called Jesus, therefore, before His birth and long before His active ministry. How different it is among men. We cannot determine the importance or significance of a man until he acts and works. We must study him before we can discover his importance in history, what he has done in the service of mankind. But

that the Babe of Bethlehem receives His name long before His birth is, of course, because the Saviour has been ordained by God Triune from before the foundation of the world. Besides, He certainly did not receive the name Jesus from men, from us. To be sure, the Scriptures speak of His incarnation, His wonderful birth of a virgin, His mighty works and miracles, His suffering and death and resurrection, His ascension and return to judgment. And what do we call Him, we as and of ourselves? People called Him a blasphemer, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a rebel and an insurrectionist, a friend of Beelzebub, a friend of publicans and sinners, a dangerous man. And what is the Reformed church world saying about this man? They deny His incarnation, deny that He is born of a virgin, deny His miracles, His resurrection, His ascension, and also His bodily return upon the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead. This Jesus

did not and could never receive the name Jesus from the children of men, from you and me as we are in and of ourselves. The truth of Scripture is that we are by nature carnal, sold under sin, lovers of evil and of the things that are below. We are haters of God, lovers of sin and have no desire to be delivered from it; we hate the Christ of Calvary, and we cannot, will not, cannot will to recognize Him as Redeemer and Saviour. We will always despise Him, trample Him under foot, nail Him to the cross, but we will never flee to Him, acknowledge and embrace Him as the one and only Mediator of God and man. If we are to receive and embrace Him, we must receive this from the Father Who is in heaven. Indeed, no man can come unto the Christ except the Father Who hath sent Him draw him.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this confession of the Son of God in our following article.

FROM HOLY WRIT

George C. Lubbers

Believing All the Scriptures (VI)

*THE HOPE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
JEHOVAH-GOD SPEAKS TO FALLEN ADAM
(Genesis 3:17) "and God said to Adam."*

God is addressing Adam here in Paradise as the Covenant God of Adam. Really He is speaking here as the same God of glory Who spoke to Abraham, the father of all believers, much later. When Moses pens these words in Gen. 3:17 he is with Israel in the wilderness; Israel is then dwelling in their tents about the tabernacle which was made after the pattern of the heaven tabernacle. God had shown him this tabernacle on Mt. Sinai with the express injunction: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee on the mount" (Exodus 25:40; Numbers 8:40; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5b). It seems that Moses goes out of his way to emphasize

this name of JEHOVAH, the *I-Am-That-I-Am*. Also here in Genesis 3:17 we confess that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

We ought to notice that both in verses 14 and in 21, 22, Jehovah God speaks as it were to Himself. He speaks as the Triune Covenant God. Says He, "man (Adam) is become like one of us": the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus God speaks in the plural when He is about to create man, and when he is to drive him in His justice and mercy out of the garden of Eden. Both times God speaks in all His august majesty, and that, too, in the fulness of His heavenly majesty and glory.

We have stated before and reaffirm that the LORD speaks here to Adam in the context of the great promise, the *protevangel*, verse 15. This promise was fulfilled in the suffering and glorified Christ. Are not all God's promises yea in Christ, and in him Amen to the glory of God the Father (II

Cor. 1:20)? Yes, we believe that here is the seeking and finding love of Christ in the way of the perfect righteousness of the cross. Did God not clothe Adam and Eve in the skins of the sacrificial lambs, which were slain and placed upon the altar?

God will have His justice satisfied! Adam is *driven* out of the garden of Eden. Mercy does not in any way set God's justice aside. Yet God allows the avenue of mercy to remain open here in the terms which he speaks to Adam. Adam must die and did die. Still in the plan of God Adam dies and in him the entire human race. By one man unto many was the judgment unto condemnation; yea, many were made sinners in him. Legally and ethically the entire human race was in God's just judgment plunged into condemnation. (Romans 5:15-21).

THE JUST JUDGMENT UPON ADAM

(Genesis 3:17) "Cursed is the ground for thy sake..."

The justice of God's curse upon the ground is set forth very clearly by Jehovah God. The justice rests upon the word to Adam as we have this recorded in Gen. 2:16, "And Jehovah God commanded the man (Adam) saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

In this word God gave the law of life and of death for Adam.

It was the law promulgated from God's throne.

God will not be dethroned, neither is the Most High mocked. He fulfilled His word. Adam died that very day! Yes, by one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and death passed on to all men, because all had sinned (Rom. 5:12). Not only was the entire human race put under the law of sin and death, but the *entire creation* was subjected to vanity in God's wrath over Adam. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," God says to Adam!

What we ought to notice carefully is that God did not *curse Adam*. This curse is not directed against Adam's person nor against the person of Eve. The curse is upon the serpent and upon the seed of the serpent, the Old Dragon, the great Deceiver and Liar from the beginning in whom there is no truth. He is the father of the lie. Upon him God pronounced His curse. Later he pronounces this curse also upon Cain, and much later upon Canaan the son of Ham (Genesis 3:14; Genesis 9:25).

But the curse is not upon Adam's *person*. Adam was, even then, already written in the Lamb's book of life. As we hope to point out more in depth a bit later, Adam may be included, according to the election of grace, in the church spoken of in Genesis 4:26b, "then began men to call upon the name of

the LORD." Surely, Adam also worshipped as did Abel at the altar, bringing the bloody sacrifice of the flock (Gen. 4:4).

Yes, God has His justice satisfied!

The Seed of the woman will perform it.

Truly, the zeal of the LORD will perform it.

Scripture speaks of the zeal of God's house. In this zeal and holy jealousy for His holy Name He will bring many sons to glory (Psalm 69:9; Isaiah 9:9; John 2:7). In this coming LAMB, God will be glorified and will manifest all the glory of His grace in the saints — including Adam and Eve!

Meanwhile the ground is cursed for Adam's transgression's sake. Adam and his posterity will eat bread in toil and labor, in the sweat of their brow. The cursed earth will be very hard to subdue, even to eke a livelihood from it. What a far cry this cursed earth is from the paradisaical condition as described in Genesis 2:5, 6: "... and there was not a man to till the ground, but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground".

That Adam was not cursed from the ground as was Cain is because Adam's hand did not have the blood of a saint staining it. The voice of the blood of one of the saints did not cry against Adam's soul for vengeance. *Abel's* blood cried from the earth to the Lord Sabaoth (Gen. 4:10). It was the blood which was the first of all the blood of the souls under the altar, which cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Revelation 6:10).

Not so Adam. Such a curse is not placed upon Adam and upon Adam's seed as they are taken up presently in the generations of the heavens and of the earth. These are taken up in the hope of heaven and of earth, which both shall share in the redemption which is ours in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul that the ground, too, lives in hope. Paul calls this "cursed ground" the creature which has been subjected to vanity in Romans 8:20-22. Literally the text reads, "for the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

What we should notice is that the curse upon the ground was God's subjecting it to vanity. However, this was done in the wisdom and mercy of God *upon hope*. Now this is no mere hope of the creature

to return to the original beauty and virginal freshness of the garden of Eden as revealed and portrayed in Genesis 2:5-15, nor does this refer to a mere return to the "milk and honey" condition of the land of Canaan, as the premillennialists dream of the earthly fulfilment of the promises, but this refers undoubtedly to the wisdom of God whereby he subjected the creature to vanity in hope of being liberated to the glory of the children of God in Christ Jesus. That will be the glory of a new heaven and a new earth. Into this glory the creature will be liberated when the earth, being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (II Peter 3:12).

It is of interest to notice that Paul does not simply have an abstract discussion on the truth of the subjection of the creature in hope by God, but he introduces the truth of the creature's sharing in the salvation of the sons of God to teach and demonstrate the incomparable greatness of the glory which shall be ours as the sons of adoption (Rom. 8:18). As sons of adoption, who have the Spirit of adoption, we cry, "Abba Father." We stand in relationship to God as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Yes, we suffer greatly for Christ's sake, even as the souls under altar. There is the terrible reality referred to by Jesus in Matthew 23:34, 35. Jesus speaks in this passage "of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Berachia, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

However, all the suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared with the glory which

shall be revealed in us when we shall publicly receive the crown of righteousness and glory.

That will be the day! It will be the great day of our Lord Jesus Christ's revelation in the saints. Then all the groaning of the saints will cease, the Spirit will no longer groan in the sons of adoption as the firstfruits of the full harvest, nor will creation ever again groan and travail in the vanity of vanities of its subjected existence.

Then will the hope of the creature be fulfilled!

In the very groaning of the creature we see that all things reach out in earnest expectation of the realization of the hope of heaven and earth.

When Paul writes concerning the waiting and groaning creation, it is evident that he does not refer to the groaning of the children of God. For it is for the glory of these children of God that the creature waits in hope. Nor does this refer to the angel hosts. For these are not subject to the curse upon the creature. For their habitat is heaven, although the angels also long for the realization of the promises of God. They stoop down to look into the revelation of the mystery of godliness.

No, this refers to the whole creation: heaven, earth, the firmament, land and sea, sun, moon and stars, fish and fowl, animals and creeping things. Creation cannot come to its increased design and purpose. It is subjected to the vanity of vanities, where all the rivers run into the sea and the sea does not become full. All is one great weariness in all things, so that it cannot be expressed.

Yet withal, it is subjected upon hope, the hope of heaven and earth!

ALL AROUND US

Gise J. Van Baren

A Growing Controversy: "The Fourth Day"

The Grand Rapids Press, January 17, 1987, presented a special report in its religious section about "A controversial course", taught by Howard Van Till at Calvin College. Van Till is an astronomy and physics professor who recently wrote a book,

The Fourth Day which has generated considerable controversy. The book is doubtlessly contributing to the growing rift between the "conservatives" and "liberals" in the Christian Reformed Church. I quote some of the report in the *Press*:

Standing between the creationists on the one hand and the strict evolutionists on the other, Van Till tries to chart a new way for Christians to view the world.

"I believe the world should, if you study it carefully, provide reliable information," said the 48-year-old Van Till. "It is, after all, God's handiwork. I trust that it is characterized by good order, continuity and integrity."

Many of his ideas are contained in *The Fourth Day*, a book published last year by Eerdmans Publishing Co. The title of the book comes from the account of creation in Genesis, in which God created the heavens on the fourth day.

. . . Critics say he ignores in his new book the authority of scripture, especially when he says that he believes the first 11 chapters of the Bible are not to be read literally.

"This is a touchy area, an area in which the Christian community gets uptight," said Van Till.

"I'm talking about some big questions. What I'm trying to do (in the book) is be challenging without being unnecessarily disturbing."

What he believes, he said, is that the first part of Genesis should be read as a "rich, artistic" account of creation. He doesn't read it literally.

Creationists, however, don't like this. They say Van Till is moving too far afield in the way he combines science and theology.

"The issue for me is the doctrine of creation, not the story itself as presented in Genesis," commented the physics professor.

But that doesn't silence his detractors.

John Hultink, a CRC member and managing editor of a bi-weekly newspaper called *Christian Renewal*, is one of the astronomer's harshest critics.

As editor of the conservative paper, published in Ontario, Hultink sits on the far right fringe of those challenging Van Till's ideas. Hultink, in fact, has frequently denounced *The Fourth Day* as a work that is out to undermine the Christian Reformed Church.

"What Professor Van Till has done in his book is reduce all the givens of the first chapters of Genesis to one statement, and that is that he thinks God created the universe via the process of evolution," said Hultink.

"I think this (publication of this book) is the most important thing that ever happened to our denomination," added Hultink . . .

"What is at stake here is the question of the authority, the authenticity, the reliability of revelation," he commented.

The *Christian Renewal*, he added, is geared to preserving orthodox Christianity within the CRC. Van Till's book, he said, is an example of how people, even

at the CRC's school, are veering farther and farther from the truth.

"What Van Till is saying is that Adam and Eve never existed, that there was no flood, no tower of Babel," said Hultink. "He places man and his authority and insight above the insight and authority of God."

. . . Van Till, a teacher at Calvin for nearly 20 years, noted that different readers will view his book in various ways.

"I understand why this book troubles some people, but I think the creation/evolution controversy is a discussion that has generated much more heat than light over the years," he commented.

For his part, Van Till said he believes the first chapters of the Bible ought to be read in light of the times in which they were written.

The biblical accounts of creation, he said, should be read in view of the doctrine they describe, not the history they recount.

"I see this as a rich, artistic account of creation. I believe that different cultures have different ways of picturing how God goes about his work as creator," he said.

What is important, he said, is the fact that God is the one who made, and continues to make, the universe. He is the entity behind the moon, stars, the earth and man.

"In the end, the doctrinal statements are the same," said Van Till. "We and all the world are dependent on God for our existence."

. . . It was the resurgence of the creation/evolution debate a few years ago that provided the impetus for him to write *The Fourth Day*. The debate itself has grown as people have become more and more unhappy with the science's "non-theistic" answers that science provides to the ultimate questions, he said.

Van Till believes the universe is around 15 billion years old, that it was formed by God and that it has, in fact, evolved in a variety of highly complex ways over time.

"I am doing theology, but for much of my biblical research I'm relying on other experts," he said.

. . . Van Till may question the historical authenticity of the early chapters of the Bible, but that doesn't mean that he reads scripture as fiction.

"I don't rule out miracles," he said. "I believe these are signs and wonders, special acts of God performed in the presence of human witnesses for the purpose of revealing something important for their salvation."

He believes in Christ's resurrection, in the virgin birth, in the account of Jesus bringing Lazarus back from the dead.

These events, he said, were witnessed by someone who wrote them down. The events chronicled in Genesis, however, were not actually written by a person who experienced them . . .

One can then understand the consternation of many conservatives in the CRC — especially since Van Till has been teaching these things for 20 years at Calvin College — to more than 2000 students in the past decade in his astronomy course (p. 75 of his book). Disturbing too, must be his report that "Though the majority of my students arrive familiar with the cosmic time scale and have no problems with it, there are always several in each class who have never given the matter serious consideration (assuming it, perhaps, to be mere nonsense) or who, having considered it, have very consciously rejected it in the sincere Christian belief that it is clearly contradicted by the teaching of the Bible, particularly by Genesis 1" Concerning this traditional interpretation, and those who still believe it, Van Till states, "I have since come to the conclusion that such an interpretation is naive" (p. 76). And that most of his students come to class without any problems with the "cosmic time scale and have no problems with it" ought itself to be very disturbing.

No wonder that the anguished cry was presented in "Questions and Answers" in the *Banner*, Dec. 8, 1986, "Why is evolution taught at Calvin College? More than a year ago the *Banner* acknowledged this, and no one has ever challenged these views on the pages of our church magazine. However, *Christian Renewal* (Feb. 3, 1986) discussed this problem openly. What can be done about this?"

The answer, written with words which must not be easily understood by the layman, states:

It is important to know whether the charges made in the journal you cite are true. In fairness to all, I asked Calvin College for an official response. This was furnished by Dr. Howard J. Van Till of the department of physics and astronomy:

"The question to which you have invited a response is trivial. Misapprehension arises, I believe, out of an extended failure to stress the importance of

certain distinctions. The biblically based doctrine of creation, which clearly informs us where we and the rest of the world stand in relationship to God, is often confused with *culturally* or *scientifically* inspired pictures of the creation's formative history. And the scientific concept of evolutionary development, which seeks to provide a description of the processes that make up cosmic history, is often confused with naturalistic denials of the reality of God's purposeful governance of that history.

"I am fully confident that every Calvin College professor firmly believes that we, along with the world in which we live, are God's creation. We heartily profess our faith in God, who, as our sovereign Creator, is our Originator, our Sustainer, our Governor, and the faithful Provider of our daily needs.

"We vigorously reject the philosophy of naturalistic evolutionism because it denies God's governance of 'natural' processes and because it attempts illegitimately to use the results of natural science to provide the appearance of support for an atheistic religious perspective.

"Now, as responsible stewards of God's creation, we are called to employ the tools of competent scholarship in the investigation of its properties, its behavior, and its formative history. We scientists, therefore, must meaningfully engage the concept of evolutionary development (a *scientific* concept with limited scope, not to be confused with the *philosophical* concept of naturalistic evolutionism), and we must honestly evaluate theories of development on the basis of their adequacy in accounting for the physical evidence of creation's formative history in an orderly and consistent manner."

So one is "naive" to believe in a literal account of creation as presented in Genesis 1. Indeed, the conservatives have great reason for concern. If I may apply some of Van Till's own language in describing Genesis 1 to his answer above, I would be inclined to say that if one removes the "packaging" of the answer, and gets at the "content", the substance would be: Yes, evolution is taught at Calvin College — but a "theistic" evolution.

AN ANGRY PROPHET'S PRAYER

(con't. from page 262)

antichrist to save them from the curse instead of looking to Christ and His cross? What about the nations that have, and even today are denying the believers sabbath-worship services and cast into prison or exile the faithful? You like to see that and see God's wisdom in it?

And even apart from that, we say with Paul that all things work together for good to those that love God. But were there not many, many things in your life that you wanted done differently? Did it all look *at that time* as though it was working for your good? A loved one who manifests a strong faith in God and has been a power in His church is snatched

away in what we call mid-life, while an enemy of the church is still very active and healthy beyond the fourscore years of the strong, and is able to harass and lead others against those who hold to the truth and fight the good fight of faith? You never *said* that God was unwise and did foolish deeds. But did you *always* praise Him for every work He performed, and did you confess His wisdom as well as His grace, mercy, and slowness to anger? We fight our anger by God's grace. But we too, if we are honest, will have to admit that we were often angry because of what God did. And it is that grace, mercy, and slowness to anger which are rooted in Christ's cross that forgives our anger and saves us from God's holy wrath.

FEATURE

Arie den Hartog

Reflections on our Departure from Singapore

I am writing this article at my desk in the study of our Randolph Church. We are thankful to the Lord that He has given us a place in one of our churches after our return home from Singapore. Our life as a family has started a whole new chapter. It would be hard to put into words what a great difference there is between life in Singapore and life here in the U.S.A. After laboring in Singapore and the Evangelical Reformed Church there for almost seven years it was very difficult for us to leave. Over the years we have grown to love the saints of God there very dearly. Yet we also believe that our departure was in the providence of the Lord. He called us to return and gave us a place in Randolph church. We are very happy to be here. We believe that our churches made the right decision when they decided to bring us home. It was time for us to leave the church there and commend the saints there to the grace of God. We were very thankful to the Lord that we could leave Singapore with such close bonds of Christian love between us and with peace in our hearts believing that the Lord would continue to keep and preserve His church there.

This is no doubt a very significant stage for the ERCS. They will now have to continue on their own. We believe they can by the grace of God. The church there continues to have a great task before it. We are thankful that the Lord has given to them two faithful pastors. Over the years of labor together we have also learned to esteem highly the brethren whom the Lord has raised up in their midst to be office bearers. We surely did not leave Singapore because there was little more work for us to do there. We were kept very busy until the very last day we were there. As is true of every faithful

and true church of Jesus Christ so the ERCS has the great responsibility to "contend for the faith which was delivered to them." We are thankful for having been used of the Lord in part to deliver to them the great heritage of the Reformed Faith. Our deep love for the church there causes us all the more earnestly to hope and pray that the ERCS will remain faithful to the truth in the coming years. We and they know that they are still relatively young in the faith and in their development. There are still very many things that they have to face in their church life which they have never before experienced. The devil will surely try very hard to lead them astray and to destroy them. Let us as churches continue often to remember them in prayer.

Most of our readers know that a good beginning has been made in the ERCS of starting a second congregation. By the time we left Singapore more than fifty brethren from the first congregation had indicated their desire and intention to be part of the second congregation. The organism of the church is now already in existence. Worship services are being held regularly at a beautiful facility obtained in the Lord's providence at the Singapore American School. We were very privileged to preach at the inaugural meeting. The church there is not yet officially instituted. It is hoped and planned that this will take place some time between six months and a year from now. This is largely dependent upon the Lord raising up men in the midst of the group qualified and called to serve as office bearers. We believe that it was a good move to start another congregation even though both of the congregations to begin with will be small compared to some of our larger congregations here in the U.S.A. Yet we believe it is good to have two places where the Word of God is being preached and where the standard of the Reformed faith is being raised. We

trust that in the providence of the Lord this will serve unto the extension of the church and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in Singapore. One of the greatest advantages of this move is that the ERCS will now be able to begin to develop a denominational church life. All of this will be very new for them. We hope and pray that our Protestant Reformed Churches can continue to give assistance and guidance especially in this area.

Brother Jaikishin Mahtani, who was trained in our seminary for three years, has now become Pastor Mahtani. We were very happy to witness that he is a faithful minister of the Word of God rightly dividing the Word of truth. Pastor Mahtani is now the pastor of the second congregation. He has been received very well by the members of the church and he is working very hard.

Mission work continues to be one of the greatest tasks of the ERCS. The church continues to grow there in a very wonderful and unusual way. Recently another group of seven young people were added to the church by confession of faith and baptism. Before we left we saw again that there were a number of regular newcomers at the worship services. Some of these had already asked for a new catechism class to be conducted to prepare them for baptism and church membership. There is obviously still a lot of mission work to do in Singapore. Though there are many churches in Singapore, still only a small percentage of the population are professing Christians. Also very few churches in Singapore are preaching the truths of the Reformed faith that we, with the ERCS, hold dear.

The church is also growing from within as the Lord continues to raise up new covenant homes in her midst. There are now, I believe, around 40 married couples. There are also at least that many children. Infant baptisms are a very frequent event in the church. There is talk about the beginning of catechism training for the children of the church. In a couple of years the oldest of the children will be ready for this. There is also discussion about the future covenant instruction of the children of the church. Whether it will in years to come be possible to have any form of Christian School remains to be seen.

One of the greatest concerns that we have after leaving Singapore is the matter of the future of the relationship between the PRC and the ERCS. Now that we do not have a missionary in Singapore it will not be so easy to keep up close ties. We as churches will have to work very hard at this. It is our earnest hope and prayer that we will continue to have a close and fruitful relationship as sister churches, and one that is of mutual benefit to both our denominations. Knowing both churches probably better than anyone else, we know how much we

need each other and how much we could benefit by sharing in each other's church life. Both of our churches in the providence of the Lord have their strengths and weaknesses. As I think about all of this, the question arises: What shall we do to maintain a close relationship and to prevent our relationship from degenerating into little more than a mere formal one? We will have to put a lot of real and concrete effort into this. We will have to continue to take a very keen interest in each other's church life. We will have to have the courage and love to continue to admonish and encourage and advise one another without causing offense and removing all offense that might arise. Above all, our relationship will continue if we continue together to love and defend and promote the common truth of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been given to us. There will be an important official aspect of this relationship. But also there must be the continuing spiritual and personal bond of friendship in the Lord. I hope that this will be maintained through personal correspondence and visits between the members of our two denominations, and above all through constant fervent prayer one for another.

We come also to a very significant stage as Protestant Reformed Churches. We now have one fewer missionary as a denomination than we have had in the past years. We hope that this will not continue for long. We need to expand our efforts of foreign missions through investigating new fields of labor and praying earnestly to the Lord that He will open new doors for us for the preaching of the gospel. We need young men who are called to the gospel ministry in our churches. It is truly a sad situation that we have so few men in our seminary at present. We need to do some real soul searching to determine the reason for this.

We have the vision that our work of foreign missions ought to be continued in the East. Perhaps in the providence of the Lord we can some day further help the ERCS, maybe in the area of training ministers or in helping them establish another congregation. The future is in the hands of the Lord. We also see great potential for future mission work in the countries around Singapore, especially in Malaysia. Before our return to the U.S.A. we had the opportunity to make a lengthy trip into Malaysia. We wanted to meet for the last time with beloved brethren in Malaysia whom we have gotten to know and love over the years of our stay in Singapore. We were greatly moved by their situation and need. We know of very little true Reformed preaching in the entire country of Malaysia. Perhaps in the providence of the Lord our churches could some day in some form do mission work in Malaysia. Personally I hope and pray that we can.

It will not be easy to get into Malaysia, or for that matter into any other foreign country today, to begin new mission work. Much preliminary ground work has to be done and it may be several years before a work can actually be started. We need to begin to do that preliminary work now. We need to have a vision for the future and an earnest

desire and great zeal to continue on in the great task of mission work for the glory of the Lord and for the salvation of His people among the nations. Let us be encouraged as churches with the blessing of the Lord upon His church in Singapore and continue to be faithful to our Lord's great commission.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

Confession of Faith (3)

"Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?"

This is the first question asked of those who make public confession of their faith.

The Scriptures emphasize the importance of faith. In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." In I John 5:4 the Apostle emphasizes the importance of faith when he says, "... and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Paul writes in Romans 14:23, "... whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

FAITH IS KNOWLEDGE

An important question in connection with confession of faith is: What is the content of the faith which we confess? What does faith believe?

Faith must have content, solid, intellectual content. Our Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that faith consists of knowledge and confidence. Knowledge, doctrinal knowledge is important in the one who is making confession of faith. He must "know Whom he has believed," II Timothy 1:12. The first

question asked at the time of public confession of faith speaks of "acknowledging" the doctrines of the Bible. The word "acknowledge" has in it the word "knowledge."

That faith is knowledge is plain from Scripture. In John 17:3 Jesus teaches, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." In I Timothy 4:3 the Apostle speaks of "believing and knowing the truth." From Hebrews 11:3 we learn that faith "understands."

A faith that is uninformed, that is without knowledge is not merely a weak faith, but it is non-existent, no faith at all. Faith must have content. And when we make confession of faith we must be able to give expression to the content of our faith.

Here the responsibility of the eldership comes in. At the time young people present themselves to make confession of faith, the elders must determine that these young people know the faith they are confessing. An examination must be conducted; questions must be asked that it may be clearly ascertained that the truth is known and understood by the one making confession of faith. One who knows next to nothing of the Reformed faith, although he may be living an upright life and say that he loves Jesus, must not be permitted to make confession of faith, but must be encouraged to receive further instruction.

But more than just the responsibility of the elders, the responsibility of the whole church

comes out here. If knowledge of the truth is required of our young people making confession of faith, we must be sure that in their childhood and youth these young men and women received thorough instruction in the truth. If our young people are to grow up knowing the truth, not perishing in ignorance, we must see to it that they have the preaching of the truth in the church. We must see to it that they receive instruction in the truth in our homes. We must see to it that, as God makes that possible, they receive sound instruction in the truth in the Christian schools. And we must see to it that this sound instruction is given in the catechism room. In many instances today the blame for the ignorance of the young people is not to be laid at the doorstep of the young people, but at the doorstep of the parents and the church. As in the days of the Judges, a generation grows up that knows not the Lord. But the fault today, as then, is that parents do not instruct their children.

THE DOCTRINES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The content of faith the first question describes as "the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments. . . ."

This indicates that the knowledge of faith is doctrinal knowledge. Reformed churches have always emphasized the importance of doctrine. Reformed churches ought to be characterized by precise doctrinal formulations and doctrinal sensitivity. The indifference on the part of many churches and many church members today to doctrine is only an indication of the weakness of the churches.

It is striking that when the Apostle begins to list the profit for the church of the inspired Scriptures the very first thing that he mentions is doctrine: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine . . ." When he exhorts the young pastor Timothy to be faithful in his ministry, Paul's charge to him is, "Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine . . ." The outstanding sign of the end-time, according to II Timothy 4:3, is that people ". . . will not endure sound doctrine . . ."

The doctrines to be known, believed, and confessed are said to be the doctrines "contained in the Old and New Testaments." This indicates that essential to all the other doctrines is the doctrine of Holy Scripture itself.

Faith in the divine inspiration, and therefore the infallibility of the Bible, is essential on the part of the young person making confession of faith. This must be determined with absolute certainty by the elders. Anyone who questions, has reservations about, or openly denies the inspiration of Scripture must not be permitted to make confession of faith.

Does the one confessing his faith believe that the

Holy Spirit guided the human writers of the Bible so that what they wrote was the Word of God and only the Word of God? Does he believe that there are errors in the Bible? Is the account of the creation and fall of man to be received as literal, reliable history? And what about the flood, the passage through the Red Sea, the conquest of Jericho, the miracles of Christ and the apostles?

Not only the doctrine of Holy Scripture, but the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture are also to be known and believed. The person making confession of faith must believe the fundamental doctrines set forth in the Bible. Examples would be: the trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, creation, the covenant, the sacraments, the church, the place of the law in the Christian life, the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, Christ's second coming, etc. He ought to know and be able to defend the Five Points of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election (predestination), limited atonement (particular redemption), irresistible grace, the perseverance and preservation of the saints.

Since faith is always personal, and the knowledge of faith is always spiritual knowledge (not mere intellectual knowledge), it ought to be ascertained how each of these doctrines applies personally to those making confession of faith. What does the truth of total depravity mean for you, personally? The death of Christ — was that a death for you? Of what significance for you is the truth of the church and the means of grace?

Essentially, however, faith is not faith in doctrines, but faith is faith in a Person. The Scriptures emphasize that the object of faith is Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, exalted Jesus Christ. To believe is to believe in (or, as the New Testament frequently puts it: "into") Jesus Christ. To the Philippian jailor Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," Acts 16:31. In II Timothy 1:12 Paul says, "For I know WHOM (not "what" but "whom") I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Confession of faith is essentially confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Does the young person believe in Jesus Christ? What does he believe about the Person of Jesus Christ? What does he believe about the work of Jesus Christ? Does he trust in Jesus Christ and in Him alone for all his salvation?

This is confession of faith! That is the teaching of Romans 10:9, 11: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

IN THIS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Not the least significant aspect of the first question for confession of faith is that we acknowledge the doctrines of the Scriptures as "taught here in this Christian Church."

It is important that the young people know why they are making confession of faith in a Protestant Reformed Church, and not some other church, or even some other Reformed church. This implies several things.

This implies, first of all, an acquaintance with the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches. The young person ought to know the highlights of that history. He ought to be able to answer such questions as: What led to the organization of our churches? Are our churches justified in their separate existence? Were the issues surrounding the formation of our denomination crucial issues, issues that affected the very heart of the Reformed faith?

In the second place, confessing faith in THIS church carries with it the conviction that the Protestant Reformed Churches are faithful manifestations of the true Church of Jesus Christ in the world. The young person had better be able in good conscience to say that, or he ought not to make confession of faith in these churches. This does not mean that the Protestant Reformed Churches are THE true Church, while all other churches are THE false church. That is not correct, neither have the Protestant Reformed Churches ever said this, although some have slanderously affirmed this. Nor does this mean that only PR's are going to heaven, or at least that all PR's are going to heaven.

But this does mean that before God and His Word we are convinced that we are a denomination of churches that manifests the marks of the true church in the world. We are not perfect — far from it! But we can say, we had better be able to say, that the Word is preached in truth in our churches, the sacraments are rightly administered, and Christian discipline is faithfully exercised.

This is the church to which I am called to belong. And this is the church of which I must remain a member. This is the third thing implied in confession of faith in THIS church. Since this is a true church of Jesus Christ in which the young person confesses his faith, he must be determined to be a faithful member. He may not for any reason leave this church: a job, a boy friend or a girl friend, a spouse.

This is a serious matter. The seriousness of this is that this first question is answered affirmatively not just before the church, but before the very face of God. How is it possible that we solemnly affirm before God that we acknowledge the doctrine of the Scriptures as taught in THIS Christian church, and then shortly thereafter leave that church and even turn our back on the church altogether? Those who do shall one day give account before God!

The believing young person confesses his faith, acknowledging the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments as taught in this Christian church because he understands them to be "the true and complete doctrine of *salvation*." Believing these truths, he is saved! Confessing these truths, he is saved! Being a faithful member of the church that teaches these truths, he is saved!

BIBLE STUDIES

Jason L. Kortering

Leviticus — Reconciliation Through Sacrifice

7. Holiness expressed in the keeping of specific feasts (23:1-24:23). The first one mentioned is the Sabbath, no work is allowed on the seventh day in order that they may gather before the Lord (23:1-3).

Then we have the *Feast of the Passover* mentioned, the fourteenth day of the first month (23:4, 5), the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, the fifteenth day of the same month for seven days, no work is to be per-

formed during this time, the beginning and ending of the feast is to include a public convocation to the Lord, (23:6-8), the *Feast of the Firstfruits*, at harvest time, they were to bring a sheaf of the Firstfruits to the priest and he would wave it before the Lord. The people were to bring a lamb as a burnt offering presented to the Lord as both a meat offering and a drink offering, (23:9-14), the *Feast of Pentecost*, they were to count out seven Sabbaths up to fifty days from the time they brought the offering for the Firstfruits, and bring another meal offering. This time they were to bring baked loaves of bread (not sheaves of grain), and offer various animals as burnt offering (with meat and drink offerings), sin offering, peace offering, accompanied by a day of holy convocation. They were specifically instructed to leave the corners of the field for the poor to glean (23:15-22). We then have the *Feast of Trumpets*, on the seventh month. The first day of the month was declared a Sabbath. The unique feature for this feast was the blowing of trumpets to call the people to come together for a holy convocation. They were to avoid servile work and present offerings before the Lord, (23:23-25). The *Great Day of Atonement* is mentioned. During this time, the tenth day of the seventh month, special mention is made of "afflicting their souls", so necessary that if one did not humble himself before the Lord and come with an offering that soul was to be cut off from the people. To do this the people had to avoid work and busy themselves in worship, (23:26-32). Finally mention is made of the *Feast of Tabernacles*. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month for seven days, the people would offer sacrifices to the Lord, dwell in booths, and wave branches before the Lord as expression of their joy. The week was to begin and end in a holy convocation, a Sabbath. In this way they would properly commemorate their exodus from Egypt, (23:33-44). We then have some general instruction about the maintenance of the tabernacle. The oil must be brought so that the lights burn continually, (24:1-4), the loaves of shewbread were to be baked and set before the Lord not only, but also be used for food for the priests (24:5-9). The incident of the young man, the son of an Israelitish mother and Egyptian father, when he cursed the name of the Lord and was stoned to death upon the direct instruction of the Lord, is recorded. Reminder is given also that anyone who kills another person must be killed, blemish for blemish, beast for beast whether this involves an Israelitish person or a stranger, (24:10-23).

8. Details are given on the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee (25:1-55). When the children of Israel come to the land of Canaan they are to plow

and harvest for six years, and the seventh was to be a year of rest for the Lord. What grew of itself in their fields was not to be harvested. All belonged to God and they were to live day by day as He provided (25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee was to be every fiftieth year. It began when the trumpet was blown on the Day of Atonement. This year also was marked by no laboring for harvest nor cultivating of grapes. Rather they had to eat from the land as God provided, (25:8-13). We receive further details as to how the observance of this Year of Jubilee would affect their property. Value of land was determined by its acquisition according to Jubilee. Fear of not having enough food for a year, or even two in the event of Jubilee, was quieted by the promise that Jehovah would bless them with enough in the previous year for three years if they needed it. They were forbidden to sell the land, and if poverty necessitated their having it redeemed, this would be returned on this year. Distinction is made between walled property and open fields as it relates to redemption (25:14-34). We then receive information on how the Year of Jubilee would affect the people themselves, especially the poor. Usury was forbidden, and they were to help the poor. Even if a man were sold for debts, he was not to be a slave, but a hired servant. Bond servants were to be taken from the heathen. On Jubilee all debts were canceled and all freed with certain exceptions stated. Canceling of debts on Jubilee would be proportionate to the years of service, (25:35-55).

9. Pronouncements of blessings and curses from Jehovah (26:1-46). The key-note of the entire law is worship Jehovah alone, idols forbidden, keep the Sabbaths and reverence the sanctuary (26:1, 2). Then we have a series of blessings which are promised if Israel will be faithful to God, for example rain, abundant harvest, chase away their enemies, give them many children, God will dwell among them and keep them free (26:3-13). This is followed by a series of judgments for the opposite: if Israel will not keep God's commands and breaks His covenant, He will slay them before their enemies, dry up the land so no harvest will come, plagues will come, wild beasts will destroy them, the enemy will destroy them, they will even eat their children for hunger, their dead bodies will be strewn about, desolation will be in the land, they will be scattered among the heathen. If they confess their sins, God will remember His covenant, no matter how bad things are, (26:14-46).

10. In conclusion, specific instructions relating to previous teachings is given (27:1-34). Details concerning vows are mentioned. As voluntary obligations they were not included in the previous requirements. Specific amounts of money to be pledged are stated for each age group, male and

female, (27:1-8). This is followed by the value and kind of animals that may be pledged (27:9-13), a house (27:14, 15), land (27:16-25). Specific instruction is given concerning those things which belonged to the Lord and how they were affected by the vow, such as the firstlings of animals (27:26, 27), devoted things (27:28, 29), the things tithed (27:30-34).

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

As we pointed out before, the great contribution of Leviticus to our spiritual understanding rests in the sacrifice. In this book we have both the way of being right with God (covering of the blood which is basic for our righteousness) and the joy of being right with God (expressed in our walk of holiness). Even though this gospel truth is here set forth in the Old Testament form of type and shadow, its message is as true for us today as then. As we examine the details in which Israel had to bring the sacrifices to God, we thankfully gaze by faith upon the perfect sacrifice God gave us in His Son. What a privilege it is for us not to lay our hands upon the head of a goat, but by faith to place our faith upon the Son of God. We do not look upon the fire on an altar. We bow silently before the cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Through blood we are reconciled to God, not by the blood of animals, but by the precious blood of His Son.

So also for our joyful response. Israel was instructed to show its joy in dwelling in booths, waving palm branches, carefully keeping minute details of the law. We do it from the spiritual response of thankful worship and a daily walk in holiness unto the Lord. The law is now written in our hearts. Justification and sanctification are forever joined together by our merciful Father.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does Leviticus fit into the canon of Scripture, especially that of the Pentateuch?

2. The keynote of Leviticus is holiness (occurs some 87 times). What is the difference between justification and sanctification? How is this difference indicated in this book (the two main divisions) and how is this distinction important for us to keep in mind?

3. Reflect on the method of sacrificing. Trace the history of sacrifice as a form of worship. Here in Leviticus, sacrifices are distinguished as burnt offerings, meal offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings (first 5 chapters). What was the main difference between these offerings and what special meaning was there in each?

4. The Old Testament saints expressed the following elements in their sacrifices: a form of approach unto God (both of reconciliation and renewal), they dedicated themselves and their possessions to God, they gave to God of their possessions, they expressed praise to Him. Consider how our worship of God includes these same elements.

5. Discuss how Christ was present in the Old Testament sacrifices and illustrate by referring to specific elements of the sacrifice.

6. Show from this book that God

- a. Instructed Israel in *how* to express their holiness in response to their forgiveness of sin.
- b. *Expected* them to live a holy life, with the appropriate warnings of punishment.
- c. Does this apply to us, even though we are in the New Testament?

7. Describe the feasts and explain what their purpose was in the holy life of Israel. Include the feasts of Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles.

8. Reflect on the holy life of Israel and our holy life. What were similarities and differences?

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

An Angry Prophet's Prayer

It would certainly be wrong to credit Jonah for what he did not do. But it would also be unfair to accuse him of sins which he did not commit. He is

to be rebuked for fleeing to Tarshish when called to go to preach in Nineveh. God's visitation upon him in that raging storm at sea and his own words to the

sailors reveal his sinfulness. He may also be rebuked for not going to Nineveh as soon as the fish spewed him out on dry land. But we err if we say that he did not rejoice in the fact that there were converts in Nineveh, men and women who received God's word and repented of their sins.

In the first place, let it be stated that only a small fraction of the people in Nineveh did turn from their sins and unto God. It was by no means a wholesale conversion of the city. It is true that the whole city was ordered by the king to repent and put on sackcloth and pray for the sparing of the city. But that does not mean that all were sincere and did turn to God. Jonah certainly had reason to doubt that such a widespread conversion would take place. He knew of isolated conversions of Gentile individuals such as Rahab and Ruth, but not of a whole Gentile nation or city. To be sure, the whole city was filled with fear of destruction. They believed that it could and even would happen, if they continued on their sinful way. But that is not conversion, or saving faith. Do not forget that the devil also believes, and has seen thousands of times that God punished sin. And he does not want to go to hell. But he has not the smallest fraction of saving faith.

Many unbelievers have been told by their physician that they have but a few days to live. These unbelievers do not doubt that death is coming. They feel it themselves in their bones, that is, in the disease which brought them to that physician. That they believe his word is plain from the fact that they make out a will and try to set their house in order. But this does not mean that they believe in Christ. They may believe that God is going to take away their lives, but there is no sorrow in their hearts over their sins. There is no desire for salvation in the blood of Christ, and that they be delivered from their sinful nature. In the days of Ahab and Elijah the people were convinced when God sent fire down upon Elijah's altar, while Baal could not even hear his prophets cry for fire upon their altar. They even cried out, "Jehovah, He is the God; Jehovah, He is the God." And they waited for rain, but not for salvation. They wanted to be delivered from the drought, but not from the power of sin that held them.

So it was with most of Nineveh after Jonah's preaching. And the very fact that we never hear again after this of Nineveh as a place where there were believing children of God, shows that it was a very small minority of people who did sincerely repent and separate from their sins. And remember that God told Abraham that if there were only ten

righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah, He would not send hail and fire down upon them. Do not forget likewise that in Numbers 14:2 we read that the Israelites said, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt!" or "Would God that we had died in the wilderness." This was after the report of the ten spies who told Israel that they could not capture the land because of the giants in the land. Yes, even in Israel at times there was only a figurative handful of true believers. When then the leaders urge the whole nation to put on sackcloth and pray this does not mean that there is a mass conversion and turning to God in true faith. And there is nothing strange from that point of view in Jonah's actions and disappointment when the city is spared. He had reason to believe that some of this, yea much in this heathen nation, was only outward appearance and fear of punishment, but not fear of God in the sense of faith that wants deliverance from the power and love of sin.

Besides, it is not true, as pointed out in a previous installment of this series on the book of Jonah, that Jonah fled to Tarshish because of a sinful nationalism which preferred Israel from a fleshly, carnal point of view. He did not limit, or want limited, the salvation in Christ which God had promised to Abraham and his seed. As a prophet of God he *did* want to see Gentiles brought to the faith and saved from God's holy wrath. And he did rejoice in the salvation of Gentiles in Nineveh. His prayer recorded in Jonah 4:2 reveals that he realized very emphatically that his preaching could be used by God to turn Gentiles from unbelief to faith, and from sin to repentance and worship to God.

No, Jonah's problem was that the ungodly element in Nineveh was such a great threat in his eyes, not to Israel as a nation, but to the Old Testament Church. He was looking at the Jews as the church of God, not as the nation that descended from Abraham and his seed. Granted that even the king repented and could order a city-wide putting away of sins, this would not insure the conversion of the majority of the nation, nor that in the coming years this nation would not be a threat to Israel. Do we not read in II Kings 15:29 that Assyria, whose capital city was Nineveh, carried away as captives Israelites from parts of the Kingdom of Israel such as Gilead, Galilee and all the land of Naphtali? Jonah had reason to fear what Nineveh could do to Israel. And we may be sure that, when after forty days there was no visitation by God, the unbelievers went back to their evil ways and considered Jonah to be a false prophet. Jonah may even have seen some of this after the forty days, and went out of the city thinking that God would still destroy it.

Jonah's foolish cry that it was better for him to

die and not to live was not due to an accusation of the Ninevites that he was a false prophet, and because he was ridiculed by the unbelievers for presenting to them a false warning. His very message indirectly contained the possibility of the sparing of the city, if they repented. He preached fully aware of the fact that a mass repentance would bring a continued life to the city. It was not personal embarrassment that brought forth his cry for death. All he would have to do is to go back to Canaan, not build a booth outside the city to see whether God would still destroy the city.

Jonah was angry because a wicked city was spared. He did not despise God's grace, mercy, and slowness to anger. He did not accuse God of injustice. In fact, he attributed Nineveh's continued existence after the forty days as due to God's grace, mercy, and slowness to anger. He confesses that God is all these. And he does not want God's grace upon any but those whom God brings to repentance. No mercy does he want shown to enemies of God. And in this he is correct. God's grace and mercy come to man through Christ and never apart from Him. He told man, in the very first sermon preached to man after he fell, that salvation would come only through The Seed of the Woman, Whom Paul in Galatians 3:16 points out is Christ. To Adam God also clearly indicated that all God's grace and mercy comes through the cross of Christ, when the seed of the serpent bruises His heel. Jonah was absolutely correct in believing that the unbelievers in Nineveh, the enemies of the church of God, can have no grace and mercy shown them, for Christ did not die for them. The human race is divided into only two classes of people: those who bruised Christ's heel and have no use for His church, but instead have enmity towards all who show faith in Christ, and those whom Christ saved by His blood and Spirit, and who hate sin of every kind. There just is no legal basis for the just and righteous God to show grace, mercy and slowness to anger unto those who do not belong to Christ, are not connected to Him by God's sovereign, eternal, unchangeable election. That Jonah does not question.

Jonah does not accuse God of being unjust. Would he dare to pray to God, as he did, that God

would take his life away, and say that it is better for him to die than to live, if God is unjust, and he would have to appear before that unjust god? The very fact that he prays to God shows that his trust is still in God as the God of just mercy, grace, and slowness to anger. And it is exactly because of these that Jonah is not smitten right then and there for such anger.

But put yourself in Jonah's shoes for a moment and try to understand his problem. Would you not rather die than see God's church wiped off the face of this earth by the antichrist, who is coming and will kill the saints left and right, burn down the churches, or hand them over to the ungodly to use as places of carnal, lustful entertainment? Would you want to see God show the antichristian forces some "common grace"? and make their eyes stand out with fatness? Would you not rather with Jonah want to be lifted out of those awful days and be brought into the glory of Christ's kingdom?

To die in sin is to go to hell. Jonah was not praying for that when he prayed that his life might be taken away. His problem was that he could not see God's *wisdom* when He spared this "great city" that was such a threat to the church of that day.

No, Jonah was not unconcerned about the well-being of those who did repent. He knew how God saved Rahab and her family, when the walls of Jericho all around their house fell down. He had every reason to believe that God would spare the believers. In fact he did not even know the exact way that God would destroy the city, if there was no repentance. But to spare such a fierce enemy of the church, to spare the capital city of a nation that a few years later did attack the Kingdom of Israel did not seem wise to Jonah.

And before we in pride lift ourselves above Jonah and speak of *his* folly, let us, who on this side of the cross of Christ and with far more enlightenment than Jonah had, look at ourselves. You never questioned God's wisdom? You approved of every work He performed that touched your life? What about the so-called Christians who attack the church today with false doctrines and try to lead your children away from the truth, and to look for the

(con't. on page 253)

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

March 1, 1987

With this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, we continue the profiles of our churches with a profile of the Doon, Iowa, Protestant Reformed Church.

In March of 1926, out of the upheaval of the common grace question, a very small group formed the local Protestant Reformed congregation of Doon. This group had its early struggles; no pastor,

no church home, and heading into the depression years. This group also had its early problems in regard to growth and falling away. It remained a small and struggling group between the corn rows of the far tip of Northwest Iowa. Many may even have often wondered if Doon still existed.

By the grace of God who is the Father of all history, Doon finally started to thrive under the teaching of faithful pastors and a renewed dedication to the truth of the Scriptures; this took place through the upheaval of the early fifties.

For thirty some years of slow but steady and noticeable growth Doon now numbers some fifty-plus families with around two hundred forty souls.

Doon is a relatively young congregation. In their own Protestant Reformed grade school they have about fifty pupils, with four teachers instructing. There are also about fifty children below school age. Their school opened its doors in the fall of 1967, and has operated faithfully ever since.

In times past Doon was made up almost entirely of farmers, but this has changed drastically in latter years. Many of the congregation now work in small industries nearby.

Doon worshipped in an old church purchased from the Baptists about fifty years ago. This was replaced in 1975 by a new edifice and in 1985 a new parsonage was built. Both are located on half of a city block in the northeastern part of Doon.

The most enjoyable and interesting aspect of the Doon congregation has been its slow but steady growth, its desire to stand firm in the faith and truths of Scripture, and the faithfulness of our covenant God in supplying all of their spiritual needs through faithful shepherds over the years. The results of all of this have been a peaceful, loving congregation, spared from the public gross sins which are often devastating to small congregations.

Edward Van Egdom, who supplied the above information, concludes his letter to me by saying "thanks be to God and to Him be the glory alone. We are almost as peaceful as the little city in which we live. Come to see us some time."

From Edmonton we learned that the Lord willing, there could be one more Protestant Reformed congregation in Canada. Several families of our church in Edmonton live in the neighboring city of Lacombe, a city about eighty miles to the south. This means they must travel quite a distance every Sunday just to get to church. These members have decided to seek Classis' advice and approval to organize as a separate congregation. Let us all

remember this matter in our prayers as it will come before Classis West in March.

An office bearers conference is being planned for Tuesday, March 3 in Hull, Iowa on the subject "Dispensationalism". A morning and an afternoon session are being planned.

Pastors in the greater Grand Rapids area have once again organized a Marriage Seminar for all those who are planning to be married during this coming year, as well as those who have been married within the past two years.

These seminars are all scheduled to be held on Thursday evenings at 7:30 and will meet at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church beginning February 12 and running for five more weeks after that. Subjects for these seminars were listed as follows: Feb. 12 — The Foundation, Feb. 19 — The Husband, Feb. 26 — The Wife, March 5 — Finances, March 12 — Sex, Children, March 19 — Devotions, etc.

I also noticed that beginning Feb. 1, Rev. Haak of our Lynden, Protestant Reformed Church began a series on Marriage and the Family with a sermon entitled Marriage's Divine Origin.

It was also mentioned here last time that Lynden is trying to deal with an overcrowding problem. To follow up on that idea, I can inform you that on February 5, a Thursday evening, the entire congregation of Lynden was asked to gather at the Word of Life Church. The church was open at 7:00 PM for the congregation to browse around in. At 8:15 the members gathered in the auditorium at which time Rev. Haak gave a short meditation based on II Peter 1:10. After this the New Building Committee answered questions on the many options facing the congregation. Coffee and fellowship followed in the basement.

Lynden also began airing their church services on radio station KNIR (1550 AM) on February 8 between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M.

Due to Rev. Engelsma's absence on church visitation to Classis West, the Council of South Holland arranged a pulpit exchange with Rev. Van Overloop, their missionary, for the evening service of January 18.

On February 13, young people from area churches gathered in Grand Village Mall in Grandville, Michigan for a Mystery Person Hunt. If I have this straight, several people disguised themselves and just walked the mall as regular shoppers. The object for the young people was to discover these disguised shoppers. It could be embarrassing if you guessed wrong. Games and refreshments were provided afterward at Covenant Christian High School.

NOTICE!!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year, are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee, Mr. Larry Meulenberg, Secretary, 342 Begole S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. Phone number is: (616) 453-8466. This contact should be made before the next meeting of the Committee on April 1, 1987, the Lord willing.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 10, 1987, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN VAN DEN TOP, observe their 35th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful to our covenant God for the years He has given them and the faithful Christian instruction they have given us. We pray God's blessings continue with them in the years ahead.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him." (Deut. 7:9)

Alan and Viola De Boer
Bradley and Andon
Marvin and LaDonna Van Den Top
Jessica

Steve and LaVon Abma
Jodi and Janae

Doon, Iowa

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sympathy to Henry Bergman in the death of his sister, MARY BERGMAN.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (I Thess. 4:14)

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

NOTICE!!!

The new Clerk of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church is; MR. BEN VAN DER MOLEN, 504 MONROE ST., PELLA, IOWA 50219.

NOTICE!!!

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington, is seeking a Junior High School teacher for the 1987-1988 school year. Teachers of social studies and/or science are especially invited to apply. Those interested may call Albert De Boer (206) 384-4148 or John Hilton (206) 988-6032 (home) or (206) 354-5436 (school). Applications should be sent to: COVENANT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, 9088 NORTHWOOD ROAD, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON 98264.

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the Standard Bearer.*

NOTICE!!!

The South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School seeks applications for an elementary school teacher for the 1987-1988 academic year. Please send resumé to Board Secretary, James Lan-ting, P.O. Box 156, South Holland, Illinois 60473.

NOTICE!!!

The Protestant Reformed Church of Wellington, New Zealand announces the following trio: Revs. Kenneth Koole, Rodney Miersma, and Thomas Miersma.

— Committee for Contact With Other Churches

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1987-88 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 19, 1987 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

Pre-Seminary Students:

A transcript of grades from high school and college (if any), a letter of testimony from the student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician must accompany the application.

Seminary Students:

A testimonial from the student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, a certificate of health from a reputable physician, and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. All applicants to the seminary department must have completed the equivalent of a four-year college education (125 semester hours) and must meet the course requirements for entrance to the seminary department. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All seminary department applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student can not appear at the March 19th meeting, notification of this fact along with a suggested interview date must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

Jon Huisken, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

"Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is accepting applications for a full-time teaching position. Applicants should be willing and able to teach Business Courses, English, and Physical Education. Applicants should have a broad-based educational background. Applications may also be submitted for the position of Choir Director, Band Director and Librarian. Applicants must possess secondary certification."

"Inquiries or formal letters of application should be sent to Covenant Christian High School, 1401 Ferndale S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504. Attention: Miss Agatha Lubbers, principal and Dr. R. Van Putten, Education Committee Chairman. Please include a resumé."