

The STANDARD BEARER

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

Do you know:

1. That John Calvin believed that Moses wrote *history* in Genesis 1, ff.?
2. That John Calvin believed that creation took place in six days?
3. That John Calvin believed that the world is about six thousand years old?
4. That John Calvin believed that we cannot read God's revelation in creation and history except through the spectacles of the Scriptures?

See Editorial, p. 293

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Ans. First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, who has manifested himself in his word, for all things, he hath commanded us to ask him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of his divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded, that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as he has promised us in his word.

Ques. 118. What has God commanded us to ask of him?

Ans. All things necessary for soul and body; which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer he himself taught us. Upon this follows the Lord's Prayer. Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 45.

"Behold, he prayeth."

God said this concerning Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, after the Lord had appeared to him on the way to Damascus.

Paul had been brought up according to the strict laws of the Pharisees. He had been taught to pray already at his mother's knee. During the thirty six years of his life he must have addressed God in a formal prayer many times.

But now he had been struck with blindness and sat in a house on Straight Street in Damascus, reviewing his life under the power of the Holy Spirit. For the first time he realized how spiritually blind he had always been, particularly in rejecting the Christ and persecuting his followers. Day and night he prayed for God's forgiving mercies.

Even while he prayed, God spoke to Ananias, instructing him to restore Paul's sight, assure him of God's pardon and inform him that he was a chosen vessel to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul had learned to pray!

We think of the disciples, who had witnessed the Lord in long hours of close communion with the Father, and had heard Him pray. They had never known any one to pray as He did. Therefore they asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray." They wanted Him to teach them, even as a little child is taught at mother's knee.

With our Catechism we now approach the subject of prayer, not for an abstract discussion of the subject, but rather as the highest expression of our thankfulness to God for all the riches of His salvation. May we do so with a true, spiritual, childlike desire to learn to pray!

What is prayer? Prayer is one of God's most essential gifts of grace to His people in Christ. Prayer is access to the throne of grace through our Advocate, Jesus Christ, the Righteous. True prayer is aroused in our hearts through faith, by the power

of the Holy Spirit. We think of Jacob wrestling with the Angel of Jehovah and pleading for His blessing. We think of Hannah beseeching God for a Samuel. And our thoughts turn to the publican in the temple, pleading: "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner."

Prayer is addressing, calling upon God who permits us to make all our needs known in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. This includes trust, rejoicing in the Lord, singing songs in the night, worshipping with praise and adoration. "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord," Psalm 105:1-3.

Prayer is all that, but even more. For in prayer we enter into God's presence, we approach before His face, we bow in worship and adoration, we pour out our souls before Him who knows our weakness and our frailty, who remembers that we are dust. Prayer is casting ourselves upon Christ, clinging to His cross, seeking Him as our Refuge and Strength, the ever present Help in every need. Prayer is intercession for our fellow believers in the blessed experience of the communion of saints, knowing that our prayers intermingle with the prayers of all the saints as they ascend to heaven.

Prayer is all that, and also more. Prayer is covenant fellowship with the God of our salvation, experiencing His nearness, His approval and blessing. It is the closest that we can possibly come to heaven in this life! Our God says to us: "Seek ye My face", and our heart responds: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

We need no letter of recommendation, as with a dignitary. We need no appointment, as with a doctor. We are not put on a waiting list or on hold. We need no telephone or other means of communication. There is no time of the day or night that the channel of communication is closed. God has prepared for us an open line of communication through Jesus Christ, whereby our hearts have

direct contact with the heart of God!

Need we still ask: "Why is prayer necessary for Christians"? The answer is obvious. God requires it. Scripture urges us in no uncertain terms: "Seek the Lord, while (since) he may be found; call upon him while (since) he is near." We can add to that: God requires it as the chief expression of thankfulness. What could God require of us that is more blessed than that? Even more, what a wonderful way He has of requiring it. He creates us as rational, moral creatures who are able to respond to Him! We desire, we think, we speak, we act. God re-creates us as new creatures in Christ that we may know Him, love Him, and serve Him in love. We approach as empty vessels to the overflowing Fountain of every good and perfect gift to receive out of His fulness more than we can ask or think. Why does a newly-born babe naturally seek its mother's breast? Why does a small child confidently ask mother for a cookie or a slice of bread? For that same reason the child of God seeks Father's fellowship and blessing, which are more to Him than life itself.

Our Book of Instruction asks about the requisites of a true prayer that is acceptable to God, and which He will hear.

We can enter into God's presence only with a deep awareness in our hearts that God is GOD! Fear and awesome reverence must fill our souls as we approach the Holy, Righteous, Almighty and Eternal God who dwells in the dazzling brightness of His eternal perfections, God above all, blessed forever! "He that cometh to God must believe that He is," Hebrews 11:6. We are not like the pagans who worship the god of their choice. Nor may we address God as if He were our equal. Only God can tell us who and what He is, as He does in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. We can know Him only by a true and living faith, wrought in our hearts continuously by the Holy Spirit. Before we enter into the sanctuary we should be deeply aware of His eternal majesty as the ever blessed, adorable Jehovah! Well may we pause before we utter a word, that our words may be few and proper!

We must also be filled with a deep awareness of ourselves. We are mere, insignificant creatures of the dust. God has no need of us, but we are sorely in need of Him. Moreover, we are sinful creatures who have grossly transgressed all His commandments, and fail to keep any of them. Even our prayers at their very best are polluted with sin. God has every reason to banish us from His presence, and would necessarily do so, if it were not that He has created access to His throne through our Mediator Jesus Christ. No prayer is complete without an expressed or implied confession of sin.

No prayer reaches the throne of grace unless it is sent up in Jesus' Name. For God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Finally, prayer includes an awareness of our great need. "He who comes to God must believe . . . that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," Heb. 11:6. James warns us in his epistle that "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Moreover, "Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss," James 4:2, 3. Most of our petitions are so carnal, so earthly and selfish, so half-hearted, that God in His mercy refuses to grant them. We ask for the forgiveness of our sins, yet we refuse to forsake them. We ask for sanctification, but we still cling to the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. James says in the first chapter of his epistle, "If any of you lack wisdom (or any other blessing, for that matter), let him ask of God, that giveth liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord," 1:5-7.

We must seek diligently. Often we are amazed at the fact that our prayers are no sooner uttered, or the answer is there. God was preparing the answer even before we prayed. But there are also times when heaven seems closed, and our prayers arise no higher than the ceiling. We wonder whether God has turned His back on us and shut us off from His presence. Has God forgotten to be kind? Will He withhold His mercies forever? God undoubtedly is telling us something. He certainly teaches us to storm His throne with our bitter need. He wants us to ask, but also to seek; to seek, but also to knock, even until heaven's door is once more opened to us. Through all our prayers and supplications, and through all our diligent seeking even day and night, we learn to surrender our will completely to Father's will. For His will alone is good! His way is the only good way!

What, then, must be the content of our prayers? What must be our greatest need and our strongest desire? That God's name be exalted in us, by us, round about us, come what may! That His kingdom come, in which we may serve Him in heavenly perfection, and that eternally! That His will, which is always wise and good, may be carried out in all its detail! That we may be assured of Father's daily care, that our sins be forgiven, and that we may be kept by the power of God from all evil and may grow in grace and sanctification unto the day of our complete deliverance, to dwell with God in His house forever!

For God's is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever! Amen.

Lord, teach us to pray!

EDITORIAL

Why Evolution? (4) Van Till and Calvin

Before continuing with my critique of Dr. Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day*, I must call your attention to his appeal to John Calvin.

It is not uncommon, of course, that men like to clothe themselves with the prestige and the exegetical and theological authority of John Calvin, especially if they themselves go by the name of Calvinists. After all, Calvin is known and acknowledged by many as "the prince of exegetes." Besides, the theological opinions of John Calvin carry great weight; and unquestionably, if one has Calvin on his side in things theological, he has strong support. Further, if one can quote or refer to Calvin in connection with one's views, he leaves the impression of orthodoxy.

I was reminded of this by the opening paragraph of Chapter 3 of *The Fourth Day*, where Dr. Van Till makes a reference to Calvin as follows:

In an apt metaphor, John Calvin referred to Scripture as the "spectacles" that we need in order to sharpen our perception of God's revelation in human history and in the physical world. Applying that metaphor to our present concern, how can we say that Scripture clarifies our view of the heavens? What do we learn from the Bible about stars? When we view stars through the spectacles of Scripture, what do we see?

It is also true, however, that frequently men quote or refer to Calvin only *up to a point* or only in so far as it suits their purposes. And therefore it is also true that frequently when one investigates a little farther, he discovers that a writer does not really agree with Calvin at all; or rather, that Calvin does not agree with him.

Interestingly enough, upon investigation I discovered this to be the case with respect to Dr. Van Till's reference to Calvin. It is certainly true that John Calvin refers to Scripture as the "spectacles"

which we need in order to read and understand God's revelation in human history and in creation. In fact, Calvin insists that without those spectacles one cannot read that revelation. But it is worth our while to take note of the context in which he makes reference on at least one occasion (Calvin uses the figure more than once) to those "spectacles" of the Scriptures.

Calvin writes rather extensively about creation in Book I of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Book I, Chapter XIV, is entitled, "In The Creation Of The World, And All Things In It, The True God Distinguished By Certain Marks From Fictitious Gods." Already in Section 1 of this chapter we learn that Calvin considered Genesis 1 to be *history*. We also learn in this same paragraph that Calvin held that the world was about six thousand years old. In the first paragraph of this section we read this (quotations are from the Beveridge translation):

"Although Isaiah justly charges the worshippers of false gods with stupidity, in not learning from the foundations of the earth, and the circle of the heavens, who the true God is (Isa. xl. 21); yet so sluggish and grovelling is our intellect, that it was necessary he should be more clearly depicted, in order that the faithful might not fall away to Gentile fictions. The idea that God is the soul of the world, though the most tolerable that philosophers have suggested, is absurd; and, therefore, it was of importance to furnish us with a more intimate knowledge in order that we might not wander to and fro in uncertainty. Hence God was pleased that a history of the creation should exist — a history on which the faith of the Church might lean without seeking any other God than Him whom Moses sets forth as the Creator and Architect of the world. First, in that history, the period of time is marked so as to enable the faithful to ascend by an un-

broken succession of years to the first origin of their race and of all things. This knowledge is of the highest use not only as an antidote to the monstrous fables which anciently prevailed both in Egypt and the other regions of the world, but also as a means of giving a clearer manifestation of the eternity of God as contrasted with the birth of creation, and thereby inspiring us with higher admiration. We must not be moved by the profane jeer, that it is strange how it did not sooner occur to the Deity to create the heavens and the earth, instead of idly allowing an infinite period to pass away, during which thousands of generations might have existed, while the present world is drawing to a close before it has completed its six thousandth year. Why God delayed so long it is neither fit nor lawful to inquire. Should the human mind presume to do it, it could only fail in the attempt, nor would it be useful for us to know that God, as a trial of the modesty of our faith, has been pleased purposely to conceal. It was a shrewd saying of a good old man, who when some one pertly asked in derision what God did before the world was created, answered he made a hell for the inquisitive (August. Confess., lib. xi. c. 12). This reproof not less weighty than severe, should repress the tickling wantonness which urges many to indulge in vicious and hurtful speculation."

In the very next paragraph of this same section we find one of the references to the Scriptures as "spectacles":

In fine, let us remember that that invisible God, whose wisdom, power, and justice, are incomprehensible, is set before us in the history of Moses as in a mirror, in which his living image is reflected. For as an eye, either dimmed by age or weakened by any other cause, sees nothing distinctly without the aid of glasses, so (such is our imbecility) if Scripture does not direct us in our inquiries after God, we immediately turn vain in our imaginations. Those who now indulge their petulance, and refuse to take warning, will learn, when too late, how much better it had been reverently to regard the secret counsels of God, than to belch forth blasphemies which pollute the face of heaven. Justly does Augustine complain that God is insulted whenever any higher reason than his will is demanded (Lib. de Gent.). He also in another place wisely reminds us that it is just as improper to raise questions about infinite periods of time as about infinite space (De Civit. Dei). However wide the circuit of the heavens may be, it is of some definite extent. But should any one expostulate with God that vacant space remains exceeding creation by a hundredfold, must not every pious mind detest the presumption? Similar is the madness of those who charge God with idleness in not having pleased

them by creating the world countless ages sooner than he did create it. In their cupidity they affect to go beyond the world, as if the ample circumference of heaven and earth did not contain objects numerous and resplendent enough to absorb all our senses; as if, in the period of six thousand years, God had not furnished facts enough to exercise our mind in ceaseless meditation. Therefore, let us willingly remain hedged in by those boundaries within which God has been pleased to confine our persons, and, as it were, enclose our minds, so as to prevent them from losing themselves by wandering unrestrained."

Then in the very next paragraph, Section 2, Calvin writes about creation in six days:

"With the same view Moses relates that the work of creation was accomplished not in one moment, but in six days. By this statement we are drawn away from fiction to the one God who thus divided his work into six days, that we may have no reluctance to devote our whole lives to the contemplation of it. For though our eyes, in what direction soever they turn, are forced to behold the works of God, we see how fleeting our attention is, and how quickly pious thoughts, if any arise, vanish away. Here, too, objection is taken to these progressive steps as inconsistent with the power of God, until human reason is subdued to the obedience of faith, and learns to welcome the calm quiescence to which the sanctification of the seventh day invites us. In the very order of events, we ought diligently to ponder on the paternal goodness of God toward the human race, ~~in not creating Adam until he had~~ liberally enriched the earth with all good things. Had he placed him on an earth barren and unfurnished; had he given life before light, he might have seemed to pay little regard to his interest. But now that he has arranged the motions of the sun and stars for man's use, has replenished the air, earth, and water, with living creatures, and produced all kinds of fruit in abundance for the supply of food, by performing the office of a provident and industrious head of a family, he has shown his wondrous goodness toward us. These subjects, which I only briefly touch, if more attentively pondered, will make it manifest that Moses was a sure witness and herald of the one only Creator. I do not repeat what I have already explained — viz. that mention is here made not of the bare essence of God, but that his eternal Wisdom and Spirit are also set before us, in order that we may not dream of any other God than Him who desires to be recognized in that express image."

Thus spake John Calvin!

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Jason L. Kortering

Numbers — The Wilderness Sojourn (1)

The people of Israel spent a little less than a year at Mt. Sinai. During this time they received the ten commandments, the details of the Levitical laws, the instructions on the construction of the temple. Toward the end of this time they built the tabernacle which was to accompany them through the wilderness sojourn. It is at this point that the Book of Numbers takes up the historical account of these events, an account encompassing the forty year stay in the wilderness and the eventual arrival at the borders of Canaan.

THE NAME

The name of the book was originally designated by the Jews as *bemidhbar*, meaning literally in the Hebrew tongue, "in the wilderness;" or by others, *wayedhabber* taken from the first word of the book, meaning "And he spake". For our purposes, the book is called Numbers, derived from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, which used the Greek word, *arithmoi*, literally numbers, which in turn was taken over by the Latin Vulgate. The naming refers to the two instances of the numbering of the people of Israel which are included in this history, the first at the departure from Mt. Sinai (chapter 1) and the second at the conclusion of the wilderness sojourn some thirty-eight years later (chapter 26).

THE AUTHOR

Since this book is included in the Pentateuch (five books of Moses), the author was Moses. We entered into detail on this point in connection with our introduction of Genesis.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

If we see clearly the relationship of Numbers to the preceding books, it will become apparent that

this book is more than a continuation of the historical account of the wilderness sojourn. Genesis is the book of beginnings, not only of the creation and the covenant with the individual patriarchs, but also the nation of Israel. The family of Jacob went down into Egypt, for there the Lord would make of them a great nation. Exodus is the account of their departure from Egypt and of how they received as a nation the laws of God which formed the basis for His theocratic rule over them. In Leviticus we have a record of God's further instruction at Sinai, especially the emphasis placed upon Israel becoming a holy nation through the blood of the atonement and the washing away of sins in their daily lives. Now in the book of Numbers we learn from the history following their departure from Mt. Sinai that Israel failed miserably in their quest for Canaan. After they were delivered from Egypt with a mighty hand, where the God of Israel defeated their enemies and laid Egypt waste before them, after they had received the holy laws which God specifically gave to them to show them the way of His covenant favor, and after they had the tabernacle built and visibly present in their midst, what did the people do? Did they walk in humble obedience and keep the law of God? This history shows otherwise. They rebelled and complained, they forsook their God and He finally humbled them so that all above twenty years of age died in the wilderness.

What does this teach us? Like Israel, we are unable and unwilling to walk in God's covenant way. We need but look into our own lives to see the rebellion, the spiritual unfaithfulness, the attraction for Egypt and what it has to offer. As a people, Israel did not deserve to enter Canaan. Neither do we deserve to enter heaven. It is a wonder of God's sovereign grace. Oh, how desolate is the wilderness of sin and how majestic are the mountains of

Jerusalem. With the presence of Jehovah in the face of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, the sojourn is not only possible, it is a reality. This we learn from the important book of Numbers. Merrill Unger makes this note in his *The New Ungers Bible Handbook*: "The New Testament repeatedly alludes to or quotes the book of Numbers (c.f. John 3:14 and Numbers 21:9). Baalam (Numbers 22-24) is referred to by Jude (vs. 11), Peter (II Peter 2:15, 16), and John (Rev. 2:14). Jude also refers to Korah's rebellion (vs. 11, c.f. Numbers 16, 27:3). Its spiritually illustrative contents are given deep meaning (I Cor. 10:1-11) and are inseparably connected with the rest of the Pentateuch, particularly with Exodus and Leviticus."

Harrison sounds the same note in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

Numbers must never be regarded as merely comprising a catalog of the outstanding incidents which marked the Israelite sojourn in the Wilderness. Not only did the book record such events, but it interpreted them so as to demonstrate the Covenant love of God for His people in every emergency of distress and danger, as well as the stern and severe judgments of God against apostasy and rebellion. This revelation is uniformly evident throughout the book, and furnishes a theological emphasis that serves to integrate the literary selections into one harmonious corpus. The theme of divine holiness, so apparent in Leviticus, is also central to the theology of Numbers. While God dwells in the midst of His people, His innate sanctity demands that any who approach Him do so through carefully prescribed rules."

A BRIEF OUTLINE

The book of Numbers is divided into three main parts. The first deals with the preparations for Israel's departure from Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:10), the second covers the journey from Mt. Sinai to the plains of Moab (10:11-21:35), and the final section deals with the events that take place in the plains of Moab (22:1-36:13).

We will begin with the preparations for departure from Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:10).

1. The people are numbered (1:1-54). God instructed Moses on the first day of the second month of the second year after leaving Egypt to take a census of the males of each tribe, 21 years and older, capable of going to war. A leading man of each tribe was to assist him (1:1-16). They assembled at that time and the tally is given of each tribe: Reuben 46,500, Simeon 59,300, Gad 45,650, Judah 74,600, Issachar 54,400, Zebulun 57,400, Ephraim 40,500, Manasseh 32,200, Benjamin 35,400, Dan 62,700, Asher 41,500, Naphtali 53,400, for a total of 603,550 exclusive of the Levites (1:17-54). This means that the family of Jacob grew in Egypt from approximately 70 souls to a nation of over 2 million.

2. Each tribe is arranged within the camp, situated around the tabernacle (2:1-34). To the east of the tabernacle were the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (2:1-9). To the south side were the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (2:10-16). In the middle of all these tribes the Levites were to dwell in close proximity to the tabernacle (2:17). To the west side the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were located (2:18-24). Finally on the north side, the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali were assigned (2:25-31). All were to pitch their tents by the standards of their own tribe (2:32-34).

3. The Levites are given specific instruction regarding their service of the Lord (3:1-4:49). The priests are mentioned first, specifically the sons of Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar (3:1-4). Then we have the tribe of Levi assigned the work of the tabernacle, its care and service (3:5-10). The Levites are set aside in behalf of all the firstborn sons of Israel (3:11-13). The Levites are now numbered, the children of Gershon number 7,500 males from one month and older. Their specific instruction in the care of the tabernacle includes the care of the curtains and hangings (3:14-26). The sons of Kohath number 8,600 and are assigned the vessels of the tabernacle (3:27-32). Finally the sons of Merari number 6,200 and are assigned the assembling of the tabernacle (3:33-37). The total number of the Levites amounts to 22,000. Moses and Aaron and their families are assigned the place directly east of the tabernacle (3:36-39). Since the Levites represent the firstborn of Israel, the rest of Israel had to be redeemed from the temple service. There were 22,273 firstborn sons in all the camp (numbered from infancy). Each had to be redeemed with 5 shekels of the sanctuary for a total of 1,365 shekels, which in turn was given to Aaron and his sons (3:40-51). The sons of Levi from 30 years to 50 years are assigned the work of the tabernacle. More details are given to the sons of Kohath in dealing with the furnishings of the tabernacle (4:1-15). The care of the oil and incense belonged to Aaron's family, specifically Eleazar (4:16). The Kohathites were to be busy in the tabernacle, only they were to stay out when the holy things were uncovered (4:17-20). Also more detail is given the Gershonites in the care of the curtains and hangings of the tabernacle (4:21-28). Finally the same is done for the sons of Merari in their dealings with the construction of the poles and boards of the tabernacle (4:29-33). The numbering of the Kohathites eligible for temple service (between the ages of 30-50) total 2,750 (4:34-37). The Gershonites total 2,630 (4:38-41). And the Merarites total 3,200. The total, eligible for the work in the tabernacle, amounts to 8,580.

4. Instruction is given on ways to protect the

people from defilement (5:1-31). Any leper, person with an issue of blood or defiled by the dead was to be put outside the camp (5:1-4). Those who committed sin are shown forgiveness in the way of confession and restitution (5:5-10). If a woman goes aside and commits adultery with another man, but there are no witnesses, and the husband is jealous (suspicious), then the Lord provided a way to settle

this matter. A jealousy offering was to be brought to the priest, a mixture of holy water and dust prepared for the woman to drink. The priest required her to take an oath of agreement that if guilty her belly would swell and her thigh rot upon drinking the water, or if innocent she would suffer no ill affect. God thus established guilt and innocence, since He controls all things (5:11-31).

ALL AROUND US

Gise J. Van Baren

God's "Hostage"? AIDS

God's "Hostage"?:

Articles in many magazines and newspapers have commented on the fund-raising efforts of Oral Roberts. Comic strips likewise have been employed to mock Roberts's claims. This man who, a few years ago, claimed that Jesus appeared to him (900 feet tall), now insists that God has told Roberts that if he does not raise eight million dollars by a certain deadline, God will take his life by March 31 (or the end of the year, according to later claims). Even Las Vegas has noted the claim. There are some gamblers in that city who sought to make the claim a basis for their betting: does God get His money within the allotted time or does God take Roberts's life?

Christianity Today had this to say in its Feb. 20, 1987 issue:

Thoughts about heaven are not new to Oral Roberts. In 1975, the Tulsa evangelist told a chapel audience at Oral Roberts University (ORU) that he had asked God to take him, but God did not answer.

This time, according to Roberts, God is taking the initiative. Roberts has stated in a fund-raising appeal letter and on television that unless he raises a total of \$8 million above regular ministry expenses by next month, he will die.

"I desperately need you to come into *agreement* with me concerning my life being extended beyond

March," states a fund-raising letter signed by Roberts. "... God said, 'I want you to use the ORU medical school to put My medical presence in the earth. I want you to get this going in one year or I will call you home!'" Roberts says he received this message last March.

The evangelist likens his situation to the apostle Paul who, in the New Testament Book of Philippians spoke of his desire to "depart and be with Christ," but also of his responsibility to "abide with you in the flesh." According to Roberts's letter, "when it looked like Paul would go on to heaven, his partners flooded him with the necessary money, each one giving to God's servant out of their own need."

A follow-up letter signed by Roberts's son, Richard, affirms that without the money needed to send out missionary healing teams, "God will not extend Dad's life." Oral and Richard Roberts made similar statements on their weekly television program. A public outcry led several television stations to drop programs containing the controversial appeal.

Those who had followed Roberts's ministry say his recent announcement does not differ greatly from previous claims, such as his vision of, and conversation with, a 900-foot-tall Jesus a few years ago.

Historian David Harrell, author of the biography *Oral Roberts: An American Life*, said the evangelist in the 1970s "flirted with evangelical respectability," by becoming a Methodist, developing a respectable university, and building friendships with mainstream Christian leaders. But in recent years, Harrell said, Roberts has returned to his Pentecostal roots, noting that "messages from God" are not uncommon in Pentecostal circles . . .

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. . . Critics say Roberts's approach to raising funds, even if he is sincere, constitutes a type of emotional blackmail. Roberts often implies that a supporter must send him money in order to receive a blessing. In his latest fund-raising letter, for example, he wrote: "I know in my spirit if you neglect going into this agreement with the anointed prophet who is offering it to you, then what I can do to help you get your miracles will soon be over"

Calvinist Contact, Feb. 6, 1987, reported on the reaction of some of the secular press:

On his Jan. 4 broadcast Roberts said God told him he wouldn't live past March unless he raised the \$4.5-million. Jan. 11 Roberts said the deadline had been changed. He said God told him, "If you don't do it I'm going to call you home in one year."

The change in deadline prompted Jim Klobuchar, popular columnist for the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, to write, "What this means, he seems to be saying, is that God has been talked into a second mortgage or accepting some kind of balloon payment. It also means that the public is facing 11 months in which Roberts will modestly cloak himself in martyrdom while the Samaritans are dunned every week to raise \$4.5-million to save him from the heavenly bazooka aimed at his head"

Shocking though all of this is, it should remind us of two facts. First, when one does not behold Scripture as the only source of divine revelation, but rather believes in continuing revelations (as Pentecostals do), this sort of nonsense can be expected. If God continues to present special revelations to His people, who can deny that Roberts did not in fact receive such revelation? But secondly, one is reminded of Christ's instruction concerning the signs of the end of the age when many come in His Name and claim: "Lo, here is Christ, lo He is there."

AIDS:

Perhaps no illness has recently received greater attention than AIDS. Though man vehemently denies it, he is receiving concrete evidences of the consequences of his sin. A recent issue of *Time*, Feb. 16, 1987, recited some of the terrifying facts:

At first AIDS seems an affliction of drug addicts and especially of homosexuals, a "gay disease." No longer. The numbers as yet are small, but AIDS is a growing threat to the heterosexual population. Straight men and women in some cases do not believe it, in some cases do not want to believe it. But barring the development of a vaccine, swingers of all persuasions may sooner or later be faced with the reality of a new era of sexual caution and restraint.

. . . More than any measures, however, health officials at every level are pleading for what is very nearly a social revolution. Says U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Otis R. Bowen: "I can't

emphasize too strongly the necessity of changing lifestyles."

. . . An Atlanta executive concludes, "We are paying for our sins of the '60s, when one-night stands and sex without commitment used to be chic." More than anything, the public wants guidelines, new rules for unprecedented circumstances

The problem of bisexuality is especially poignant in the world of the arts and entertainment, where sexual exoticism in general is more tolerated than in society as a whole. Virtually every arts institution has suffered its losses, and the community is on guard

Coping with the specter of AIDS is particularly difficult for the heirs of the American sexual revolution Should AIDS spread in the most pessimistic proportions projected, there may finally sound a general alert, resulting in an increase in monogamy, in abstinence, in widespread acceptance of tough new rules of the game. But unless and until that point comes, the casualties may needlessly mount.

How serious is the AIDS threat? *Time* also commented on that:

. . . "If we can't make progress, we face the dreadful prospect of a worldwide death toll in the tens of millions a decade from now," warned Health and Human Services Secretary Otis Bowen at a recent gathering of the National Press Club. Such earlier epidemics as typhus, smallpox, and even the black death will "look very pale by comparison," he continued. "You haven't read or heard of anything yet."

. . . In the U.S., more than 30,000 cases have been reported and another 1.5 million people are thought to be carriers. If the epidemic continues to spread at its current rate, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta predicts, the total number of cases will reach 270,000 over the next five years, while total AIDS deaths will rise to 179,000.

. . . In Africa, as many as 2 million to 5 million may already be infected, and in ten years, predicts Epidemiologist B. Frank Polk, of Johns Hopkins University, "some countries could lose 25% of their populations"

AIDS is posing an economic threat in the U.S. The cost of caring for victims of the disease, many of whom are denied health insurance, is already estimated to exceed a billion dollars a year. By 1991 AIDS medical bills could total as much as \$14 billion annually

. . . Vaccinemakers face several daunting obstacles. Perhaps the most formidable is the fact that the virus mutates and changes its outer coat so rapidly that no single vaccine is likely to be effective against all strains

. . . Slowly, as it touches more and more aspects of everyday life — the education of children, marriage rites, sexual habits, health care and insurance — AIDS will transform American society. "By 1991," says Michael Gottlieb, the physician at the University of California, Los Angeles who identified some of the

first cases of the disease, "most people in certain cities will know someone who has died of AIDS." Indeed, the CDC announced last week that in 1985, AIDS jumped from 13th to eleventh place as a cause of premature mortality in the U.S. . . .

The report must strike terror in the hearts of many. And is it not truly remarkable that though there was thundered from thousands of pulpits, "Thou shalt not commit adultery", none would

listen — indeed would scoff at such "puritanism". Now secular press presents repeated calls to monogamy and a changed sexual life-style. The whole reminds one of the account found in Revelation 9:1-11. And though many would deny that AIDS is a punishment for specific sins, it is obvious to all that AIDS is the direct consequence of the "life-styles" clearly condemned by God in Scripture.

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Thomas C. Miersma

Scripture in the Post-Reformation Era

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the reformation of the church and the consolidation of that reformation in Europe. It was the time not only of the reformers but of the writing of the Reformed creeds. The spiritual freedom which the Reformation brought with it in its return to the Word of God brought with it a period of thriving spiritual life and of intense study of God's Word.

The same period witnessed the rise of modern secular man and what is sometimes called the Industrial Revolution. God made man to have dominion over the creation, to exercise lordship over it, and to subdue it. Though man is fallen, is utterly spiritually ruined, and is also reduced even in his natural powers and abilities from what he was by his creation, yet he still possesses the increated drive to bring all things into subjection to himself. This he does in the service of sin, in opposition to God, warring with the curse of God which rests upon the creation and with a view to the coming of the kingdom of antichrist. It is not surprising therefore that the godless man-centered spirit of the Renaissance should stimulate a rapid growth in the natural sciences.

Exalting the mind of man and the powers of his reason men began to call into question the existing assumptions concerning the nature and the properties of the world as they were then understood and

to subject them to re-evaluation. Such an approach necessarily calls into question established truths of science and technology, and investigates them anew to determine their validity. When the object of critical study and doubt is the science and wisdom of men, such an approach has a certain validity, for man is a fallible and imperfect creature of limited understanding. But because man is a whole creature, the spiritual aspect of any study cannot be eliminated from that study. Even in the study of creation man is confronted with the reality that God made the world, that it was brought into being, shaped and molded by the living God Whose power and divinity it declares. For the unbeliever, therefore, who stands in opposition to God, out of the enmity of his natural heart, the study of the creation works his condemnation. For it sets before him the knowledge that God is and is to be glorified and praised by him. This knowledge he suppresses in unrighteousness, by which sin he is exposed to the judgment of God, and God delivers him over to vanity and folly. He becomes an idolater. Scripture sets this reality before us in Romans 1:18 and following.

It is not surprising therefore that along with such development in science and technology the pride of sinful men should also turn from the examination of the wisdom of men to call into question the wisdom and revelation of God. The Reformation proceeded from the principle of faith, the sincere

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desire to know God, to bow before His Word, and to confess the truth of that Word purely in the obedience of faith. The spirit of unbelief, however, turned to God's Word, to the doctrine contained in it and to God's revelation of Himself to call it into question, to doubt its wisdom and truth. As man would sit in judgment upon the wisdom of men in the realm of science and technology so also he would sit in judgment upon the wisdom of God set forth in His Word. Thus the truth of the depravity of man and God's sovereign grace was called into question by Arminianism, that man might sit in judgment upon God and render a verdict as to whether God was righteous and just. In like manner Socinianism arose in Europe, questioning the doctrine of the Trinity and the reasonableness of the truth which Scripture reveals that God is one in Being and three in Persons. Man's wisdom, man's understanding, and not the Word of God was set up as the standard by which all things were to be judged. God and His Word also were to be judged by this same standard of the mind and wisdom of man.

Such thinking is not new. It is as old as the fall into sin and the language of the devil, "yea hath God said . . ." (Genesis 3:1). It is the language of doubt and unbelief. It belongs to the spirit of our modern age which would call into question every word, every truth and value revealed in the Word of God and God's revelation of Himself also by the creation. It lies at the root of sin in man's heart. It belongs to the pagan philosophy of this world, and it lies at the root of the philosophies of ancient Greece and Rome. It lies at the foundation of modern philosophy as well.

In our era, however, it has an added characteristic. The ancient unbelieving philosophers, men such as Plato and Aristotle, had only the revelation of God in the creation. God's Word they did not possess. Our post-reformation era and the philosophy of our modern age has arisen not in the darkness of paganism but over against the revealed light of God's Word set down in the Scriptures. It arose alongside the Reformation, and has developed in unbelief, in opposition to the truth. Even as the church turned diligently to search the Scriptures and the truth of God's Word, and was brought to clearer light by the Reformation, so also modern philosophy has developed beside it in sin. Modern philosophy is not therefore simply the unbelieving wisdom of this world but the apostate wisdom of a world, which having known the truth, willfully rejects it and labors against the truth to deny it. Modern philosophy is not merely pagan but antichristian in its character. It is this apostate character which gives modern philosophy also its distinctive character, for it denies God, denies His

revelation, makes God after man's own image and sets itself against the truth of His Word.

This reality is not found merely in certain isolated attacks upon the truth of Scripture or the doctrine of Scripture but lies at the very core of modern thought. The seeds of its development were present already in the Renaissance and did not take long to manifest themselves in such doctrinal assaults upon the truth as that of Arminianism and Socinianism. Scripture itself did not become the immediate object of attack directly. He, however, who denies or corrupts the truth of God must needs at least implicitly war with the truth of God's revelation of Himself in His Word.

For a time the miracles of Scripture defended the Word of God from direct attack. The Scriptures were given by God by means of men who were eye-witnesses of the things which are set down in Scripture. They saw with their own eyes the risen Lord and His wonderful and mighty works. It is thus that Peter speaks in II Peter 1 of that which he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration. Just as a witness in a courtroom and his testimony cannot be easily set aside when it concerns events at which he alone was present, so also the plain testimony of Scripture that the apostles were eye-witnesses of the things of which they spoke could not easily be set aside. To openly oppose Scripture, doubt must be cast upon the reality, the truth and certainty of these events and their occurrence and the truth of those who saw them. This was not easily done.

It is by setting up man's reason as the sole standard of authority by which truth is to be judged that modern philosophy began its assault upon the truth of God's Word. In that assault the natural sciences have repeatedly served as a tool in the hands of wicked men to oppose the truth and accuracy of Scripture and as a means to cast doubt upon the revealed origin of the world, the truth of the miracles of Scripture, and the truth of God Himself. It is not without reason therefore, nor should we find it surprising, that the same men who are often regarded as the fathers of modern philosophy are also in many respects the fathers of the modern scientific method. While there are a number of men whom we may mention in this connection, particularly in England, such as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who were important in the development of the principles of modern scientific investigation, it is Rene' Descartes (1596-1650) who perhaps is to be regarded as the most important for our consideration. For he first draws together the principles of modern unbelieving science and applies them not to the creation alone but also presumes to apply them openly even to the existence of God. To him therefore we will return next time.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Ronald J. Hanko

God Is The Creator

(Editor's Note: For the remainder of the current volume-year the Rev. Ronald J. Hanko will be responsible for this department. We welcome him back to our columns. HCH)

The only way that believers can ever be convinced that the law is of any value or use to them is to show them that it is a means to praise and thank their Saviour God. As long as even the impression is left that the works of the law have any meritorious or saving value, even socially, the law will be abhorred by all who know that their salvation is not of themselves, but of God. Thus it must be shown that the law teaches God's own glory and perfection, so that the Christian, in keeping the law, may know that he is obeying the command to be holy as God is holy, living as a child and imitator of God, and in that way expressing the depth of his gratitude to God.

To that end we have attempted to show that each of the Ten Commandments is closely tied to one or another of God's attributes, and that each commandment teaches us how our life must conform in every respect to His high glory.

Turning to the eighth commandment and studying it, we must conclude that the truth concerning God which lies at the foundation of the eighth commandment is the truth that He is the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in them. In other words, it is not mere sanctified common sense, or even just bare commandment that governs all our use of our earthly possessions, but the important revelation of God as Creator.

If that is true, then it ought to be immediately evident that what we believe about creation and about God as Creator is not abstract doctrine, but something that bears directly on our everyday life

in the world. As we shall see in this study of the eighth commandment, the most important aspect of the doctrine of God the Creator is the truth that He is sovereign in His creative work. Nowhere is the sovereignty of God in creation so plainly taught as in the literal interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis. Now it is not our purpose in this brief article to defend the doctrine of *fiat* creationism over against the theories of evolutionism, but only to note that a denial of the sovereignty of God in the creation of the worlds directly affects our life. It is not mere co-incidence, for example, that in our own country the rise of the so-called "Robber Barons" of the second half of the nineteenth century, and the practice of the principle of *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) in economics, follows hard on the heels of the rise and triumph of Darwinism and evolutionary theory. Those who argue, therefore, that it does not really matter practically what one believes about the manner of God's work in creation are entirely wrong. It has to do with something so practical as the use of our earthly possessions and the gratitude we may show to God in the use of them.

In connection with the eighth commandment, the sovereignty of God as Creator means especially two things. In the first place it means that God is the sovereign Lord of all that He has created, or in other words, that the things He created are and remain His own. They are His, of course, by virtue of the fact that He created them. His ownership of them is evident in the use He makes of them. The doctrine of providence teaches that from moment to moment He rules, uses, and controls all things for His own ends and with a right that no creature can question (Dan. 4:35). God's Providence is, then, constant and unmistakable evidence that He is indeed the sovereign Lord of all things.

This is certainly the clear teaching of Scripture.

Psalm 24:1, 2 not only teaches that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein," but finds the explanation of that sovereign Lordship of God in His work as Creator: "For He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods." In Psalm 50:7-13 God reproves His people in their sacrifices with that same truth. Psalm 104 and the last chapter of Job are a detailed revelation and reminder of His Lordship as evident in His providential care for His creatures. The clouds which give drink to the wild beasts and rain for the life of man are "His chambers" (Ps. 104:13). The trees are His trees (vs. 16), and the grass and herbs, wine, oil, and bread, the food of man and beast, the seasons, day and night, and all other things are "His riches" (vs. 24). Paul summarizes all that the Scriptures teach concerning God's Lordship in creation in a very practical way, when he says, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

In the second place, and in connection with the eighth commandment, the truth that God is Creator means that He has made all things for His own profit and glory. When King Nebuchadnezzar failed to acknowledge God as the source of the wealth and glory of his kingdom, he was immediately deprived of all things and made like a beast of the field, directly dependent on God's sunshine and rain for the basic needs and comforts of his body. In spite of the warning he had received in a dream from God he did not remember what the Scriptures teach in Revelation 4:11; "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

But how do these two principles apply to the eighth commandment? Taken together they mean among other things, that as Owner and Lord of all He created, God is the One who distributes the treasures of this world, always according to His own good pleasure. God does this through the means of buying and selling, labour and wages, lending and borrowing, even inheritance and gift, chiefly, therefore, through the lawful means of commerce, and of our work in the world. Nevertheless, the distribution of these things is always His, not only in giving all these things but also in taking them away: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away" (Lk. 2:52, 53).

This leaves no justification for stealing in any form, either that of a private nature, or as it is now practiced on a larger scale by governments and leaders, who steal from the rich to give to the poor, and who justify rebellion and terrorism on the part of the poor when they use such means to gain the

things of this world for themselves. There is a great lie in the Church today: that it is wicked to be rich and prosperous, that all men have an equal right to an equal share of the things of this world, and that the wealth of the world must be re-distributed by any available means according to such humanistic principles of equality.

This is not to deny that it is wrong for the rich to oppress the poor, as so often happens, nor does it deny the calling that all believers have to help their neighbors, especially when they are in need, and to use their wealth and prosperity to support the needy, though first of all in the Church and Kingdom of God. Paul teaches that very plainly in I Timothy 6:17-19. It is only to say that the calling to help the poor is not the calling to make them wealthy or to give them equality as far as the things of this world are concerned. It is not wrong for one man to eat beefsteak while his neighbor eats beans. Nor is it our calling to use our prosperity and goods for the support of the poor, the calling to seek a solution to this world's problems of poverty and want through such giving. The Word of God makes it very clear that there is no earthly solution to these social evils, and that therefore even the giving that we do must have as its only purpose the coming of the Kingdom of God through the hardening of the ungodly and the softening and salvation of God's elect (Matt. 26:11, Rev. 21:3, 4, Rom. 12:20, 21).

There is probably no more striking proof of this truth than in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30). There the Lord sovereignly gives a portion of His wealth to each of His servants as He sees fit, and to none of them the same portion. With that portion they are called to labor in God's kingdom without covetousness and without robbery. The Word of God Himself concerning His sovereign Lordship in this matter of the eighth commandment is found in Matthew 20:15; "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

The truth that God is Creator and Owner of all things also means, in relation to the eighth commandment, that He never relinquishes His claim on them. So then, although he gives to each of us a portion of those things, He remains the Sovereign Lord, so that finally we have nothing we can call our own — all belongs to God, and must be used in His service. Thus it is that in the Parable of the Pounds the wicked servant is condemned and punished, not for misusing what he had been given, but for failing to use it for his master's profit. He is judged "out of his own mouth" when he confesses that what he had been given was "thy pound" (Lk. 19:12-27).

There are two things, then, that we must learn

about the eighth commandment. The first is that stealing of any kind is an act of violence against God Himself. This is the reason why Israel could rob God in their sacrifices. By refusing to bring a good sacrifice, they refused to acknowledge that all they had belonged to God and claimed it for themselves (Mal. 3:8, 9). This is also the explanation of the strong language used in Proverbs 11:1, where the same word is used to describe a false balance (scale) as is elsewhere used to describe the worship of other gods. In fact, stealing, even by such means as a false balance is in principle a turning away from God the Creator to worship Mammon.

Finally and positively, the eighth commandment means, in light of these principles, that we are only stewards in the house of God. We hold the same

position in God's world that Joseph had in the house of Potiphar (Gen. 39:4-6), that is, that we are no more than caretakers of things that belong to our earthly life, and must diligently and carefully use them all in His service. So we show that we have nothing that we have not received, and give praise to God Who has given us not only these things richly and for our enjoyment, but who has also given into our care heavenly treasures. The commandment is plain: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16:10, 11).

"Good Morning, Alice" (19)

Gise J. Van Baren

During the last few days of her life, Alice was willing to have the aspirator used to suction out the mucus from her throat. This is not to say that she enjoyed the procedure; on the contrary, she simply detested it. But she finally realized that there was no other way to clear her throat. Periodically, she would indicate her desire that the aspirator be used — while her eyes indicated almost a fear of it. Whoever was caring for Alice at the time would have to do this — but again, if John were present, she would insist that he must do it, for only he could do it to her satisfaction.

Good Morning Alice:

The verses we are thinking about (Luke 12:22-34) were spoken by Jesus when someone asked Him to make his brother share an inheritance with him.

Jesus' answer was, "Beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (vs. 15).

In verses 22-34 Jesus is explaining to the disciples just what the child of God should seek after. Not

riches, not anything of this world that perishes, but the spiritual needs that we have. Like Mary did when she sat at Jesus' feet.

We are to seek after the kingdom of God; and when we do, we will have confidence that God will provide for all our needs. Not perhaps in the way we wish, but in the way that best prepares us for His Kingdom.

Just think for a while today how God does care for His whole creation, and then know too, that He knows your and my every need and desire, and is blessing us with all that we need for His Kingdom.

In Him for Whom we Wait, Your friend

More tomorrow on vs. 32-34

As she had for the past number of years, mother had gone to Florida in March — but this time, at the insistence of the children. She could not do much for Alice at this point, and she needed to be away from the tensions for a time. She returned home again and saw Alice the evening before she passed away. How wonderfully God also provided that this final meeting took place. The day had been one of difficulty for Alice — although when we were all together with her, she was alert and aware of our

presence. She watched with interest a few programs on T.V., and "visited" with the family who were gathered there in her room.

Good Morning Alice:

"Fear not, little flock." Can you imagine how comforting those words must have been to the disciples and the other true followers of Jesus?

They have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about. God is going to give them the Kingdom. Jesus told His followers (His flock) to sell what they had and give to the poor. This probably was taken literally, but with what follows, we can understand that Jesus was teaching them much more than that. He taught them and thereby teaches us, to concern ourselves and prepare ourselves for that which nothing can ever harm.

Will I worry about having enough money when I am in His Kingdom? No. Will I ever worry about clothing or food or health when I am in heaven? No. Am I preparing for that now? For that is the treasure — life everlasting with all our needs filled to perfection.

But then Jesus says more too, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Is my heart with the Lord? Am I content in His way for me now and am I preparing to enter that glorious Kingdom — without fear? I can when I remember His words to me . . . "Fear not, little flock".

With love, Your friend

Please read Isaiah 43:1-3

As the evening progressed, different members of the family left for home. It was decided that John must have his sleep this evening, since he had been awake with Alice most of the preceding night and had worked long hours that day. Brother Gise would stay and be on call in case nurse Jane needed any help.

Good Morning Alice:

"Fear not." Yesterday's verse said that, too — "Fear not." You know, when someone close to us says that, "Don't be afraid; I'll help", it makes us feel a little better. But here in these three verses (Isaiah 43:1-3) we have beautiful comfort and promise and assurance.

"But now" — this is in comparison to the fury of God in the last verses of chap. 42.

"Thus saith the Lord" — there can be no other words to emphasize the truth as these: "that created thee, O Jacob and He that formed thee, O Israel" — words to humble us; we are created and formed by Him; we are not our own, but we are made to be just what He wants us to be.

"Fear not" — those comforting words again — there is no reason to fear.

"For I have redeemed thee" — He has set us free by dying for us.

"I have called thee by name" — I think that is so beautiful. Can you imagine that Jehovah God has called you and me by name; by name unto salvation and knows so individually.

"Thou art mine" — We are His, not our own. We belong to Him.

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

I do believe that these different examples do mean different things, but I don't know what. The comfort is still there though, and emphasized; whatever comes our way; trial, sorrow, illness, death — whatever comes our way, we will go through it; it will not swallow us up; it will not overcome us; it will not consume us because He will be with us. You know, that is enough; that is all we need. But then, He gives us the reason why. Why shall we have no fear?

"For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior."

What beautiful comfort: whatever we have to face in our life and in our death, we have nothing to fear. He is by our side and He will keep us.

Fear not! In His love, Your friend

Please read Psalm 92:1-2

Obviously, Alice was not too happy about the arrangements for this night. Her eyes clearly showed this. How expressive they still could be! With her eyes she indicated that she wanted the spelling card. Slowly she spelled out: J-o-h-n, while turning her eyes meaningfully towards him. None misunderstood what she wanted. But when we explained to her that John was tired after being awake for such a long period of time, and needed his sleep, she seemed to understand and was content with the arrangement.

Good Morning Alice:

Do you remember that I shared Psalm 92:1-2 with you once already?

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy Name, O Most High; to show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night."

When I wrote that note, I suggested that you read my favorite Psalter number (281) and sing it to God in your heart. I also encouraged you to perhaps read a Psalter number often — maybe even every morning.

It is a good thing to "sing" praises unto God; to tell ourselves in the morning of God's lovingkindness and in the evening remember His faithfulness.

Why don't you read these three Psalter numbers

sometime today (one right now!) and read slowly, letting their beautiful truth and comfort dwell in you richly: numbers 210, 251, 362.

In His love, Your friend

Please read Job 37:1-10

The family had all left. Now only brother Gise and wife Claire with nurse Jane were with Alice. Before retiring, a Psalm was read and prayer offered. But strangely, there were no tears this time in Alice's eyes, and she appeared perfectly content. Though it occurred to us later, it did seem as though she was finally reconciled with this way of the Lord for her and was ready to depart.

Good Morning Alice:

I know it's not "spring" for four days yet, but I've heard birds on a couple mornings already, and the rain this morning really makes it seem like spring.

I didn't "look" for today's verse. We were visiting with someone and he started talking about frost.

He mentioned how we all take things like that for granted. It's cold, and we expect to see frost on the ground or even on the window.

Now basically we know, and would be quick to say, that the frost is from God. God controls all things; and we know when there is frost, He put it there. But this friend had read Job 37 the night before, and frost has a new meaning for him.

"By the breath of God frost is given."

If we remember that God actively controls all of nature — that God breathes the frost, directs His lightning unto the ends of the earth, thunders marvelously with His voice . . . we will understand better His greatness and nearness.

Read Job 37:1-10 again — maybe right now, and realize again the might and power of our great God.

With love, Your friend

Please read Hosea 6:1-3

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

Confession of Faith (4)

"Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?"

Last time we dealt with the first question asked of those who make public confession of faith. We saw that the question emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of faith, that faith which has content. We saw that that content is doctrinal in nature. We saw that the doctrine faith confesses is contained in the Old and New Testaments as summarized in the Reformed creeds. We saw that we confess our faith "in this Christian church," and we considered the significance of making confession of faith in our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

The second question for confession of faith is closely related to the first question. It treats

especially two subjects. First, it emphasizes that the faith we confess is antithetical in nature. Confession of faith does not only involve acknowledging the truth, but the rejection of all false teachings that militate against the truth. Secondly, this second question brings up the importance of the godly walk of the one making confession of faith. In response to this question he resolves before God and the church ". . . to lead a new, godly life . . ."

REJECTING FALSE DOCTRINES

The Christian is not only called to confess the truth, but he is also called to reject the lie. Confession of faith not only means that we profess to believe in the truth of the Word of God, but that we consciously repudiate and condemn all teachings that contradict the truth of God's Word. Confession of faith is not only positive; it is also negative. The

Christian does not only say "Yes," but he must also say "No!"

The Scriptures emphasize this important aspect of the Christian's calling. In I John 4:1, for example, we read: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In II Thessalonians 3:6 the Apostle writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." In Revelation 2:2 the church at Ephesus is commended because "... thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

This antithetical calling has always been a part of the Christian life and confession. The first question speaks of the Old and New Testaments and emphasizes that the content of our faith is drawn from the Old and New Testaments. But what is the nature of the Old and New Testaments? Is the faith set down in the two testaments of Holy Scripture only positive? Or is it also negative? Does Scripture only set forth the truth, or does it also condemn the lie? To ask the question is to answer it. Think of the sharp condemnation of the lie that characterized the Old Testament prophets, that characterized the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, that characterized the teaching and writing of the Apostle Paul.

The first question also referred to the faith which we confess as contained in "the Articles of the Christian faith." The articles of the Christian faith are the creeds, our Three Forms of Unity: *The Heidelberg Catechism*, *The Belgic Confession of Faith*, and *The Canons of Dordt*. Anyone with any familiarity with our creeds knows the antithetical defence of the faith which the creeds give. The truth is set forth, all right, positively and thoroughly, but also the many errors which oppose the truth are identified and condemned. The Reformed faith is held forth to be a faith which rejects the errors of Roman Catholicism (think of the language of Q.A. 80 of *The Heidelberg Catechism*), the errors of the Anabaptists, and the errors of the Arminians, to mention only a few.

This makes the Christian faith offensive! This is intolerance of the lie! This is what makes the one who confesses this faith subject to the persecution and reproach of the world and the false church — this refusal to compromise, this refusal to endure views contrary to the Word of God, this rejection of false teaching.

We are only going to "reject all heresies repug-

nant" to the truth if we are "resolved" to do this. There must be, according to this second question, a firm resolution to live according to the truth. This points out that the truth must not only be in our heads, but also in our hearts. We must not simply know the truth, but we must love and cherish the truth. We are never going to adhere to the truth, we are certainly not going to reject all heresies repugnant to the truth, unless the truth exists as a firm resolution in our hearts.

If we are resolved to adhere to the doctrine of the Scriptures, then we are not only going to confess creation, but we are going to reject evolution. We are not only going to receive the Bible as the inspired Word of God, but we are going to reject every teaching about the Bible that reduces it to the word of man. We are not only going to confess that Jesus is God come into the flesh, but we are going to reject every view of Jesus that makes Him to be only a mere man. We are not only going to confess the truth of marriage, but we are going to reject every notion that makes unbiblical divorce and remarriage permissible. We are not only going to confess the truth of sovereign grace, but we are going to reject the teaching that salvation is due to the free-will of the sinner.

A NEW AND GODLY LIFE

But there is more involved in confession of faith. Confession of faith is not only knowledge of the doctrines of Holy Scripture. Confession of faith is not even the ability to articulate these doctrines and vigorously to defend these doctrines. Confession of faith also involves the determination to live a life in harmony with that confession. When we make confession of faith, we promise before God and His Church that we will adorn our confession with an upright and holy walk. This is indicated in the second question by the fact that we promise "to live a new, godly life."

The Scriptures emphasize the importance of the walk of God's people. Our emphasis on the importance of doctrine must never lead us to disparage the importance of a godly walk. The Apostle speaks, in Romans 6:4, of this "new life" according to which we are to walk: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In Colossians 2:6 Paul writes, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." To the Thessalonians he writes, "Furthermore, then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

By speaking of the doctrines which we confess in

the first question, and mentioning the Christian walk of life in the second question, the *Form For Public Confession Of Faith* establishes the proper relationship between these two aspects of the believer's life.

That connection is, first of all, that sound doctrine is the foundation of the Christian life. Apart from doctrine, knowing, believing, and confessing the doctrine, there is no possibility of living the Christian life. The true doctrine must be what motivates and guides us in our everyday life in the world. This is why the first duty of the faithful minister is to preach the doctrine, I Timothy 4:16. This is why the first duty of the believer is to receive the doctrine.

We see this connection between doctrine and life today. Ignorance of some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Word of God prevails in the churches. People perish for lack of knowledge; there is a famine of the Word of God. What is the result of this? The result of this doctrinal ignorance is unbelievable wickedness in the lives of the members of the church, disobedience to the commandments of God's law, and unholy living.

But there is another connection between doctrine and life. That connection is that the Christian's walk of life is the proof and evidence of the faith that he confesses. Belief of the truth necessarily shows itself in a godly walk. The true and complete doctrine that we acknowledge must be expressed in our daily life. And if the new and godly walk does not follow, it only indicates that our confession was a fraud.

James indicates this relationship between doctrine and life in his epistle. He writes in James 2:14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" In verse 19 he says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." The conclusion? "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone," James 2:17.

That this must be a "new", godly life must not be misunderstood. We must not suppose that the one confessing his faith is now called, for the first time, in virtue of his public confession of faith, to *begin* living a godly, Christian life. It is not as if up to this point he has lived a godless and disobedient life, but from now on and henceforth he promises to correct this situation and live as a Christian.

Not at all! The word "new" does not strike a contrast before and after confession of faith. The "new" and godly life is something to which the one confessing his faith has been called long ago and is the life that he has already for some time been living. Instead, the contrast is between the "old" man and the "new" man in the believing child of God. By virtue of his confession of faith he promises to live according to the principle of the new man. He resolves to fight the good fight of faith, to put off the old man with his deeds, and thus to live a "new, godly life."

Next time, the Lord willing, we will finish our discussion of this second question.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

Silence That Speaks Loudly

Yes, it is true that actions often speak louder than words. In fact we often speak loudly by our actions while our mouths are kept tightly shut. Still more, very often our very act of not speaking with our lips is a case of speaking loudly with our deed. And this was the case with Jonah after God asked him, "Doest thou well to be angry?"

Jonah revealed his anger over the fact that God did not overthrow Nineveh forty days after Jonah's preaching. What Jonah did after God asked him whether he did well by being angry, spoke loudly, even though with his mouth he did not say one word. And remember that Jonah did not become angry because God was not gracious, merciful, kind

and slow to anger. Rather Jonah considered God to be too gracious, merciful, kind and slow to anger. In his mind it was folly for God to save this chief city of the Assyrians and thereby leave a tremendous threat to the well-being of the church of that day as it was found in Israel.

It was not that Jonah hated seeing Gentiles converted and saved. He knew that now and then God gathered a few individuals from other nations, tongues, and tribes. His own concern for the Gentile sailors on whose ship he was during that terrible storm, and his instruction to them to cast him overboard for their safety, shows that he could have a tender spot in his heart for Gentiles. But to save a whole city and then, if you please, the chief city of a nation that had already caused much misery for the Israelites, made him angry enough to ask God to take away his life, so that he would not live to see Assyria destroy Israel.

We may also add that Jonah was certainly correct in believing that most of the fasting, wearing of sackcloth and ashes, which the king ordered, was sham and hypocrisy and not due to sincere confession of sin. Had it been sincere, Jonah would have no reason to fear what would happen if Nineveh was spared. A converted kingdom would be no enemy of Israel. But the city was not converted and a few years later not only invaded Israel but brought the kingdom of Israel to an end! Had there been a sincere city-wide conversion, this would never have happened to Israel. And when God asked Jonah whether he was doing well by being angry that this city was spared, Jonah spoke out loudly by what he did, rather than by any word which he spoke. He spoke not a word.

What Jonah did was to go out of the city — God asked him that question while he was still in the city — build himself a booth on the east side of the city, and sit watching to see whether God would still overthrow Nineveh. Plainly his answer to God's question was in this act. By it he said that he was doing well by being angry. But there is still more. What he failed to do also spoke volumes. He could have and should have called those who were sincerely sorry for their sins and who prayed to God to come with him out of the city, as the angels brought Lot and his family out of Sodom. He should have gathered them together and encouraged them and assured them that if it pleased God, He could save them as He saved Rahab and her family. He could have preached to them and comforted them with the truth that, if it pleased God that they died in the overthrow, they would be taken into heavenly glory and be forever out of all misery and trouble.

le. He could have welcomed them into the Old Testament church, prayed with them and sacrificed before them, teaching them that there is salvation only through the shedding of blood. He could have pointed them to the types and shadows of Christ and His cross.

No, Jonah thought that he saw folly in God's work; but he failed to see the folly and sin in his own anger. That explains how he would dare to ask God to take his life away from him. He who dies walking in his sins is through death cast into the lake of fire! But so sure was Jonah that he saw things correctly, that he dared to pray for death. And he certainly deserved death. He was repeating his sin committed when he fled from his calling and took that ship to Tarshish. Then he did not want Nineveh spared; and now he is of that same opinion. God is wrong and Jonah is right. He cannot say with the psalmist in Psalm 119:68, "Thou art good and doest good."

In His grace God did not silence Jonah's mouth by death. And in corrective grace He began to show Jonah his folly and sin. Though he was one of God's prophets, he needed to be instructed. The human teacher needed a Divine Teacher Who would open his eyes and turn him from his sin. Bear in mind that all this happened and is recorded so that we also may be instructed. It is so easy for us to complain about what God does and to question His wisdom in causing this or that to happen. No, we do not always complain, find fault and then express it in words of our mouths; but what we do reveals this sin. So often we consider ourselves to be wiser than God. And if we had things in our hands, we surely would have seen to it that this or that did not happen, and that certain events we wanted to take place did become part of the history of our lives and of the world.

The enemies of the church, the false prophets in the midst of the false church, have so much success, while those who hold to the truth do not grow at all in number, or even become smaller in number. Those who pervert the truth and come with the lie, in one form or another, have access and financial power to spread the lie far more widely than those with the truth. God does not overthrow these dangerous enemies any more than He overthrew Nineveh. Pretty soon the antichristian power, and the Man of Sin himself, will deny us food, because we will not take the mark of the beast on our right hand or forehead. And God lets it all continue. Therefore, we had better learn a lesson here with Jonah and not question God's works. There is wisdom behind every work He performs as well as grace, mercy, kindness and slowness of anger toward His elect people. Remember that the cross of Christ looked all wrong, and that Peter

denied any connection with Jesus because of His capture. But what a work of wisdom as well as of grace, mercy, kindness and slowness to anger! Never, no, never, do we do well when we are angry about any work of God. And we had better be sure that our actions do not show that we judge otherwise, even when the words never come upon our lips.

In His grace God is now going to teach this angry prophet, whose actions say that he still believes that he is doing well when he is angry because of God's work. To see this we must take note of the fact that Jonah sought protection for himself from God's wrath. He not only went out of the city to be safe, but he built a booth to get out of the burning, hot sunshine, which is also here because of God's holy wrath against sin. That burning, hot sunshine is upon the earth because of sin and was not there in the garden of Eden. God came to man in the cool of the day. And Adam and Eve did not need clothes to keep them from a burning heat of the sun. There was no curse, no misery on the earth until sin came. Jonah felt that curse and therefore sought comfort in the shade of his booth. Then the next day came a stronger touch of that curse. For God sent a vehement wind from off the hot desert. Yes, God did that. We read that He "prepared a vehement east wind". Let us therefore keep in mind that only in the way of the blotting out of sin is there real, lasting protection from the curse. Unless our guilt is taken away, there just is no legal basis for the removal of the smallest part of our miseries here below. And our miseries are here to remind us of that curse and the need of the cross of Christ.

And now God begins to turn the screws a bit tighter upon Jonah so that he may see his error. God causes a plant, here called a gourd, to grow up the first night that Jonah is outside the city. It grew very rapidly and when the sun came up the next morning it provided some wonderful shade for Jonah. Jonah was happy, and we read that he was "exceeding glad of the gourd."

But God sent a worm to cause the gourd to wither and take away Jonah's shade and comfort, while that vehement wind from off the desert sent an overpowering heat. Now Jonah has an added reason for being angry. Strikingly enough we do not read that he gave thanks to God for that gourd, even though he was exceedingly glad. But he does become very angry that the gourd withers and no longer protects him. That the converts in Nineveh got the comfort of no overthrow of their city never enters into Jonah's mind. According to Jonah it was unwise to give comfort to the converts in Nineveh; but to give him comfort from that hot wind was something else. A group of believers in the city did not need to be protected and cared for, but he, an

angry prophet, must be given comfort.

To teach Jonah, God comes again with a question. This time it is, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" Jonah's answer is that he is doing well being angry for the destruction of a plant. Little children who cannot tell which is their right hand and which is the left one and cattle may and must be killed; but an angry prophet must have things his way and be protected from God's anger. For Jonah's sake the plant must live; but children of the believing Ninevites, and cattle that supply them with milk, meat and leather, must die. For Jonah all things must go well for his flesh; but the well-being and the joy of bringing up children in the fear of God's name has no rightful place in God's plans.

God does more now. He calls Jonah's attention to the fact that this really was not his gourd. He did not plant it. He did not buy it. He did not water it or do any labour for it. Yet he thinks that he has something to say about its length of life and service to him. And the point is that surely Nineveh and its people were not Jonah's. He did not give life to these people. He had nothing to do with the founding and establishment of the city. He did not build even one of its houses. And yet he thinks that he can tell God what should be done to it.

And if Jonah is going to argue and say, "Yes, but these are sinners", the finger points now also at him for his anger, and for elevating himself above God so that he can decide what God must do. No, God brought the city into being and Jonah as well. If He has a reason — and He did — for sparing the city, and Jonah does not understand it, he must still bow before the sovereign will of the God of heaven and earth. And granted that this is a desperately wicked city that deserves to be overthrown, there were 120,000 children in it who were not the big sinners that many men and women were *in Israel*, which God had not overthrown. These children were guilty in Adam, as we read in Romans 5:14-19 and I Corinthians 15:22; but they did not commit the sins for which God had predicted an overthrow if there was no repentance. Not being able to distinguish between their right and left hands these children could not commit the sins the adults in Nineveh and in Israel were committing.

And the cattle had no sin. They might be killed for food and clothing. In fact God killed an animal to provide Adam and Eve with skins to cover their nakedness; and in Isaiah 65:25 we even read of a serpent being in the new Jerusalem.

Jonah is now silent once again. This silence speaks well for him. He saw the light and the evil of his anger. Since we read not one word spoken by Jonah after this lesson God gave him, we may assume that he agreed and no longer questioned

God's works. He was silenced by God's grace. Truly those words of Jonah while in the belly of the

fish are so very, very true: "Salvation is of the Lord."

Report of Classis West

March 9, 1987

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Hull, Iowa on March 4, 1987. Meeting from 8:30 AM until after midnight, Classis finished its work in one, long day. Twelve ministers and twelve elders represented the churches of the West. Rev. T. Miersma led Classis in opening devotions, speaking to the delegates on II Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Rev. R. Moore presided over this Classis. Elder G. De Jong (Hull) and Rev. A. den Hartog (Randolph) were delegated to Classis for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription. Classis gave advisory vote to emeritus minister, Rev. G. Lanting; to missionary, Rev. R. Van Overloop; and to the delegates *ad examina* from Classis East, Rev. W. Bekkering, Rev. J. Kortering, and Rev. G. Van Baren. The delegates *ad examina* were present in compliance with the provision of the "Decisions" pertaining to Article 38 of the Church Order, in view of a request of Classis West by a group in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada to be organized as a Protestant Reformed Church. Classis welcomed the representatives of this group present at Classis and gave them the right to speak when the request of the group in Lacombe was treated.

With the concurrence of the delegates *ad examina* from Classis East, Classis West approved the request of the group in Lacombe, Alberta to be organized as a Protestant Reformed Church and appointed the Consistory of the Edmonton Church to carry out the organization. The Consistory of Edmonton, which brought the request of the group in Lacombe to Classis, informed Classis that the group in Lacombe consists of 6 families; that the majority of the group have been members of the Edmonton Congregation for some time; that there is in the group a sufficient number of qualified men for the

formation of a consistory; that Lacombe, a town of about 4,000 population, is about 90 miles south of Edmonton, which makes travelling to Edmonton every Sunday for church difficult; and that the care of both the Edmonton and Lacombe memberships is a heavy burden upon the Pastor of Edmonton.

Another matter that took up a good deal of Classis' time was the appeal of a member against a Consistory. Because of the nature of the appeal, Classis treated it in closed session.

Classis approved the subsidy requests of Edgerton, Edmonton, Houston, Isabel, and Pella in the amount of \$83,374 and forwarded the requests to Synod. In addition, the new Lacombe Congregation will need subsidy.

Other decisions of Classis included approving the annual visitation of the Churches by the Church Visitors; rejecting an overture of South Holland concerning certain procedures of Classis; and approving the transfer of the money of the C. Van Der Molen estate to Synod and the final accounting of these funds, as reported by a committee of Classis.

Elected as *primi* delegates to Synod, 1987 were Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. C. Haak, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. D. Kuiper, and Elders E. Bruinsma, Sr. (Loveland), E. Gritters (Redlands), E. Stouwie, Sr. (South Holland), and H. Vander Meulen (Lynden).

Secundi delegates are Rev. A. den Hartog, Rev. M. De Vries, Rev. R. Hanco, Rev. R. Moore, and Elders R. Brunsting (Hull), Wm. Griess (Loveland), C. Van Meeteren (Redlands), and G. Vroom (South Holland).

In other elections, Classis chose Rev. D. Engelsma as Stated Clerk; Rev. C. Terpstra as Assistant Stated Clerk; Rev. G. Lanting and Rev. D.

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Kuiper as *primi* delegates *ad examina*; Rev. R. Cammenga as a *secundus* delegate *ad examina*; Rev. G. Lanting and Rev. R. Moore as Church Visitors; and Rev. M. De Vries as a member of the Classical Committee.

Classis accepted the invitation of Pella to hold the Fall, 1987 meeting of Classis there on September 2, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

April 1, 1987

With this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, let us continue our series on church profiles with a brief look at our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Southeast history began March 7, 1944 when twenty-five families were organized as the Fourth Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. At this meeting the late Rev. H. Hoeksema preached a sermon based on Ephesians 6:14, a verse which set the tone for the struggles Southeast would face in the years to come.

Fourth Church began to hold meetings in an old store building in Boston Square. It was soon after this that the Rev. Richard Veldman became their first pastor. The congregation at Fourth purchased an old garage on the corner of Kalamazoo Ave. and Orville St. in Grand Rapids. And with a sizable monetary gift from First Church, they purchased a parsonage and remodeled the garage.

In December, 1951, the congregation met and decided that since they were experiencing such growth, the only solution was to tear down the out-grown garage and rebuild a church on the same site. While this was being done, the congregation met in the auditorium of Grand Rapids Christian High School.

Upon completion of this new building, a dedication was held on March 26, 1953.

However, all was not well in the Protestant Reformed Churches at this time, and the doctrinal difficulties touched Fourth Church very deeply, so much so that there was a split in the congregation; and they lost not only their newly-built sanctuary but their name as well.

Those who remained faithful to the Protestant Reformed Churches began to meet in the auditorium of Adams St. Christian School. At this time the group became known as the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

Plans were soon under way to build a new church building on Cambridge Ave., and this site remains the church home of the congregation until the present.

But Southeast's trials were not over. Rev. Richard Veldman and many of the families of Southeast left the church in 1962 and became members of another denomination. Southwest went from a church with a pastor and seventy families to a church without a pastor and only eighteen families in a very short period of time.

Into this difficult situation the Lord sent his faithful servant, Rev. M. Schipper, and he steadied the small flock and cared for it for sixteen years until he retired in 1978. And our Heavenly Father has continued to provide for Southeast by providing faithful men after Rev. Schipper, first Rev. C. Haak and now Rev. S. Key.

At the present time Southeast has about sixty families with a total membership of approximately two hundred thirty.

Many of the men in the congregation are employed at Steelcase, the office furniture giant. There are also two auto dealerships, several home builders and some general business people.

The congregation has a nice mix of all age groups. There are some elderly of course, who are very much appreciated. The Lord has also blessed Southeast with some middle-aged and younger families, with many children and young adults, especially in recent years.

God has also blessed the congregation with special handicapped children. They have been a great blessing, needing special attention and instruction.

Southeast has an active Evangelism Society. Besides this, their Sunday evening service is being aired on WFUR-AM 1570 from 6:00-7:00 Sunday evening.

The Lord has also brought many young adults to

Ben Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Southeast in recent years, from outside our circles. And in particular, from different nationalities than our own. This, of course, serves as a great means of encouragement to the members as individuals and also collectively.

And finally, Southeast is currently involved with various remodeling projects, including the extension of the church narthex.

In other news from our churches: Rev. Rodney Miersma of Holland, has received the call to be the pastor of our sister Protestant Reformed Church in Wellington, New Zealand.

On Tuesday, March 10, all the Adult Bible and Mr. and Mrs. Societies in West Michigan met in a League Meeting at Byron Center Church to hear Rev. J. Slopsema speak on "Family Devotions".

In late February, Rev. Bruinsma returned to Grand Rapids for a couple of days in order to meet with a committee appointed to develop a policy for the conduct of our mission labors in Jamaica. Also present at this meeting was Rev. den Hartog who was appointed to be an advisor to this committee.

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, California is in need of a teacher for Grades K-3 for the 1987-1988 school year. Teachers and prospective teachers interested in applying for this position please write to: Hope Christian School, 1309 E. Brockton, Redlands, CA 92374, or phone Ed Karsemeyer (714-793-7166 home) or (714-793-1504 school), or Bill Feenstra (714-793-3597).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of Southeast Protestant Reformed Senior Mr. & Mrs. Society wish to express their Christian sympathy to fellow members, Mr. & Mrs. Ted Pipe and Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pipe, in the death of their father, MR. GERRIT PIPE. May the Lord comfort them by His Word and Spirit. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15)

Mr. Jerry De Vries, Vice-Pres.
Mrs. Bonnie Velting

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ministers for the 1987-88 school year. If you are interested, please contact Mike Rau, 4165 Jenison St., Grandville, MI 49418, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is also required on the topic "The calling of a minister/teacher to instruct in light of Hosea 4:6". Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1987.

Classis West decided unanimously to organize the families at Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. The consistory of Edmonton was appointed to take charge of this organization, although at this time no date has been set for this.

The Revs. J. Kortering, W. Bekkering and G. Van Baren represented Classis East at this meeting. Due to their absence for most of that week from their congregations back in Michigan, they arranged a three-way pulpit exchange for Sunday, March 8.

Rev. Dykstra was the featured speaker at the School Board Inspirational Program held on Friday, February 27, in Doon, Iowa. Besides this speech there were several special numbers and some audience singing.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, wishes to express their Christian sympathy to John Buiter and Peter Zandstra in the death of their brother and brother-in-law EVERETT BUITER.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Peter Koole, Pres.
Milo DeWald, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Adult Bible Study Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Gerrit Pipe and family in the death of her beloved husband, MR. GERRIT PIPE.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from labours; and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. S. Key, President
Miss A. Reitsma, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of their faithful fellow member MR. EVERETT BUITER, whom the Lord took unto Himself on the morning of February 27, 1987.

It is our fervent prayer that his wife, his sons, and all his family may be comforted with a keen awareness that — "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15).

May we together rejoice in the sure promises of God's infallible Word, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." (Revelation 21:7).

Rev. David Engelsma, Pres.
Mr. Homer De Jong, Sec'y.