

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE STANDARD BEARER

Euthanasia speaks much of the quality of life. And the proponents of euthanasia are determined to open the way of the killing of those whose quality of life is low. The old, the sick, the mentally incapacitated, the babies, children and older people, whose life is one of suffering or abnormality — these have to go. More and more the notion is being spread abroad in the land that it is perfectly all right to terminate the life of anyone who has lost this elusive quality of life.

Organizations flourish which even give instructions on how to commit suicide when you are convinced that your quality of life has so deteriorated that you want to bring it to an end.

See: Walking In The Light, p. 226

Contents

February 15, 1988

Meditation — Cornelius Hanko	
Prayer for Divine Forgiveness	218
Editorial —	
As To Evolution At Dordt College (4)	221
In His Hear — Arie den Hartog	
Receiving The Word of God	224
Walking In The Light — Herman C. Hanko	
Euthanasia (4)	226
From Holy Writ — George C. Lubbers	
Exegetical Sketches on Micah 6:1-8 (3)	228
Taking Heed To The Doctrine — Ronald H. Hanko	
The Two Natures of Christ: The Humanity of Christ	231
The Day of Shadows — John A. Heys	
God's Promise Faithfully Kept	233
Contribution — Bruce Van Solkema	
Perspective From The Pew	236
Book Review	237
News From Our Churches	238

Meditation

Cornelius Hanko

Prayer for Divine Forgiveness

Ques. 126. What is the fifth petition?

Answer. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; that is, be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners, our transgressions, nor that depravity, which always cleaves to us; even as we feel the evidence of thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor.

Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 51

Our Father, which art in heaven!

Thou hast taught us in Thy Word that all things are of Thee, through Thee, and unto Thee, to whom be the glory forever! Thus also our Lord teaches us in the perfect prayer to ask: "Hallowed

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be Thy Name!" By Thy grace and through faith we stammer that prayer.

We also learn to pray for the coming of Thy kingdom, and the carrying out of Thy counsel; and on our part, for obedience and surrender to Thy perfect will.

It is with these petitions in mind that we now pray: "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Our sins!

Thou hast set before us that perfect standard or mark, the perfect goal for our lives, that whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do it all to the glory of Thy most holy Name! (I Cor. 10:31)

Yet we always sin; without fail we miss the mark. Instead of having Thee always foremost in all our thoughts, we desire, will, think, speak, and act as if Thou hast no place in our lives. We seek ourselves instead of Thee, we strive for our own vain glory rather than Thine, we trust in our own strength rather than putting our trust in Thee, and we labor for the bread that perishes rather than for the Bread that endures forever. Far be it from us to speak of the good that sinners do, for in our flesh dwells no good. Sins of omission and of commission cleave to us in all that we say and do, for even our best works are still polluted with sin. We even try to defend and condone our wrong doing, rationalizing why we may do what we are doing, even when we condemn those deeds in others. There are also still those secret sins, unknown as yet to us, yet very really offensive to Thee.

But that is not all. I must add that, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." I do not say that to excuse myself, but rather

because it weighs heavily upon my soul that I am prone by nature to hate Thee and my neighbor. I am incapable of any good, only inclined to all that is evil. I stand with my back to Thee and aim the "arrows" of my life in the very opposite direction from the mark, the standard of Thy law which Thou hast set before me. I am aware of character sins, which are so definitely mine, yet which I can see in others far better than I see them in myself. Even my reading of Thy Word, my daily prayers, my church attendance, my listening to the preaching of Thy Word, my partaking of the sacraments are still so very imperfect that I hide my face in shame. When I would do the good, the evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am!

All of this adds up to an immense debt, far greater than the national debt, to be compared only with the impossible sum of the ten thousand talents of gold, of which Jesus speaks in the parable. (Matthew 18) Sin is transgression of Thy law. Transgression implies guilt, the guilt is debt. This debt must be paid, if ever restitution shall be made in thy sight. Thou hast said that the soul that sins must die. For in Thy righteous judgment Thou hast declared, "Accursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Humbly I confess that I have grossly transgressed, not one or two of Thy commandments, but all of them. I have kept none of them. Nor am I able to keep any one of them. I confess my personal sins, and I also do that in the company of all Thy saints as a part of the household of faith. I realize my communal responsibility for the sins of myself, my family, my fellow saints. And therefore I ask: Forgive *us* our debts, as we forgive our debtors!

Forgive, Father!

As the words leave my lips I realize that this is a very bold request. To forgive means to erase, to wipe out my sins as if they never existed.

I may not, I dare not, even though there are voices that say that I may, appeal to some sort of universal love for all men, or love for sinners. I know that Thou art too holy of eyes, too righteous to ignore, excuse, or condone sin! My conscience tells me that I deserve Thy just condemnation even unto everlasting torments of hell. I have no right to plead for mercy! If Thou shouldst mark transgressions, who could stand in Thy holy presence? As for me, poor sinner, forgiveness, if dependent upon me, would be forever impossible!

Yet what is impossible with us is possible with Thee. From all eternity hast Thou in Thy infinite mercy prepared the way of salvation for Thy chosen in Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou hast laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, holding Him accountable for our sin-debt, that by His complete surrender unto Thee by the death of the cross He should merit for us eternal life!

Thou wert in Christ reconciling us unto Thyself, never to impute our sins unto us. Justice and mercy met together at Calvary, where Thou didst pour out all Thy wrath against our sins upon Jesus, and where He became the perfect propitiation for our sins. Thou gavest Thy Son, and He laid down His life to bring us to glory!

It is no less a wonder of Thy grace that Thou dost freely bestow on us Thy gift of living faith, that rich assurance in our hearts that we belong to this faithful Savior with body and soul, in life and in death, even unto all eternity. His righteous-

ness is so fully imputed unto us as if we in our own bodies had atoned for our sins, yea, as if we never had had any sin and had always kept Thy just commands. Thou seest us, not as we are in ourselves, but as clothed in the righteousness of Christ, who is now in heaven, and intercedes for us before Thy throne. It is alone in that confidence that we dare to lift up our voices to Thee to plead for mercy!

Forgive us our sins!

No, we do not ask this in doubt, as if we question that complete atonement once made on the cross by Thy precious blood. Nor do we waver in the faith, questioning whether the merited righteousness of Christ applies to us. But we realize that in this body of sin and death we have a daily fight against sin that wars in our members. Sin is always present in us; we sin every moment of our lives in all we say and do. Thou requirest of us that we love Thee with our whole being, with all our being, actions, and life; yet we are prone by nature to hate Thee and the neighbor. Our daily plea must be:

With my burden of transgression

Heavy laden, overborne,
Humbled low I make confession,

For my folly now I mourn.
In this awareness we need to be assured that Thou forgivest all

our transgressions, and wilt never reckon them against us, even as if they never existed. We need to hear the voice of Jesus saying unto us by His Spirit in our hearts, "Thy sins, though ever so great, are forgiven thee; go in peace." We must know that as a father has compassion upon his children, so Thou, Father, hast compassion upon us. Our troubled souls must find assurance in the confidence that as far as the east is from the west, so far hast Thou removed our transgressions from us, that the righteousness of Christ is freely imputed to us.

Therefore our daily prayer must be, personally and with our families, and on the Sabbath day with Thy people, "Forgive us our debts!" Only then can we meet together before Thy throne and confess,

How blest is he whose trespass
hath freely been forgiven,
Whose sin is wholly covered
before the sight of heaven.
Blest he to whom Jehovah imputeth not his sin,
Who hath a guileless spirit,
whose heart is true within.

As we forgive our debtors.

Even as we pray, we are aware that there are those who sin against us, who offend both Thee and us by their sins. Shamefacedly we admit that the offence against us troubles us much more than the offence against Thee. Yet what does that minimal debt

to us amount to in comparison with the tremendous debt of sin we owe to Thee? It is Thy great goodness that we may confess our sins at the foot of the cross to Thee and to one another, and find mercy. It is Thy boundless grace that creates in our hearts the desire and firm resolution to forgive one another, even as Thou in Christ hast forgiven us.

That, and only that, makes the communion of saints possible, and opens the way to Thy throne.

Therefore we ask that Thou wilt forgive us, even as we forgive those who trespass against us.

We do not ask that Thou wilt forgive them on the condition that we forgive. Thou art never in any sense dependent upon us.

Nor do we ask that Thou wilt forgive us because we forgive others. The only basis for any forgiveness is in the cross of Thy dear Son.

But we do ask that Thou wilt forgive us, even as Thou hast already created in us the desire and firm resolve to forgive the brother.

In the fellowship of the Spirit we experience Thy forgiving mercies in our own hearts, in our families, and wherever Thy people meet.

O, the blessedness!

Teach us, Father, to bring this petition before Thee in an ever richer, fuller measure. For Jesus' sake! □

NOTICE!

The Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan, is in need of \$100,000.00 to finance the construction of their sanctuary building project.

Those interested in loaning \$1,000.00 or more for periods of five, ten or fifteen years at an interest rate of 7½ % are requested to contact Mr. Phil Lotterman, 871 Rushmore St., Jenison, MI 49428 for particulars. (Phone (616) 457-0005.)

As To Evolution At Dordt College (4)

Both because it has been a couple months since we treated this subject and because we will be discussing specifically the statements of Prof. Hodgson at the conclusion of his address, we will repeat those statements. For reasons which will become plain a little later, I will number those statements. Bear in mind that these are the corrected statements, transcribed from a very clear recording, so that there can be no doubt as to their accuracy:

1. *Do mammals, for example, have a common ancestor? Do all taxonomic phyla and kingdoms go back to a single ancestral line? They are good questions, and they are not easily answered. On the basis of presently available scientific evidence, I think we cannot be totally sure. The studies of the earliest mammals and birds, too, for that matter, show strong reptilian skeletal structures, indicating a highly reptile ancestry.*

Again, a transition from fish to lung fish to amphibians does to some extent, seem to be in evidence in the discovery of some species that have been found.

2. *Furthermore, if we look at the history of earth rocks — and some microfossils go back more than three billion years — we are confronted with the fact that the simpler kingdoms, like Kingdom Monera, occurred before the more complex forms of life. So there seems to be a gradual divergence over time into more and more complex life forms. The earliest life forms were exceedingly simple and did not even have nucleated cells. More recent life forms have been, of course, multi-celled, with some very complicated organs that are involved.*

3. *So to summarize the point, I would like to say the following. The case for evolution, I believe, is a good one on the basis of available scientific evidence. The possibility, however, of divine creation of some basic life forms, particularly at higher taxonomic levels, over widely spaced intervals of time — not just a few thousand years now — is a possibility which cannot be ruled out on the basis of present scientific observational evidence. And so, I think that that is about where we really have to leave it. I think that there are some things that strongly suggest evolution as an explanation for a lot of the varieties of life that we find. Whether it will explain everything, of course, will remain somewhat for the future to discover.*

In connection with this whole matter, Prof. Hodgson prepared a document entitled "A Statement of Explanation Regarding My Participation at Hillsdale and a Statement of My Views on Creation and Evolution." This document was not sent to me by either Prof. Hodgson or Dordt College, though both knew about and were concerned about my writings on this subject; however, one of our readers received a copy and forwarded it to me. The second division of this document is entitled, "Explanation of Statements Made At Hillsdale." I will quote it in full:

One must remember that the quotations attributed to me in the press were based upon an admittedly noisy and poor quality tape, and cover only the very end of the debate, about 2.5% of my speaking time that evening. I understand that this tape or copies of it have been circulating, but none has ever been sent to me or Dordt College for inspection. I therefore am not in a position to verify the accuracy of the published quotations, but I have no reason to doubt the transcribers tried to do their best. [I have since explained that I have a very clear recording, and the accuracy of the quotations above is unquestionable. HCH]

(A reconstruction, based upon student notes, of other parts of the debate has also been published. Unfortunately it shows considerable inaccuracies, claiming, for example, that I found no fault with the theistic evolutionist's interpretation of Scripture, when in fact I do have strong reservations, and said so at Hillsdale. I have little confidence in the accuracy of the report based upon student

notes.) [The reference here is to an article by a student, Archie Allison, in the Reformed Herald. True, Dr. Hodgson expressed reservations about theistic evolution; whether they were so very "strong" is, I think, open to debate. I can quote his statements if need be. HCH]

I shall comment on some of the statements which appear in the tape recorded portions. (Remember, that unfortunately only my final words appeared in print, without the benefit of the context of my earlier statements.) I shall comment paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1. Asking whether mammals, or the various phyla and kingdoms can be traced back to a common ancestry (a common question students ask), I responded by saying "On the basis of presently available scientific evidence, (emphasis added by Prof. Hodgson) I think we cannot be totally sure." I was speaking about the scientific evidence here (in my mind it was set in italics), not the Biblical evidence, which I had discussed earlier. Scientifically speaking, the question of common ancestry is still an open one. The scientific evidence presently available does not either establish or refute either a creationist or an evolutionary interpretation of events. The phrasing of some of my words in this paragraph, coming at the end of a three hour, hot, sweaty debate, and facing a time limit, were awkward. Clearly they lack the polish and editing of an unhurried opening statement, but I think my meaning is generally clear, although the phrasing could be improved. I fail to see how this statement constitutes "teaching evolution." [Correction! These statements did not come "at the end of a three hour, hot, sweaty debate." They came at the conclusion of Prof. Hodgson's opening 45 minute statement. HCH]

The quotation "strains of curious mammals . . ." in the paragraph is garbled. It makes no sense. Whatever I said (I am not sure of the exact wording) related to the earliest mammals and birds. Their skeletal structures do show strongly reptilian characteristics. There is little room for doubt about that — I think most Christian biologists and geologists, if they have studied these fossils, would agree. To the evolutionist their reptilian characteristics indicate a reptile ancestry is highly likely. What may look "highly likely" to the evolutionist is a "not proven" to most creationists. While we may disagree with the evolutionists' conclusion, we cannot honestly pretend the reptilian characteristics are not there. We must be truthful about the evidence.

The statement is followed by "Again, a transition from fish to lung fish to amphibians does to some extent seem to be in evidence in the discovery of some species that have been found." This is a statement based upon fossil finds. There are a number of transitional species that have been found, even if some Christians like to keep repeating that there are no transitional forms. Again, however, the case is not fully determined, but all thinking Christians, especially those who are qualified biologists and geologists, must take a careful look at the evidence. That was my great concern in the debate — the Church is ill served if we have anathemas pronounced without a careful look at the evidence (both Biblical and scientific) by qualified people.

There is nothing, therefore, in this paragraph which is urging my audience to forsake their Biblical faith to embrace an evolutionist philosophy.

Paragraph 2. This paragraph says the fossil evidence indicates that simple life forms preceded the more complex, and that there appears to have been a gradual divergence over time. There is no real doubt about this sequence among scientists generally; it is also a view generally shared by most Christian biology and geology professors. Evolutionists consider this sequence to be evidence of an evolutionary unfolding over time, but a progressive creationist would argue that the sequence is due to a series of separate divine acts of creation spread over long eras of time. (My remarks made earlier in the evening about the progressive creationists made that sort of thing clear to the audience.) Again, there is nothing in this paragraph urging people to become evolutionists.

Paragraph 3. I am reported as saying "The case for evolution, I believe, is a good one on the basis of available scientific evidence." Note here again I am speaking of "available scientific evidence." I was thinking particularly of microevolution, although I might have left the prefix "micro-" off the word. I was not talking at this point about Biblical evidence, which I had covered earlier. I then went on to indicate in the words that followed that the present available scientific evidence did not, and should not be construed as excluding, the progressive creationist position (the position held by B.B. Warfield, Edward J. Young, and my own position).

My expression here should have been clearer, I admit, because some might have gone away thinking that "The case for evolution is good . . ." meant my personal endorsement. It was spoken unwisely (as the timekeeper was signalling me to end). I had in the back of my mind I remember the sense of having a "good

case" that would cause a grand jury to recommend a matter for trial, in contrast to a "proven case" with (sic) might result from a trial. As I spoke I was thinking of that difference, but it was too subtle (and an unexplained) distinction for the audience. It was a serious mistake.

Then I concluded with the words, "And so I think that that is about where we really have to leave it. I think that there are some things that strongly suggest evolution as an explanation for a lot of the varieties of life that we find. Whether it will explain everything, of course, will remain somewhat for the future to discover." I am suggesting in these words that on the narrower taxonomic levels (genus, family, etc.) there probably has been a measure of microevolution, and that God has been pleased to work that way in some cases. I had even examined the Apostle Paul's statement in Acts 17:26 which implies divergence (microevolution) within the human species over time. I had discussed the idea of microevolution (accepted by many conservative Christian creationist scholars) earlier in the evening.

It is evident in this closing paragraph that I blundered in expressing myself. I had no intention of leading my hearers from Biblical teaching.

What about all this?

As far as I am concerned, Dr. Hodgson's attempt to put some kind of good interpretation upon his words is totally unacceptable. And here are my reasons:

1. There is not the slightest indication in the tape recording that Dr. Hodgson's explanation of Paragraph 1 is true. In his speech he emphatically did not indicate that he was emphasizing scientific evidence in distinction, say, from Biblical evidence. Neither is it true that he even so much as suggests that he meant that the alleged strong reptilian skeletal structures of "the earliest mammals and birds" (prehistoric mammals and birds? HCH) indicates a highly likely reptile ancestry to the evolutionist. Dr. Hodgson

makes a flat, objective statement; and he himself must accept responsibility for that statement. The alternative is that he flatly retracts it — publicly and to all concerned. The same is true of Prof. Hodgson's statement concerning so-called "transitional forms." (These used to be called "missing links" between species.) Note carefully that he does not merely speak of *similarities*, if there be such. But he speaks of "a transition" and of "transitional forms." This is evolutionist language.

2. But let us grant Prof. Hodgson's explanation of Paragraph 1 (and also Paragraph 2) for the moment. Let us accept his claim that he is speaking of "scientific evidence" in distinction from "Biblical evidence" for the moment. Underlying this explanation is the assumption that science is neutral, and that "scientific evidence" is the same for the (Reformed) believer and for the unbeliever. This is plain from such a statement as this: "The *scientific* evidence presently available does not either establish or refute either a creationist or an evolutionary interpretation of events." No Reformed scientist, proceeding from his *a priori* Biblical and believing "bias" would ever make a statement like that. His Biblical "bias" (or "believing bias") would forbid it. And, by the way, no unbelieving, evolutionist scientist would make such a statement either. His unbelieving, evolutionist bias would forbid it.

3. When Prof. Hodgson speaks of "a gradual divergence over time" in Paragraph 2, he is in fact speaking about *evolution*. It is plain from his speech that he equates "divergence" and evolution. Besides, it appears to me that he would have considerable

difficulty in maintaining this position in the light of the Scriptural statements concerning the creation of living things on Days 3, 5, and 6 in Genesis 1. Further, it is characteristic of the progressive creationist position, to which Dr. Hodgson appeals here, that it makes room for such evolutionist ideas. And, note well, in the context of Paragraphs 1 and 3 the ideas of Paragraph 2, of "divergence" (evolution) from simple to complex are indeed evolutionist.

4. In the light of Paragraph 3, I simply stand aghast at Prof. Hodgson's claim that he did not take the evolutionist position in the Hillsdale debate. True, he leaves open the "possibility" of "divine creation of some basic life forms." And the latter are restricted to "particularly at the higher taxonomic levels." And these, in turn, are "over widely spaced intervals of time — not just a few thousand years now." And then he does not even positively assert these, but states that they "cannot be ruled out on the basis of present scientific observational evidence." Then he concludes by asserting that "there are some things that strongly suggest evolution as an explanation for a lot of the varieties of life that we find."

Could anyone leave Hillsdale after such statements thinking that Prof. Hodgson promoted only divine creation (even a progressive divine creation)? The answer is plainly: No.

Could anyone leave Hillsdale after such statements thinking that Prof. Hodgson *denied* evolutionism? The answer is plainly: No.

Could anyone leave Hillsdale after such statements thinking that Prof. Hodgson taught a degree of evolutionism? The answer is inescapably: Yes.

Could anyone leave Hillsdale after such statements, in the context of Prof. Hodgson's claimed adherence to "progressive creationism," thinking that "progressive creationism" leaves room for an admixture of and a compromise with evolutionism? Again, the answer is plainly: Yes. □

HCH

The Standard Bearer makes a thoughtful gift for members of your family, friends, and neighbors. Give a gift of the Standard Bearer.

In His Fear
Arie den Hartog

Receiving The Word of God

In I Thessalonians 2:13 the apostle Paul speaks of giving thanks to God without ceasing on account of the saints in Thessalonica, because they received the Word of God, not as the mere word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God. Earlier in this epistle Paul commended the great virtue of this church. He remembered their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Thessalonians had become examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia. All of this was directly related to the manner in which these saints of God received the Word of God. The

Word of God is the great power and blessing of the church. It will accomplish its purpose for the glory of God and the salvation of His people when it is received truly as the Word of God. All troubles and apostasy that are in the church can be traced to her refusal to receive the Word of God as the Word of God.

The Word of God is a great and fearful wonder. God is a living, personal, wonderful, speaking God. He is the God of infinite knowledge and wisdom. God speaks of Himself to reveal Himself outside of Himself, especially to man. God speaks of His own sovereignty, majesty, and holiness. God speaks as the righteous God and judge of all men, to reveal His will to men. God speaks in order to explain His own deeds and wonders in the earth and in history. God's word is powerful. It is almighty and effectual to accomplish all His purpose in creation and history. He created the heavens and the earth and all that they contain by the Word of His power. "Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people

of none effect," Psalm 33:8-10. God shakes heaven and earth by His almighty Word, and causes the earth to tremble before Him. Even more powerful and wonderful is the Word of God when He accomplishes His Sovereign purpose of salvation. By His Word He condemns and judges the ungodly reprobate, and finally casts him into eternal destruction. By His almighty Word He calls His people from the ends of the earth and gathers His elect unto Himself. Not all the power of the devil and the raging of the nations are able to prevent the Lord from accomplishing His purpose by His wonderful Word of power. No one can stand before His Word. By the power of His Word the Lord will judge His people in righteousness. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Hebrews 4:12. The Word of God is mighty and effectual to save His people. By His Word God quickens the dead and makes alive. By His Word He causes His people to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. By the Word of the Lord He convinces men of sin, and turns them again

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unto Himself. By the Word of the Lord He effectually works faith in the hearts of His people and causes them to trust in Him alone. By His Word the Lord instructs His people in truth and righteousness, not only objectively, but also by enlightening their minds and giving them understanding of His truth. By the Word of the Lord He comforts and assures His people in all their trials and afflictions. By the Word of the Lord His people are preserved from all evil and saved to the uttermost, and none shall be able to destroy.

God has in olden days spoken His Word through the mouths of His holy prophets. He gave them special revelations and put His own Word in their mouths. He sent them forth by His Spirit so they could speak His Word with great power and authority. In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son as the Word made flesh, as the brightness of His own glory, and the express image of His person. The Lord Jesus came to earth not only to do mighty deeds and wonders, but also to reveal the Word of God. Much of the Lord's ministry on earth was that of preaching the Word of God. How wonderful was the Word of God as spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. By His mighty and powerful Word He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and even raised up the dead. By the Word of God the Lord Jesus defeated the devil and caused him to flee in great terror before Him.

God gave us His Word in the Bible. The Bible is the written record of the Word of God. It is in its entirety the Word of God alone. God so inspired the human instruments which He used to write the Bible that they could write, without any error and

without mixture of human word and wisdom, the perfect Word of God. Thus what the Bible says is what God Himself has said. God Himself spoke to men and caused them infallibly to write His Word.

God will have His Word preached in the world for the salvation of His people and the glory of His own name. That is how He continues to speak even today. First He sent prophets and apostles to preach His Word. They were His official ambassadors, with His mighty Word of salvation. In all their preaching and teaching they must speak nothing but the Word of God. The apostles and prophets were instruments of special revelation. They were in a special way given the Word of God, and could speak with absolute authority from God in all that they preached. They were called to defend the truth of God's Word against all the opposition of men. They did this, not for their own glory and advantage, but for the glory of God and the advantage of the people of God who were to be saved by the Word of God.

God today still sends forth His Word through the preaching. He Himself calls and ordains preachers of His Word. He sends them forth with His Word and Spirit, effectually and powerfully to accomplish His purpose. He does not give men today any new revelation, because His Word is perfect and complete as it is recorded in the Scriptures. God speaks His Word today when faithful men of God expound and teach from the Holy Scriptures. God Himself causes the preaching of His Word to be effectual for the salvation of His people, through the operation of His Spirit.

We, as people of God, have the great privilege and blessing to hear the Word of God through the preaching. Do we receive the preaching of the Word, not as

the mere word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God? The blessing, prosperity, and spiritual strength of the church is dependent upon the Word of God and how we receive it. Two great evils always arise in the church. In many churches God's Word is no longer faithfully preached. Modern man does not believe that the Scriptures are the absolutely infallible and authoritative Word of God. Modern man imagines that the Scriptures are a mixture of God's Word and man's opinion and interpretation. Preaching in many churches today has lost its power and authority chiefly because it is not truly the preaching of the Word of God. But there is also another evil: this is the evil of people who refuse to hear the Word of God in truth. When the Word of God is preached, these imagine that it is nothing more than one man's opinion that can be accepted or rejected according to their own fancy. Every man claims the right to interpret the Word of God in his own way. Meanwhile, every man does what is right in his own eyes.

God's people, according to Isaiah 66, must be a people who tremble at the Word of God. How can our response to God's Word be any other than that? God, the almighty and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, speaks. Shall we, as creatures of His hand who are totally dependent on Him, and who are guilty sinners in His sight, not fear and tremble at His Word? We receive the Word of God in truth when we bow in holy reverence and humility before it. We receive the Word of God properly when we listen to it with great seriousness, without saying in our hearts that we

know better ourselves. We receive the Word of God properly when we take heed to its commandments and admonitions. We receive the Word of God in truth when we trust completely in its promises, and look earnestly for the fulfillment of its great prophecies.

We have to be on our guard against every temptation to reject the Word of God. The Word of God often offends because of our sinful arrogance and pride. The Word of God goes directly against all of the inclinations of our sinful flesh. How easy it is to become critical of the preaching of God's word and to fault the preacher. But often the opposition which we have against a certain preacher is in fact due to offense at the Word of God itself.

Much opposition against certain preachers is nothing but a smoke screen for opposition against the Word of God itself. How easily members of the church today dismiss the preaching of God's Word as the opinion of the preacher. It is true that we preachers cannot speak infallibly as the apostles of the Lord did. This does not, however, give the members of the church the right quickly to dismiss the preaching and substitute their own opinions and interpretations of God's Word. In connection with hearing the preaching of the Word of God, we must always also follow the example of the Berean Christians, by daily searching the Scriptures, that we might know whether the preaching is truly the Word of God, lest we become

guilty of rejecting the Word of God to our own detriment and judgment.

Blessed is the church and the people of God who receive the Word of God in truth. That church will be able to stand in our evil day against the many false doctrines around us. That church will also inevitably manifest the glorious virtues of Christ which were so beautifully revealed in the church of Thessalonica.

God Himself must give us His grace and Holy Spirit that we might receive His Word in truth. Let us pray that we might be a church and people who always receive the Word of God as it is in truth the very Word of God, the God of our salvation. □

Walking In The Light

Herman C. Hanko

Euthanasia (4)

In previous articles we have attempted to point out the complexity of the problem of so-called euthanasia and see some of the ramifications of it in our present-day society. In the next two articles, we have to try to come to some conclusions on the matter and offer some guidelines for our thinking.

We live in a very strange world, made strange by the presence of sin. Indeed, as the night of sin grows darker and iniquity abounds, the strange inconsistencies of life in this wicked world are magnified. It will re-

quire only a few allusions to some common-day practices to show how true this is.

On the one hand, there is a great deal of talk in the world today about the sanctity of life, the worth of the individual, the obligation we all have to make life easier and happier for the down-trodden, the oppressed, those who experience discrimination in any form, etc. The individual is so important and his place in life so sacred that any kinds of racial slurs, discriminatory actions, ethnic jokes, or whatever, directed against him

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are severely condemned and become in some instances the stuff of expensive lawsuits.

Coupled with this are the tremendous efforts which are being expended and the enormous sums of money which are being spent in research and development to extend man's life. Every effort is being made to combat disease, to invent ever new and ever costlier machines which will increase man's life span. And as the average age of people increases, science boasts with a loud voice about its accomplishments. One need only think, e.g., of the mechanical heart which has recently been used in several instances — of the tremendous cost involved in developing it, of the unprecedented medical bills which are being accumulated as it is actually being tried in some people, of the untold amount of suffering which some are willing to endure to live a little while longer in this world.

If I may insert a parenthetical remark or two at this point: this whole matter of prolonging life seems sometimes to be ironic in the extreme. Prolonging life is hailed by some as the ultimate triumph of medical science. But I have made too many trips to too many rest homes and nursing homes, and seen too many tragedies of prolonging life to join in the hosannas. The longer life is prolonged, the greater become the problems which men create with thousands of nursing homes filled with thousands of people who have little else to do but wait to die. This is progress? and cause for jubilation? But this by way of parenthesis.

On the other hand, life is cheap. Criminals roam the streets ready to shoot a person for 50 cents, not hesitant to commit the

most atrocious crimes to gain money for a drug habit. But the same liberal frame of mind which is so determined to respect life is the force behind an utter callousness towards the victims of crime and a woolly-headed concern for the criminal. The one who gets shot doesn't count; the suffering and anguish of his family and loved ones is unimportant; the murderer must have his rights protected and must not, under any circumstances, be put to death. Alcohol can figure in 60% or better of accidents which leave the highways running with blood, but drunk drivers go scot-free, beer and whiskey commercials continue to dominate TV screens, and no one gives a snap of the fingers for the innocent victims of these accidents who must bear their sorrow alone. Thousands, tens of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of babies are killed in cold blood, before they see the light of day, in hospitals and abortion clinics; the future generations of this country are sacrificed to the god pleasure — as Judah under Manasseh sacrificed her children in the fiery arms of the idol Moloch, and those who have the biggest word about the sanctity of life are those who scream the loudest about the rights to abort a child.

The only explanation for this strange phenomenon is man's determined opposition to God, man's insatiable desire to rule sovereignly in this world, man's fixed purpose to cast God from His throne, and man's total disregard for life, regardless of what he may say. His disregard for life is everywhere evident. And when he apparently succeeds in prolonging life, he does so not because life is so sacred to him and not because he loves his fellow man so dearly; but rather because he hates God, is determined to overcome sickness and

death which God has sent as punishment for sin, and thus is desperate to show that he can escape God's anger, do as he pleases, and finally make God's punishment of sin ineffective.

Euthanasia belongs to this whole picture. As we noticed in earlier articles, it is a growing movement, an idea which is, to use a word of our Surgeon-General, snowballing to alarming proportions. The idea behind it all is something called rather euphemistically, "the quality of life." We must, we are told, be concerned about and interested in the quality of life. Now, I am not prepared to say what exactly this rather vague, but catchy word means. But it refers to the fact that life has got to be pleasant, has got to be enjoyable, has got to be "normal" in some vague sense, or else life is not worth living. The phrase turns up a lot in connection with the treatment of cancer patients. The doctor, in discussing with the patient what treatment he ought to have, talks about prolonging life, but also about the quality of that life when it is prolonged. "I can," the doctor says, give you, through treatment, another ten years. But you have to know that 'the quality of your life' will be reduced, that this 'quality of life' will deteriorate with the passing of the years, and that you must make a choice of dying within five years without treatment, or in ten years with treatment. The determining factor is the 'quality of life.'"

While I suppose, from a certain point of view, there may be a bit of truth to this whole business of quality of life, I have come to despise the notion, for all that. I think of the family with a child with severe Down's syndrome. Doctors are of the opinion that

the "quality of life" is so poor for such a child that, if they discover this condition before the child is born, the child ought to be aborted. But what of the happiness of such a child, a happiness that is so great that he or she is like a light around the house? What about the parents who learn to love that child with such a love that it is almost greater (if that were possible) than the love they have for their "normal" children? What do any doctors know about the quality of life in such situations? My grandmother, a dear, pious and Godly saint, never lived a day of the last thirty or forty years of her life without excruciating pain. But the quality of her life was something else. She bore children, raised a family, gave them Godly instruction, and was an unending source of wisdom, strength, guidance, and advice to the entire neighborhood in which she lived.

Euthanasia speaks much of the quality of life. And the proponents of euthanasia are determined to open the way of the killing of those whose quality of life is low. The old, the sick, the mentally incapacitated, the babies, children and older people, whose life is one of suffering or abnormality — these have to go. More and more the notion is being spread abroad in the land that it is perfectly all right to terminate the life of anyone who has lost this elusive quality of life. Organizations flourish which even give instructions on how to commit suicide when you are convinced that your quality of life has so deteriorated that you want to bring it to an end.

Man has come to think that he has the complete say-so about his life. He may do with it as he pleases — so he thinks. It is his to live as he pleases; it is his to end

as he pleases. And not only may he do with his own life what he pleases, but he has come to think of himself as so powerful that he may do to others who cannot make their own decisions what he thinks ought to be done.

Euthanasia is plain and simple murder. No one, under any circumstances, may take the life of another person. No one may himself determine when and how another's life shall end. To do so is to play God, to take or attempt to take into one's own hand the prerogatives which belong to God alone. No one may, under any circumstances, be instrumental in another's death. We must get that straight and we must proceed from that principle.

This does not mean that many other problems do not remain. They do. And we shall try to speak of them in another article. □

From Holy Writ
George C. Lubbers

Exegetical Sketches on Micah 6:1-8 (3)

We now come to our consideration of Micah 6:6, 7. We wish to state at the very outset that these two verses are worthy of our careful consideration. The Word of God is worthy of being studied. Such study yields rich rewards.

The verses here read as follows: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself

before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

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When we take an overview of these questions, which are asked in these verses, we notice that they are really rhetorical questions. To ask these questions is really to answer them. Implied in these questions, in the light of all the Scriptures, is a strong: God forbid!

The following elements call for our specific attention:

First, that just who the questioner is, is not clearly indicated in the text. Either they are questions which are asked by an individual "I," a definite Israelite, who responds with a pricked heart to the divine controversy of God with his people, or the prophet, by rhetorical device, places these questions in the mouth of someone, who then in that capacity asks the questions, so that the divine answer may be heard.

Secondly, we should also notice that there is one leading question in the text, which is then amplified by other more detailed questions. The leading question is: "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD?" The other questions which follow are elucidations upon the first question.

Thirdly, we ought to notice, that the question which suggests the answers to all these questions is: "Will the LORD *be pleased* with" many and various sacrifices, or with very few oblations for that matter? What sacrifice can mere man place of his own choosing which would please the LORD? For, mark you well, the sacrifices which are brought into God's holy temple and upon the altar must be a pleasing odor and scent in God's holy nostrils. The verb "be pleased" in the Hebrew text is a tense which expresses that all sacrifices must in very deed be pleasing, that unto all eternity God loves to receive them as a perpetual odor in His holy tem-

ple. It must be the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, the fruit of the lips (Hebrews 13:15, 16).

Meanwhile we must not forget that the LORD has a controversy exactly on this point with his people. We are certain that the clear-cut word of Jesus to the Samaritan woman is here fitting, which reads, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24).

Let us now consider these various questions in the text briefly.

First, as we have earlier indicated, these questions all imply a "God forbid!" And this response must be elicited from the heart and mouth of every believer. For in a sense this is a question after the well-known revealed will of God. Already in paradise God killed the lamb, clothed Adam and Eve with the skins thereof, and proclaimed that the Seed of the woman will triumph in the blood of the Lamb, which is without spot or wrinkle. Away then with all human sacrifice and merely human ordinances! Adam and Eve needed to have the shame of their nakedness taken away. Thus it is also here in this controversy!

As an aside, we might observe whether these questions might not be right, or at least understandable, from the viewpoint of the Old Testament shadows and types. Had not God Himself prescribed minutely and in great detail the duty of Israel to bring sin offerings and burnt sacrifices in Leviticus 4:10, ff.? And was not God very displeased when Israel failed to bring these sacrifices at their appointed times, or when Israel offered them contrary to the statutes in Israel? Was not God very angry and sorely displeased with all the worship of the golden calf? And

was not the institution of this calf worship a basic historical departure from God? Was it not *then* that God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets, "O ye house of Israel, have ye offered me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?" (Acts 7:41 ff.) Thus was God displeased with all abominations in his temple!

However, there is more to be said concerning sacrifices and burnt offerings. Really God never desired the latter at all. How clearly God speaks concerning His not desiring burnt offerings in Psalm 40:6-8. We read: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering has thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." It is for the unprofitableness and weakness of these sacrifices that they all would be annulled at the time of reformation (Heb. 7:18).

Hence, the real answer to these questions is to be found in the thoughts of peace which God has in Christ, His Son, at Calvary. He is the priest which becomes us: holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (Heb. 7:26).

Now we are in a position to see the utter folly of any human attempt to bring sacrifices many. Shall the bringing of thousands of rams be of any profit? Thousands of rams are just as unprofitable as the bringing of one more ram. How could thousands of rams bring about the righteousness of God which is the gift of mere grace? Was that not just the sad history of all the priesthood of Aaron? It did not cleanse the conscience from one sin. Nor could rivers of oil change the situation. In themselves these

rivers of oil are a stench in the temple of God.

Thirdly, it is obvious that now we see the godless horribleness of the question concerning the offering of the firstborn sons of Israel for transgressions. There is something shocking in the question: "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" What a depth of folly! For it is the wisdom of men which would set aside the wisdom of God as manifested in the plain of salvation. For had not God said already to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn?" (Ex. 4:22) All the firstborn sons in Israel belonged to the LORD. They were redeemed on the fortieth day in the temple. A Levite substituted for them in the temple service. Besides, was not the shedding of human blood forbidden? Did God not stay the hand of Abraham from cutting Isaac's jugular vein? Would God not prepare Himself a sacrifice for sin? Was it not written in the volume of the book of God?

The list is ended of these horrible questions.

I feel thankfully relieved!

Really, the answer to these questions was already given earlier in the prophecy of Micah. It is the same answer which we read in Isaiah 2:1-4. It all awaits the last days, the time of the fulness of time, when Christ shall be manifested to be the "end of the law" for righteousness to every one who believes. Then no one who believes shall seek to establish his own righteousness anymore. The "law that shall go forth from Zion" is the word of the gospel of grace. Jew and Gentile shall then both come to Zion, the city of the living God.

Nay, the law then shall not go forth from Sinai's heights; no more shall it be written upon tables of stone, but it will be written on the tables of the heart. Micah had spoken of the ruler who would go forth out of Bethlehem. His going forth is really from eternity, as proceeding from the counsel of peace. Now this was really written on every page of Scripture by all the prophets. For all the prophets inquired and searched out diligently concerning the salvation of our souls. They all knew that there is not a man living who can give a ransom for his soul, so that he is free from guilt and corruption of sin. In faith the saints of old looked for the One to come. They looked away from all self-righteousness as did Abraham and David. With Abraham they looked in faith unto God Who justifies the ungodly. Such faith is counted for righteousness. And with David they sang Psalm 32:1, 2, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Romans 4:4-8)

But we must move on.

We will now consider what the Holy Spirit tells us in Micah 6:8-a. We read here: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good"

There are some passages in the Bible which legalists and moralists explain in such a way that they wrest them to their own destruction. Such a passage we have here in Micah 6:8.

However, let us bear the following in mind. In the first place, the questioner is here brought to an abrupt halt. "He," the LORD, had not left Israel in the dark concerning Christian ethics and as to what constitutes what is "good," as a rule of Christian conduct. This is crystal clear from Moses, the Psalms, and all the prophets. Secondly, the point that is made clear is what is real-

ly "good." Now if the LORD did not desire law-works, He must command something else, which is good and which meets with his approval. Perhaps we can do no better than to remind ourselves of the New Testament phraseology, "and be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2)

We shall do well to take a close and hard look at this brief assertion.

Let it then be seen clearly that the verb "shew" in the Hebrew has a causative force. It really means: the Lord *has caused* thee to know what is good. It refers to making it so clear to the understanding that there need be no doubt as to what was said or meant. The Lord never desired sacrifices, but would have mercy and a new spiritual obedience of thankfulness. Here in court the high God confronts man. He says to everyone, "O man!" Man has but to listen and give heed and obey the precepts of the Lord as a redeemed people. The key-note is as given in the words of Moses: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Thus spoke Moses in Deut. 6:4, 5. Hear, "O man," and live! □

Taking Heed To The Doctrine

Ronald H. Hanko

The Two Natures of Christ: The Humanity of Christ

2. The characteristics of Christ's human nature (con't.).

b. Christ's complete human nature. Closely connected with the reality of Christ's human nature is its completeness. It should be immediately obvious that if His human nature is not complete, that is, if it does not include body, soul, spirit, heart, mind, will, and all that belongs to our humanity, then it is not real either.

This also was denied in the early history of the Church, first of all by those who taught that the deity of Christ replaced a certain part of the human nature.

An example is the error of Appollinarianism (named after the man who first taught this error, Appollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea in Syria). He taught that Christ did not have a human "mind" but that this had been replaced by the divine nature. Boettner uses the analogy of a human mind in a lion's body to explain what Appollinaris taught concerning Christ (*Studies in Theology*, p. 263). Such an idea may seem very strange to us, but we must remember that such errors arose in connection with the Church's attempt to defend what is still today a great mystery: that Christ can be at the same both really human and really divine, and yet only one Christ. In fact, the historical evidence seems to indicate that Appollinaris did not deliberately teach heresy at this point, but was attempting to hold to the truth that there is but one Christ, without in any way compromising the truth that He is really and truly God.

Another error, somewhat similar to that of Appollinaris, was the teaching that Christ had only one will (Monothelitism), in effect a denial of the completeness of Christ's humanity, an error to which Roman Catholicism still tends today.

The Church recognized immediately that these were errors and saw, too, that these errors were not insignificant, but did serious damage to the gospel. Just as the reality of our salvation depends on the reality of Christ's human nature and on the reality of His suffering and death in that human nature, so the completeness of our salvation depends on the completeness of Christ's human nature. Our whole being has come under the domination of sin and is enslaved in spiritual blindness and darkness. Not only our bodies are subject to sin and death, but also our souls (Is. 3:9), our spirits (II Cor. 7:1), our minds (Eph. 2:1-3), our wills (I Pet. 4:3), and our hearts (Jer. 17:9). Thus we are totally depraved not only in the sense that we are completely wicked, but in the sense that our whole being and existence is wicked and depraved. So it was necessary that Christ took upon Himself all our humanity and suffered in all that belongs to our human nature, not only in body, but also in soul and spirit, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually (cf. Lk. 22:44, Jn. 11:33), that we might be fully delivered from this horrible slavery.

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Gregory Nazianzen, one of the opponents of Appolinaris, saw all of this most clearly:

If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His God-head is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole. Let them not, then, begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Saviour only with bones and nerves and the portraiture of humanity (Letter to Cledonius).

Likewise, the Heidelberg Catechism hints at this truth when it says in Lord's Day XV, 37 that He "sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind, that so . . . He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation."

To this it should be added that we do not only believe that Christ suffered and was tempted at all points like we are (Heb. 4:15), but that He also served God with heart and soul and mind and strength (of physical body), that is, with His whole human nature, for that also was necessary for our salvation. It was not only necessary for our salvation that He suffer in every respect the punishment of our transgressions, but that He offer to God on our behalf a complete obedience as a substitute for our disobedience, thus justifying us before God.

Hebrews 2:17 would not be true, then, if He lacked any part of our humanity. He would not be made like us in all things, and would not, in that case, be able to be a merciful High Priest and to make reconciliation for our sins.

The strange thing that we see today is a neglect of this truth by those who emphasize even at the expense of His deity, His likeness to us. The prevailing emphasis on His sympathetic and complete humanity entirely misses the point, by missing the significance of this truth. In the preaching for example, the complete humanity of Christ is stressed merely to awaken some kind of emotional response, not to show our dreadful condition and the need of His complete humanity to assure us of deliverance. In other words, a man might point to Christ's agony of soul in the garden (Matt. 26:38) and describe at length the horror of Christ's suffering, showing how it is like our own suffering and arousing our deepest feelings, without ever mentioning the fact that this soul-suffering of the Saviour was part of the price of the redemption of our souls, and thus miss the gospel in the passage.

Here again, therefore, the Church must fight for the truth concerning Christ even at those points where superficially it would seem there is no battle to fight.

c. Christ's weakened human nature. That Christ had a weakened human nature is also part of the truth that He was like us in all things. In speaking of the reality and completeness of His human nature, the emphasis has been on the likeness to us, that He was *made like us* in all things. Now the emphasis is on the truth that He was made like *us*, that is, like us in our fallen condition, under the curse of God, subject to death and hell, and suffering all the consequences of sin, or as Paul says in Romans, "In the likeness of sinful flesh" (8:3).

This does not mean that Christ Himself was sinful or even liable to sin, but that He suffered in the flesh all the results of 4,000 years of sin's debilitating power. He

was not like we shall be in the new heavens and earth: incorruptible, immortal, with endless strength and life; not even like Adam in his perfection in Eden, but subject to poverty, weariness, hunger, pain, sickness, grief, and death. All of these things, we must remember, are the results of sin; and when Paul refers to sinful flesh, therefore, he is talking about our flesh as it had then reaped the consequences of sin for nearly 4,000 years.

II Corinthians 8:9 also refers to this truth when it says that He "became poor" for our sakes. This passage does not and cannot apply only to the physical poverty into which He was born (Lk. 2:7) and which attended Him all His life (Matt. 8:20), but to the fact that He entered our low estate. Not only was the glory of His divinity obscured, but as a man He had no glory and honor, no comeliness or beauty (Is. 53:2). Philippians 2:7 says that He "emptied Himself" (KJV: "made Himself of no reputation"), and we must not forget that even apart from all the reproach and grief He had to endure, the essence of His poverty lay simply in this, that He became like *us*.

Perhaps this does not seem of such great importance. Certainly it seems as though Christians give it little thought, for not only do the various manger scenes one sees at Christmas show little of this, but it has been very much forgotten in the song so often sung by our children at Christmas time, "Away in a Manger." The line of that hymn, "The little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes," is an outright denial of the truth that He was like us also in our weaknesses and sorrows. Certainly, in hunger, discomfort, and fright, He must have cried as a babe, just as He also cried during His earthly ministry as a grown man.

Nor may we say that this is all of little account, for here also our salvation depends on Him. All these weaknesses and limitations are part of His humiliation, and therefore also part of our salvation. Paul says in II Corinthians 8:9 that all this *is* the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the way in which we become rich in Him. To understand, we must know that all of the pain and suffering we endure, and which He took, are not just the results of sin in the sense that they came along with it, but the results of sin in this sense, that they are part of the punishment of sin. God will not give joy, peace, comfort, and satisfaction to those who walk in their own ways apart from Him, for there is no peace or life apart from Him.

And so we see that in taking all these weaknesses upon Himself, Christ was taking upon Himself the judgment due to us, that He might deliver us from it. That is the grace of His poverty.

How often that is forgotten by those who teach today that the only consequence of Christ's poverty is a pity for the poor and deprived of this world, both on the part of Christ and on the part of His church that manifests itself in various kinds relief efforts and welfare programs! That is not only a denial of the reality of His poverty and all it means, but a failure to find in it any real help, comfort, or relief. In other words, the comfort of His suffering, poverty, shame, and humiliation,

is in His suffering for sin and as the result of sin. Thus, and thus only, is He able to succor us in our *temptations* (Heb. 2:18).

The irony of it all is once again that it is exactly those who speak most often of the poverty and humiliation of Christ who are the greatest enemies of the truth of His humanity. The threat to the truth, therefore, is that the church should fail to see that His poverty is "the curse due to us," which He took, that He might enrich us with all of the blessings that are in heavenly places in Him. Let the church, therefore, be careful when she confesses that Jesus Christ came in the form of a servant. □

The Day of Shadows

John A. Heys

God's Promise Faithfully Kept

When the book of Ruth was written, we do not know. It was written in or after the days of David, but just when it was written and by whom, we cannot say. The last verses in this book, however, reveal that it was after David's anointing as future king of Israel. In these last verses, David is mentioned as a descendant of Obed, whom God gave to Boaz and Ruth. Whoever wrote this book of Ruth knew these men and the genealogies found in verses 18-22. That David was a descendant of Boaz and Obed is

not stated prophetically. The author does not present it as something that is going to happen. He writes of that which already took place.

The author of this book, whom God used to pen down these truths, could have been Samuel. He was born in the days of the judges, and was in fact the last of the judges; and he not only lived when David was born, but was used by God to anoint David as the one who would take Saul's place as king over Israel.

John A. Heys is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

What is interesting in this book is what man's name is mentioned first in this book and whose name is mentioned last in it. Elimelech is the man mentioned first. He is the one whose name was continued upon the land in Canaan that God had given him, even though he died without a grandson who could take over his inheritance. In His grace, God moved Boaz to walk in His law and take Ruth, the wife of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, to raise up seed to inherit that land and keep Elimelech's name upon it.

But the man mentioned last in this book is David, who became king and had his sons on the throne until Christ, Who was born in the royal line of David's descendants, came and obtained an everlasting kingship over God's elect. For a time these descendants of David did not sit on an earthly throne; but God continued his seed in the royal line until Mary brought forth this Christ.

Now Elimelech's name means God is my King. He did not always live up to this name. Had he done so, he would never have left the land of Canaan during that famine. He would have obeyed God and not gone contrary to His laws. He would have trusted in God, seeing that famine as God's judgment upon wickedness, and as chastisement to turn His people back to serving Him as their God and King. Leaving Canaan was idolatry. Not only did he go to idolatrous Moab, but he worshipped bread as his god. For he was willing to break God's law in order to get bread for his flesh. He was not asking himself what God wanted him to do, but what his flesh wanted. Instead of praying to God for grace to continue look-

ing to Him for all his earthly and spiritual needs, he asked his flesh what would be best for him from an earthly, physical point of view. Instead of praying that God would turn his fellow citizens from their sins, he sinned himself by leaving behind God and the worship in His temple.

This is not exaggerating his sin. We need but read five verses in the first chapter of the book, and we become aware of God's visitation upon that sin. Elimelech died. His sons went further into sin and married heathen wives, which they would not have done had their parents stayed in the promised land. Parents today better bear that in mind also, and move only where their children can grow up in a church that preaches the truth, and where they can get husbands and wives that believe in the one true and holy God.

Neither does all this deny that Elimelech was an elect child of God, who had all these sins forgiven. You cannot find anywhere in Scripture the life of one that is treated a bit extensively who did not deserve the punishment of death. Did God not even tell Adam and Eve that *one* sin of eating a piece of fruit that was forbidden would bring death? What about Noah, Abraham, Jacob, David, and Peter? And does not Paul in Romans 7 say that the evil that he would not, he does? The blood of Christ blots out such sins as well as Adam's and Eve's sins. And did God not *in His grace* cause these deaths to come so that Naomi might be instructed and brought back to the promised land and a ceasing of her sin? Was it not all in God's plan to bring salvation to Ruth and to bring her to Bethlehem where He had decreed Christ would be born?

This does not mean that we may go ahead in our sinful ways

without any fear of punishment in this life and in the life to come. The death of Elimelech and his sons speaks loudly of God's holy wrath. And Naomi's bitter weeping and request that she be called Mara, the Bitter One, is a warning to us. Besides, enjoying sin should and must raise in our minds the question whether we really have been born again and are elect, believing children of God. In His sermon on the mount Jesus said that they are blessed who mourn over sin, not do it with joy, and do it with the idea that God will look the other way. That is believing, but it is believing in another god than the one Who sent His Son to die for those whom Jesus in that same sermon on the mount calls the pure in heart, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, are poor in spirit, and mourn over sin.

Now to return to what we began to say, the last man whose name appears in the very last verse of this book of Ruth is David. And David is the one to whom God gave such wonderful victories as a king, so that under him the Israelites conquered and held all the land that God promised Abraham. The last word we find in this book is the name David, the name of one who so clearly and wonderfully gave us a picture of that Son of David, Christ, Who will crush the head of the serpent and all his seed and bring the church to heavenly glory, because He suffered the punishment we deserve, and performed the works of God's law that we did not bring to Him.

Between the name Elimelech and the name David we find the name Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth. That name Obed means "serving" or "one who serves"; and how true it is that he served the cause of God's church. He did not do this in his own strength. Do we not read in Ruth 4:13, "So

Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son?" That is often forgotten; but it is so very true that God always gives the conception, or withholds it. Obed served the bringing forth of seed to inherit Elimelech's land and to keep the seed and line that would bring forth David and Christ. But he served as God's servant. He served as a tool that was in God's hand. From Abraham to David and Christ there had to be an Obed, a servant. That God's Son might come in our flesh, and come in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, through Jacob and Judah, there had to be an Obed. And in His grace God supplied him and used him.

We must become Elimelechs, that is, people who say and whose lives reveal that God is our King. But we also — in order to reach that point of salvation, where He is our king in the sense that we love and serve Him perfectly, and that which Jacob, as God's servant, prophesied is fulfilled, namely, that the sceptre would not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet until shiloh come — must have that of which David and Solomon were only types and shadows. We need a Saviour Who gives us a new spiritual life and implants a pure love to God in us. We must have a King Who crushes Satan, brings an end to his kingdom, but also takes all the love of sin out of us and fills us with enmity against Satan and all that which denies that Jehovah is our God and King. Does not David say in Psalm 145:1, "I will extol Thee my God, O King?"

Elimelech needed Him Who was born in the line of Ruth's son, Obed, for the forgiveness of his sins. God supplied that need not simply through Ruth — who

with Mahlon could not beget a son, and then was given a conception after Boaz married her — but through the more miraculous birth of His own Son, when Mary of that royal line of David gave birth to that Son right there in Bethlehem, and that by a *virgin birth!*

Closing the book with the name of David, God directs our attention to Christ. Beginning the book by telling us that Elimelech sinfully departed from the place where God's love and grace were displayed in types and shadows, the book shows us the need of Christ. The famine in that promised land during the period of the judges, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, was a shadow of what Adam and Eve did when they sinned and were driven out of the Garden of Eden and away from the tree of life. Elimelech's going to Moab so that he could eat bread, where God did not dwell in His love and grace, was a shadow of what *had happened* there in the first creation that God brought forth, and where Adam could meet with God and enjoy His fellowship. Showing us David through whom in time Christ would be born, God gives us a shadow of that which *is coming*. Christ will come. God will keep His promise.

In light of all this we can understand the speech of the women when Obed was born. They did not see all things as we can see them today on this side of Christ's cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. But they did bless God for not leaving Naomi "without a kinsman that his name may be famous in Israel." The word here translated as famous has the basic meaning of being "called a name". Yet we can take hold of this translation and keep it as the truth of which

these women spoke. Seeing with their fleshly eye, these women saw that Elimelech kept his name in the promised land through this son of Boaz and Ruth. However, what we see with the eye of faith is Christ born in the line of Obed, Jesse, and David. He, Christ, is now at God's right hand with the famous name of Lord over all lords and King over all kings. And if those women had reason to cry out: "Blessed be the Lord," how much more reason do we not have to do that? For that is the most famous name that a man can have. Adam was created as king of this earth, having rule and dominion even over all the beasts of the field. Genesis 1:26 declares that God made man to have "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." But Adam was not king over the angels. And surely after the fall, man has no dominion over Satan and the fallen angels. They have spiritual dominion over man. But Christ, Who came in that line of Obed, Jesse, and David, has dominion over every speck of dust and of every living creature, as well as over all the inanimate creation. He showed that also in many of His miracles, not only by calming the raging sea by a command, but with power over death and the grave.

In that sense, too, Christ is the restorer of life and a nourisher of old age. Surely Ruth was a better gift to us, as well as to Naomi, than seven sons born to Mahlon and Chilion through heathen, Moabitish women, who would bring up their children in the worship and idolatry of Chemosh. No, Christ must be born of Boaz, who was in the royal line of David, as we find it in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Elimelech was in the line of David, but not in the royal

line as Salmon was, who was the one who begot Boaz. A son born to Mahlon, and thus a grandson of Elimelech, could not pay for Elimelech's and Naomi's sins. But Boaz in that royal line could and by God's grace did bring forth the Christ, Who blotted out the sins of all those given Him eternally by the Father.

The book of Ruth begins by calling our attention to sin. It closes by assuring us of the faithfulness of our God to keep His promises of taking away our sin. At that juncture we could not yet be told literally of Christ and His birth in Bethlehem. But we can be and are shown thus far in the history of God's church that God keeps His promise of the sceptre not departing from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh, that is, Christ, is come. Things in the future may look dark to us. It may look as though Christ is not coming back

to save us from the serpent and his seed. And let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that when we cannot buy or sell, because we have refused to take the mark of the beast, we of ourselves would not become Elimelechs and leave the church to get bread. That famine is coming as surely as one came in the day of the judges. God's children then are going to be sorely tried. But let us hold fast to that truth which we have here of God's faithfulness to His promises.

Did God really deal bitterly with Naomi? He was, in all that we read of in this book of Ruth, preparing the way for Christ, and through Him the way for us to have our sins blotted out and to enter into the sinless, glorious kingdom of His Son. He punishes His elect in the sense of chastising them. But never, no never, does God deal bitterly with those

He chose in Christ. Naomi better keep her name Pleasant and not tell anyone to call her Mara, or Bitter. As Paul writes: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal," II Corinthians 4:17, 18.

He did not deal bitterly with Naomi, but in the sweetness of His mercy and love. He was a restorer of her life and a nourisher of her old age. He is our Saviour, and has every step of our way to living with Him in holiness and glory planned in every detail. And He is faithful to every letter in every word of His promises. □

Contribution
Bruce Van Solkema

Perspective From The Pew

I wish to convey the needs and desires of every child of God who sits under the preaching of the Word of God, the needs and fulfillment of those needs which are taken from the bottom of my heart as I listen to the preaching from Sunday to Sunday.

In the first place, we should desire to hear good exegetical Biblical sermons based on the entire Word of God. We need sermons that explain to us the

historical background, the meaning of the text, with many appropriate proof texts and proper examples and application for us in today's world: sermons that have one basic foundation, and that is, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). If we do not hear that basic foundation in every single sermon, we as God's people sitting in the pew are not fully spiritually edified. That is

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what our heartfelt desire is — spiritual edification.

We are weak, sinful human beings who confess our sins day after day. We ask for forgiveness of those sins through Christ's blood shed on the cross for his elect, chosen people. We have fallen short of the glory of God every moment of our lives (Romans 3:23). We have sinned against the Almighty God, Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. We have heard the welcome sound to come up to God's house, the house of prayer and the house of worship. We have been reminded by the reading of the law of God in the worship service that we have broken every commandment which God has given us. God commands us: "Be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 20:7). As we meditate on these things, what do we see in ourselves? Nothing but a stinking, rotten, no-good pile of bones and flesh that soon will return to the dust from which it was created. For we have been humbled to the dust. It is precisely at that moment that we are at the very bottom of our spiritual and emotional nature and need to be spiritually edified and uplifted.

We love to hear the lively preaching of the gospel — the good news of salvation: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:18). "God sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). He conquered death and hell and Satan by rising again from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures. We must hear that our Redeemer liveth and because He lives, we, too, shall live.

So you see that it is a must that in every sermon we hear Jesus Christ crucified, and that He rose again the third day. It is not good that a child of God be left in his misery of sin and not be comforted by the fact that he is a sinner — saved by the

wonderful, sovereign grace of God. In Isaiah 40:1 and 2, we read, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned . . ." We need to be spiritually strengthened, uplifted, and comforted in our hearts by that lively preaching and expounding of the Word of God. We must hear not man's word, but only "Thus saith the Lord," so we can properly worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

We must also realize that the Holy Spirit dwells within the heart of every child of God, convicting us of our sins, giving us the assurance of our salvation through Christ's death on the cross, and leading us in a life of gratitude by good works. The preaching of God's Word is the chief means of grace by which that operation of the Holy Spirit is accomplished. As Romans 8:16 and 17 explains, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

But some may say that we can supply God's word to ourselves by the working of the Holy Spirit while we sit under the preaching of God's word. We cannot deny

that, but the fact of the matter is that the primary way that God is pleased to use is the explicit preaching of His word through an ordained preacher. A preacher that must "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Preach the word. Why? Because of the nature of the holy Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16 and 17). So we see that the preacher must preach the word which is profitable for doctrine. Doctrines? What are doctrines? Doctrines are the teachings of the Scripture which we hold very dear to our hearts and lives, the truths of Scripture which have been taught and handed down from generation to generation. Doctrine is the truth which has been developed over the years and defended by the saints of old even in the face of persecution, ridicule, scorn and, yes, even death itself. May we proclaim with all the saints, "Faith of our fathers living still, we will be true to Thee till death."

(to be continued)

Book Review

A Stranger in a Strange Land, Leonora Scholte; Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, Inheritance Publications, 120 pp. (paper);

price — US \$5.95. [Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema]

This book tells the story of the Dutch settlement in Pella, Iowa,

under the leadership of the Reverend Henry Scholte. Written by Scholte's daughter-in-law, the story gives the accuracy and intimate details which only a member of the family could furnish.

Because of persecution after the Secession of 1834 in the Netherlands, the Rev. Scholte and his followers emigrated to America and settled in the plains

of Iowa, later developed into the city of Pella.

It is a fascinating story of romance, hardships, history, and faith. Although Scholte and his followers never went along with the denominations of the Reformed Church in America nor the Christian Reformed Church, but remained an independent group, it is a valuable book about a segment of the history of our forefathers. □

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

February 15, 1988

Rev. G. Van Baren declined the call extended to him from the congregation in Holland, Michigan.

Rev. M. De Vries also declined the call he received from First Church in Grand Rapids to become the second missionary of our Protestant Reformed Churches to the island of Jamaica.

You may also remember an item from our last news column about Rev. Houck, and the incomplete results of a tread-mill test. We are happy to report that results of that test taken January

13 revealed that there is no need for Rev. Houck to undergo heart by-pass surgery.

On Sunday, January 24, Rev. Bekkering, pastor of Faith Church, began to preach again. The decision was taken that for the present Pastor Bekkering would only be responsible for one service each Lord's Day.

Let us continue to remember these two servants of God as well as all of our under-shepherds in our prayers.

The Evangelism Committee of Faith Church presented a project to their congregation recently. It was their desire to begin a weekly letter writing campaign to Rev. Bruinsma and his family in Jamaica. The purpose of this endeavor is to encourage our missionary and his family and insure that some type of weekly correspondence comes their way. Members of Faith who wanted to participate were asked to sign the

dated roster in the church narthex.

The congregation in Hull, Iowa, passed two proposals at their annual congregational meeting. They approved a proposal to put an air-conditioner in the parsonage, and to extend the period of evening services by one month in the spring.

Rev. Gritters will be happy to know that the Young People's Society from Holland met recently with the Young People's Society of Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, and for an after-recess program they discussed Rev. Gritters' fine article in the December 15, 1987 *Standard Bearer*, "What shall I do after high school?"

There was an announcement in a recent bulletin from Lynden that all the sermons given by Rev. Haak as pastor of the Lynden P.R.C. are now available in a complete list. This list contains sermon titles and texts. You

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

can receive a copy by enclosing one dollar in an envelope and mailing it to their church at 108 Beernink Lane, Lynden, Washington.

Since January 3, the worship services of the Northwest Mission have been at a different location. The first service is at 10:00 A.M. and is held in Link Elementary School. The second service is held at 6:00 P.M. in a small Lutheran Church which is across the street from the school.

The consistory of the Immanuel P.R.C. of Lacombe has been informed that the Church of the Nazarene in Lacombe is for sale. A visit was made to the property and the congregation, along with all of you, will be informed as details become known.

The Immanuel Protestant Reformed Christian School Society sponsored a lecture on "Five Basics for Reformed Education" by Rev. D. Kuiper, pastor of Lacombe, on Friday, January 15 at the church.

The Radio Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour wants to reactivate an area-wide radio choir. An organizational meeting was held January 18 at Southwest Church.

Byron Center P.R.C. thanked the Hudsonville P.R.C. recently for donating their organ, complete with all the accessories. At very short notice the consistory decided to accept this offer, and they plan to use this organ when their church is ready, unless the congregation decides it wants something different.

On February 4, Rev. Kortering spoke at Adams P.T.A. on the subject "The Financial Responsibility of the Church and the Education of Children".

The Young People in the Grand Rapids area had a sliding party at Johnson Park on January 14. Recreation and refreshments were served afterwards at Hope School.

The albums of the conference on the Christian Family have been completed. The sets consist of five speeches: "And Ye Fathers: Our Task" by Rev. C. Haak; "The Role of Family Worship" by Rev. J. Slopsema; "The Motivation of Discipline" by Rev. D. Engelsma; "The Happiness of a Godly Home" by Rev. D. Engelsma; "The Biblical Foundation of the Family" by Rev. C. Haak; and the question and answer cassette. These six tapes come in an attractive album. The cost for these albums is \$10.00. Extra albums have been made and are available from South Holland P.R.C., 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, Ill.

Southwest P.R.C. held their annual potluck on Friday, January 22 at Hope School.

And a final thought from Lacombe:

"If a man's religion does not take him to church, it is certain it will not take him to heaven." □

NOW AVAILABLE!!

A Cassette Tape Album, or, a Video Tape Cassette of the *REFORMED CONFERENCE ON THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY* held in South Holland, Illinois on October 16 and 17, 1987.

- This attractive Tape Album of six quality cassette tapes consists of three speeches; the Question & Answer Period; and two sermons preached on the Sunday following the Conference:

"The Biblical Foundation of the Family" by Rev. C. Haak

"The Role of Family Worship" by Rev. James Slopsema

"The Happiness of a Godly Home" by Rev. David J. Engelsma

Question & Answer Period

"And Ye Fathers: Our Task" by Rev. C. Haak (sermon)

"The Motivation of Discipline" by Rev. David J. Engelsma (sermon)

Cost: \$15.00 includes packaging & postage

- Video Tape consisting of only the three speeches above, and attractively priced:

Purchase — \$15.00 includes packaging & postage

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Here is a medium that Bible Study Groups could profitably use over a three week period (viewing one speech at a time) and conducting their own Q & A Period using their Bible leader or their Pastor as the moderator.

Send your orders to: The Evangelism Committee
Protestant Reformed Church
16511 South Park Avenue
South Holland, IL 60473

(quantities limited)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, expresses its sincere sympathy to Bern and Linda Zandstra and family in the death of his father, MR. PETER ZANDSTRA.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

Dan Pastoor, Pres.
Carol Monsma, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, on behalf of the congregation, expresses its sympathy to Mrs. Esther Griess and Mr. Paul Griess in the recent death of MR. WILLIAM GRIESS. May they be comforted by the truth that "... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, wish to express their sincere sympathy to their fellow member, Winifred Zandstra, in the loss of her husband, PETER ZANDSTRA.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3)

Prof. H. Hanko, President
Mrs. D. Lotterman, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, mourns the loss of one of its members, MR. PETER ZANDSTRA, whom the Lord took from our midst January 24, 1988.

May the bereaved family say with the Psalmist — "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth!" (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Hope Men's Society
John Kalsbeek, Pres.
Leon Garvelink, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Shirley Van Baren and her family in the death of her husband, TUNIS VAN BAREN.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever." (Psalm 37:18)

Rev. George Lanting, Pres.
Connie Busker, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year, are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee, Mr. Larry Meulenberg, Secretary. (616-453-8466). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting of the committee on April 6, 1988.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and the Congregation of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan, extend its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Peter Zandstra and family in the death of her husband and their father, our fellow officebearer, ELDER PETER ZANDSTRA, who passed on to Glory on January 24, 1988.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2)

Rev. J. Slopsema, President
Don Lotterman, Clerk

40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We, the children and grandchildren of MR. AND MRS. ANDREW VAN DEN TOP, rejoice with them in their thanksgiving to God for the years together that He has given them.

We thank our God with them for the gift of forty years of marriage.

We also thank our God for their faithful covenantal instruction they have given us.

And with them we pray that God will continue to bless them, and us, through them, in the years to come.

Vernon and Viney Maas
Jeff and Peggy Van Den Top
Mike and Marilyn Forslof
Loren and Carolyn Van Den Top
Ernie and Kimberly Tjoelker
17 grandchildren
1 great-grandchild