

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*



Rev. Dale Kuiper  
Office Bearers Conference  
South Holland, February 28, 1989

See "Contribution" — page 350

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## Inside this issue . . .

How well do you know the Heidelberg Catechism? Quite well, probably, given the regular preaching of the Catechism in our churches. That's good, too, of course. We do well to have a close familiarity with the Catechism. But how about the other two of the creeds which constitute the Reformed churches' Three Forms of Unity? Are we perhaps very much at home with the Catechism . . . but barely familiar with the contents of the Confession of Faith? We are aware that the "Belgic" Confession is part of our Reformed heritage. And we know that office bearers in Reformed churches must subscribe to "All the articles and points of doctrine" found therein. But is that the extent of it? That is, is this creedal statement, to us, merely a "standard" of our churches, to which one might refer when he has a question about a fine point of doctrine (sort of like a dogmatics textbook) . . . or is it the living *confession* of the church, the knowledge of which provides a ready answer of the hope that is within us?

If it is the former, that's a pity. And it's not to our credit. As Rev. Miersma points out in a thought-provoking article in this issue, the Confession of Faith can shape our thought and expression, inculcate in us Reformed language and doctrinal terminology which serve the preaching of the Word in our midst, and become a part of our *life* . . . if it is "part of us."

We have, of course, a *personal* responsibility for making it that. For myself, I have found it helpful to arrive at church a half hour before the Sunday service, and spend that time reading from the back of our Psalter. Rev. Miersma describes how, in Edmonton, the Confession of Faith is made part of that church's *liturgy*. To learn how they do it, don't miss, in this issue, "The Liturgical Use of the Confession of Faith."

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## Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

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# Jesus' Ascension

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*And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

*And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;*

*Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

*Acts 1:9-11*

It was forty days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus had appeared nine times already to His disciples. Now Jesus has appeared for the tenth and final time to His disciples on the Mount of Olives just outside the city of Jerusalem.

The disciples sensed that something dramatic was about to happen. And so they asked Jesus whether perhaps at this time He would restore the kingdom again to Israel.

Jesus responded that it was not given them to know the time or

the season for the kingdom to be restored. Nevertheless, this much Jesus could tell them: they would soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. And through the Spirit's power the disciples would become witnesses of Jesus both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

These final instructions being completed, Jesus was suddenly taken up into heaven in a cloud before the very eyes of His disciples.

And while the disciples stood gazing into heaven, they were approached by two men in white, who brought to them a most wonderful promise. This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.

Thank God for this promise!

Without this promise the ascension of Jesus into heaven would have meant a terrible loss both to the disciples and to the future church.

But now there is a blessed hope for the future. For this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as the disciples have seen Him go into heaven.

\* \* \* \* \*

While Jesus was talking to His disciples, He was taken up. Slowly Jesus began to rise from the ground.

We can well imagine that the disciples were amazed, their attention being riveted on Jesus. Thus we read that while the disciples beheld, Jesus was taken up.

And then a cloud received Jesus out of the sight of the disciples. After Jesus had risen some distance from the ground, a cloud suddenly appeared under Jesus' feet and took Him up out of their sight.

While the disciples stood gazing up into heaven, two men in white apparel, who had been standing by all the while, stepped forward and informed the disciples what had just happened. These two men were obviously angels. This is evident from the way they are described. They were dressed in brilliant white garments which reflected the very glory of God's presence in heaven.

The presence of these two angels is easily explained. Angels were always present at significant points of Jesus' life and ministry. They appeared in Bethlehem to announce Jesus' birth to the shepherds. They were present after Jesus' temptations in the wilderness to minister to Jesus. They were with Jesus in the agony of Gethsemane. They were also present in the empty tomb to announce the gospel of the resurrection to the women on Easter Sunday. And now they are present also at Jesus' ascension

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into heaven to explain its meaning and significance to the disciples. Quite obviously Jesus' ascension is another significant event in Jesus' life and ministry.

These heavenly messengers began with a question for the disciples: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"

The very question suggests that the disciples were perplexed. They didn't understand what had just taken place. Oh, they should have understood. Towards the end of His earthly ministry Jesus had spoken more and more of His departure. In the very evening of His arrest, Jesus had told the disciples that He was about to depart to His Father's house. There He would prepare a place for them (cf. John 14:2). But this had not fit into the earthly perspective the disciples had at that time. And they had quickly forgotten what Jesus had taught them.

Consequently, the angels proceeded to inform the disciples what they had just witnessed.

Jesus had been taken up into heaven.

This is what Jesus' ascension was all about. The ascension was a change of place for Jesus. For approximately thirty-three years Jesus lived and dwelt among us in the flesh. But through the ascension God took Jesus to heaven in His resurrected, glorified human nature. Jesus is therefore no more with us as to His human nature; He is in heaven.

Jesus has been taken up into heaven.

And the sign of all this was Jesus' being taken up into the sky by the cloud.

Certainly we must not imagine that the cloud, which took Jesus out of the sight of the disciples, took Jesus to heaven. Nor must we imagine that Jesus had quite a long journey from earth to heaven, lasting several hours or

perhaps even longer. No, when Jesus was taken out of the sight of the disciples by the cloud, He was instantly taken by God to heaven. God lifted Jesus up and took Jesus from the sight of the disciples by the cloud merely to give the disciples a sign of the fact that God had taken Jesus to heaven.

\* \* \* \* \*

The angels also comforted the disciples with a promise.

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Certainly the disciples needed this promise. For Jesus' ascension meant that Jesus had departed. He would be with the disciples no more on the earth. What a terrible loss this would be, were this all that could be said of Jesus' ascension!

Hence, the angels were sent from heaven to assure the disciples and the church that Jesus would return to earth one day. Jesus' departure from the church on the earth would only be temporary, the separation only for a time.

And the angels emphasized that when Jesus does return one day, He would be the same Jesus they had known. He would not return as a stranger to them. His departure into heaven would not significantly change Jesus. No, "this *same* Jesus" which was taken up into heaven would return to them.

That means that Jesus will return as the Savior. For that is what His name "Jesus" means: Savior.

And what great work of salvation will Jesus perform upon His return? He will restore the kingdom!

The disciples had just asked Jesus whether at this time He would restore the kingdom. This

kingdom was, of course, the kingdom of David. In the days of David and Solomon this kingdom had enjoyed its golden age. But since then there had been a steady decline. The ten tribes of the north had broken off and eventually were destroyed by the Assyrian captivity. To David's great kingdom there had remained only the tribe of Judah. Eventually also Judah had been brought into captivity by Babylon. And, yes, Judah had been restored to her proper inheritance in Canaan. But the kingdom had never again enjoyed the power and prosperity of former times. Judah had been ruled by one foreign power after another. At this time she was ruled by the hated Romans.

On the basis of God's promises spoken through the prophets, the disciples had expected Jesus to restore the kingdom of David.

In fact, when Jesus appeared to them this tenth time on the Mount of Olives, the disciples anticipated that Jesus would restore the kingdom at this time.

In response, Jesus made clear that He would, indeed, restore the kingdom . . . but not then. The restoration of the kingdom was yet to come.

And now the disciples were informed by the angels that this same Jesus, which was taken up into heaven before their very eyes, would return to them as the Savior. There could be no doubt as to the meaning. The ascended Jesus would return from heaven to restore the kingdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Jesus comes again He will restore the kingdom in its heavenly form.

Certainly Jesus will not restore the kingdom in the earthly form it had in the days of David and Solomon. That earthly kingdom of old merely served to point



Israel ahead to a better kingdom to come, a heavenly kingdom. When Jesus comes again therefore He will restore the kingdom by bringing the kingdom to its final, heavenly fulfillment.

Jesus ascended into heaven exactly that He might accomplish this restoration.

Upon His ascension and being seated at God's right hand, Jesus first of all established the kingdom in its heavenly form. This is not yet the restoration of the kingdom. For the kingdom will not be restored until this heavenly kingdom is complete. And the kingdom Jesus estab-

lished upon His ascension is not yet complete.

With a view to the completion of His heavenly kingdom, the ascended Lord has empowered the church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Through this witness the church is gathered from among the nations.

And when the church is fully gathered, this same Jesus, which was taken up into heaven, shall return. Every eye shall see Him.

For, according to the angels, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Then Jesus will restore the kingdom. The wicked He will destroy forever in hell. And the church He will bring to the glory of the new creation, establishing His kingdom forever in its final form.

For that day we look, as we bear witness of Jesus to the nations.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! ☐

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## Editorial

# A Question to *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*

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In the February 1989 issue of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* (hereafter *TFPM*) appeared an article on "The Extent of the Atonement and the Gospel Offer." The article is of special interest to us because the magazine in which it appears is issued by a synod committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This is the denomination that a number of families in Northern Ireland now urgently requesting help from the Protestant Reformed Churches in the form of a preacher believed themselves unable to join in good conscience before God. As a result, these Presbyterian families were compelled to separate from their church, which had decided to join the Free Presbyterian

Church of Scotland, thus leaving these families without a local church, a grievous situation. One of the issues standing in the way of their joining the Free Presbyterian Church, in the minds of these families, was the teaching of the Free Presbyterian Church on the "offer of the gospel."

The article in *TFPM* consists of a lengthy quotation from William Cunningham's *Historical Theology*, to which is prefixed a very brief introduction, presumably by the Editor of *TFPM* (the introductory paragraph carries no signature). As the title indicates, Cunningham is treating of the "gospel offer" in connection with the doctrine of the atonement. Specifically, he is refuting that objection to the doctrine of

limited atonement which consists of appealing to Scripture's command to the church to preach the gospel to all men indiscriminately. Those who hold universal atonement argue that the calling of the church to preach to all proves that Christ died for all, as though the only basis for preaching to all is Christ's death for all. Cunningham, renowned Scottish theologian of the 19th century, denies the validity of this argument. That the gospel must be preached to all and that all must be called to faith in Christ, he readily acknowledges. That this exposes the doctrine of limited atonement as false and proves universal atonement to be true, he emphatically denies.



It is worthy of note that when Cunningham comes to give the ground for the church's preaching to all (and not to the elect or regenerated only), he deliberately refuses to ground promiscuous preaching in the sufficiency of the cross to save all. This is often done, as Cunningham recognizes. Reformed defenders of limited atonement will speak at this point of the cross' being efficient for the elect, but sufficient for all. Cunningham, seemingly fearful that positing a universal reference of the cross even in this qualified sense jeopardizes the truth of limited atonement, insists that the ground of our preaching to all is simply God's command to the church to do so. (Our readers can find this passage in Cunningham's *Historical Theology*, Volume II, pp. 343-348, in the Banner of Truth edition.)

About Cunningham's doctrine, as given in the quotation, we have no question. It is solid, straightforward Presbyterian doctrine. Our question concerns the use to which this doctrine, and particularly Cunningham's description of the preaching as the "free offer," is put by *TFPM*. The paragraph that introduces Cunningham in *TFPM* reads as follows:

*Our Scottish divines, though Calvinists of unquestioned orthodoxy, have all along held the doctrine of the free offer of the gospel while holding that Christ died only for those who were given Him by the Father. We find this teaching in the sermons of the most honoured of the Scottish preachers such as Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Boston, Ebenezer Erskine, Ralph Erskine, Robert Murray MacCheyne, Dr. John Macdonald and Dr. John Kennedy, etc. This is the doctrine taught in our Confession of Faith. It is to be clearly distinguished from the Arminian view that the free offer of the gospel is a corollary of the doctrine of a universal atonement. Dr. Cunningham in the following extract*

*brings out certain points that are worthy of consideration.*

One could wish that some word of explanation had been given, why *TFPM* brings up the matter of the offer of the gospel. Is there some controversy about it in Scotland? Does the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland face some challenge to its position on the free offer?

From the introduction itself, it is evident that *TFPM* intends the quotation from Cunningham to prove two things: 1) that the Scottish divines have taught the free offer of the gospel; and 2) that the doctrine of the free offer of the gospel is Presbyterian orthodoxy. In passing, I note that the latter does not necessarily follow from the truth of the former. It is conceivable that some Scottish divines have taught a certain doctrine, but that that doctrine is unsound. Infallibility is the perfection of Scripture alone. Our question to *TFPM*, however, concerns its assertion that the Scottish divines taught the free offer, of which assertion William Cunningham is put forward as evidence.

That Cunningham spoke of the free offer is plain enough from the quotation from his *Historical Theology*. Nor is this at all surprising. As a confessional Presbyterian theologian, he used the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which, in Chapter VII, describes the preaching of the gospel under the new covenant as God's freely offering unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ. Similarly, Reformed theologians have employed the term, "offer," inasmuch as the Canons of Dort state that Christ is offered in the gospel (III, IV/9).

But it is not plain from the quotation in *TFPM* that Cunningham meant by the "free offer" what many Presbyterians mean by it today. It is widespread among Presbyterian and Re-

formed churches and theologians in our day to mean by the "free offer," or the "well meant offer," a preaching of the gospel *that expresses the love of God for all without exception who hear the preaching and that originates in a desire (will) of God to save all without exception who come under the preaching*. This is not what Westminster meant by the free offer. That Westminster had no such notion about preaching in mind when it spoke of God's freely offering salvation to sinners is evident, not only from its doctrine of predestination in Chapter III, particularly its teaching in Article 7 that God's pleasure concerning the rest of mankind, whom He did not elect, was to pass them by with His mercy and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, but also from the concluding words of the very article in which it describes the preaching of the gospel as a free offer. These words are, ". . . and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." Election controls the preaching. Election is an important part of the message of the preaching. The promise that is the heart of the gospel is for the elect only: "all that are ordained unto life." Unless the Westminster divines contradicted themselves in the short space of the same article, indeed in the same sentence, maintaining both that God loves all who hear the preaching and that He loves only those ordained to life and teaching that in the preaching God both wills to save all and wills to save only those ordained to life (a charge that no one who knows these worthies would dare to lodge against them), they clearly meant by the offer nothing other than the indiscriminate proclamation of the gospel. God will have the gospel



preached to all, not only to those whom the church has somehow determined to be elect or regenerate. Christ is presented in the gospel to all who hear. All are externally called to believe on Him. This is their duty. To all it is announced that every one who believes shall be saved.

Radically different is the doctrine of a proclamation of the gospel that manifests a universal love of God for sinners and a universal will of God for the salvation of sinners. This is what many Presbyterians and Reformed have in mind with the "free offer" today. This is the Arminian conception of preaching. It is not the case, as *TFPM* implies in its introduction to the Cunningham quotation, that a theory of preaching is Arminian only if it overtly attacks limited atonement. Just because a Presbyterian does not actively use his theory of preaching as universal grace to destroy the doctrine of limited atonement, his theory of preaching does not for this reason escape the condemnation, Arminian. To say it differently, the doctrine of preaching held by the Arminians in the late 16th and early 17th centuries was not erroneous only because it conflicted with the doctrine of limited atonement. It was false doctrine also because it assailed predestination, irresistible grace, total depravity, and ultimately the perseverance of the saints. It assailed these doctrines inasmuch as it taught that the gospel expresses divine love for all without exception and inasmuch as it taught that the gospel is rooted in a will of God for the salvation of all without exception.

Of the "free offer" in this Arminian sense, there is not a hint in the quotation from Cunningham. He wrote not one word about a love of God for all men. Neither did he so much as suggest that the gospel is preached

to all men because God has a sincere desire that all men be saved. There is every reason to conclude that for Cunningham the free offer was nothing other than promiscuous preaching of Christ that confronts every sinner with his duty to believe on Christ, by which God realizes His will to bring to Christ and save the elect whom He loves.

Our question to *TFPM* is this: What version of the offer are you defending in your article of February 1989? the universalistic version of Arminianism? or the particularistic version of creedal Presbyterianism? Presumably, your answer to this question will also indicate what version of the offer is held and practised by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, since you are a denominational magazine.

We confess, forthrightly, to some apprehension in the matter. For among the Scottish divines appealed to by you as having taught the free offer are the "Marrow men" (so called because of their adherence to the doctrine contained in the book, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*) — Boston and the Erskine brothers. But these men taught that the preaching of the gospel is grounded in a "giving love" of God for all men without exception. Necessarily, they themselves acknowledged that such a doctrine of preaching bears on the vital question of the extent of the atonement. For the "Marrow men" also taught that by God's design there is a general reference of Christ's death to all sinners without exception. In His "giving love" for all men, God "hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all men, that whosoever shall believe in His Son shall not perish, but have eternal life." The "Marrow men," therefore, said to every sinner, "Christ is dead for you." This, they insisted, is the indispensable basis for

preaching the gospel to all.

This is a form of the Arminian conception of preaching. It characteristically undermines the truth of limited atonement. It worked itself out in the history of Scottish Presbyterianism in a full-blown confession of universal atonement. Scottish theologian, John Macleod, himself sympathetic to the men of the "Marrow," writes, in his *Scottish Theology*:

*Thus the end of the record of the "Marrow" tradition in the largest body of the Secession went so far to justify those who from the first connected it with the teaching of a Redemption that was universal . . . an extreme way of saying to the unconverted, Christ died for you, or, the Saviour is dead for you, was forced by a kind of logical necessity to justify its own statement by holding . . . that He actually died for each and all to whom the Gospel comes when its Word calls upon us to believe (p. 243).*

Is this the free offer defended by *TFPM*?

Or, as we hope, do you rather confess a promiscuous preaching of a particular love, a particular will to save, and a particular promise, that is, a particular Christ — a Christ for those only whom the Father has given Him, repudiating Arminian universalism?

This is our question, a fair and reasonable one, we think.

May we have your answer? □

—DJE

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*Give a gift of  
the Standard  
Bearer to a  
friend or loved  
one today.*



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## Letters

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We appreciate *The Standard Bearer* and . . . are sure that the Lord will use it to gather and strengthen His Church.

Menno Poortenga  
Lansing, IL

Thanks be to God for this excellent means of *The Standard Bearer* for the proclaiming of God's Word. It is a joy to send in these subscriptions (42! -Ed.) . . . we can see . . . how much care and thought goes into each issue . . .

David and Anita Reinbold  
Ft. Wayne, IN

After subtracting my subscription, you shall, I trust, prayerfully manage the contribution. Our prayers are with you daily.

James C. Young  
Newton, NC

### Response

We appreciate and need such generous contributions as you sent with your subscription. Our readers will be interested to know that subscriptions do not meet even half of the cost of publishing *The SB*. The cost of publishing *The SB* from September 1, 1987 to September 1, 1988 was slightly more than \$35,000. During the same period, receipts from subscriptions were \$16,461.56. The rest was brought in from contributions by interested individuals and from church collections in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Despite an increase in subscriptions, our balance is low, and slowly decreasing. There is no need for *The SB* to live from hand to mouth. Besides, there are improvements that could be considered if more money were available. We ask that individuals remember *The SB* in their use of their money and that the churches give liberally, as they are able, in the scheduled collections. With the exception of minimal stipends for the Business Manager and the Acting Managing Editor, every cent given to *The SB* goes directly to the printing and mailing of this faithful witness to the Reformed faith and life. □

—Ed.

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## Guided Into All Truth

Rev. Charles Terpstra

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# Augustine and the Pelagian Heresy (1)

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Rev. Terpstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa.

### INTRODUCTION

Continuing our look at some of the Christian church's great defenders and developers of the truth, we want to focus next on Augustine (A.D. 354-430). In considering this church father we are dealing with one of the true

giants of the church, one who is in fact generally considered the greatest of the church fathers. Even though the life and work of Augustine takes us back to the 4th and 5th centuries, he is still held in high regard through his writings by nearly all churches,



Protestant and Catholic. The fact that the 1600 year anniversaries of his birth (1954) and of his conversion and baptism (1986-87) were met with such large notice both by the religious and secular press indicates his widespread influence and respect. He is perhaps the most quoted theologian down through the ages, and in a vast range of contexts and subjects.

Yet the name of Augustine ought to be particularly familiar to all Reformed believers, since we are as much "Calvinists" as we are "Augustinians." The theology of the Reformation, which is our heritage, is at heart the theology of Augustine. He is entitled the "Doctor of grace," because to him we owe the development of the doctrine of God's sovereign grace rooted in God's eternal predestination. And as we might expect, the development of this doctrine also came in the way of controversy. The Spirit guided Augustine into a clear and sharp setting forth of the truth of sovereign grace through the means of the whetstone of the Pelagian heresy. To be sure, Augustine was also prepared for and led into a right understanding of the doctrine of salvation through his own personal conversion. (Who has not read the story of that intense struggle as rehearsed in his *Confessions*!) But especially was the truth of sovereign grace honored by means of the grave error of Pelagius.

And it is on this that we wish to focus. In doing so, we understand that we are limiting ourselves to but a small part of the great work and influence of this church father. Augustine has given much to the development of doctrine: he gave to the church her final systematic doctrine of the Trinity; he contributed greatly to the doctrine concerning the church through his

controversy with the Donatists; he answered the "higher critic" Manicheans of his day with a strong defense of Holy Scripture. But we believe it was the doctrine of sovereign grace which was his greatest contribution. The notable Presbyterian theologian B.B. Warfield expressed the same conviction: *It is not Augustine the traditionalist, or Augustine the thinker, but Augustine the religious genius, who has most profoundly influenced the world. The most significant fact about him is that he, first among Church teachers, gave adequate expression to that type of religion which has since attached to itself the name of "evangelical"; the religion, that is to say, of faith, as distinct from the religion of works; the religion which, despairing of self, casts all its hope on God, as opposed to the religion which, in a greater or less degree, trusts in itself . . . . The great contribution which Augustine has made to the world's life and thought is embodied in the theology of grace . . . . ("Studies in Tertullian and Augustine," in Works, vol. iv, pp. 127-28)*

That is indeed what the Spirit through Augustine has given us — the "theology of grace." How and why are what we will examine in this article and the next.

#### THE BACKGROUND TO THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY

We have noticed in our past articles that most of the controversies in the early church centered on the doctrines of God and of Jesus Christ. These truths are foundational for the church, and it was only when these had been defended and set forth clearly that the other doctrines of the faith could be dealt with. Clearly, all other doctrines stand or fall with the truth concerning God Himself. This is especially true of the doctrine of salvation. Thus it was too that after the church had gone through the Trinitarian and Christological controversies, the church was

ready to face the truth concerning God's work of salvation.

As far as the whole question of the precise nature of the work of salvation and the character of God's grace in effecting it is concerned, it may be said that in this respect too the church accepted in a general way the biblical teaching on how God saves man the sinner. She held to the truths that man was a sinner in Adam, and that he was not saved by his own works but by the work of Christ for him in the cross and in him by the Spirit. Nevertheless, these truths had not yet been specifically examined and stated, chiefly because they had not yet been seriously tested by the fires of heresy. What is more, we know that there existed in the church of the 4th century that perennial "tension" between the sovereignty of God on the one hand and the freedom and responsibility of man on the other hand. How much credit can be attributed to God and how much to man was a burning question in the church at that time. And it appears that with regard to this question many of the church fathers had gone in the direction of synergism, that is, the view that man cooperates with God in the work of salvation. L. Berkhof in his *History of Christian Doctrines* gives us the prevailing view at that time:

*On the whole the main emphasis was on the free will of man rather than on the operation of divine grace. It is not the grace of God, but the free will of man that takes the initiative in the work of regeneration. But though it begins the work, it cannot complete it without divine aid. The power of God co-operates with the human will, and enables it to turn from evil and to do that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God (pp. 128-29).*

It is evident then that the doctrines of sin and grace needed careful eliciting and development from the Scriptures. For this task



God raised up Augustine. And to this end God used the heretic Pelagius.

### PELAGIUS AND HIS HERESY

History provides us with precious little information concerning Pelagius. Most of what we do know about him comes from Augustine's own writings. He was a British monk, who as an already aged man suddenly appeared on the scene in the city of Rome at the beginning of the 5th century. He was known for his piety and his zeal in promoting morality and upright living in the church. Even Augustine described him as "a holy man, . . . who has made no small progress in the Christian life" ("On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, p. 69).

Significantly, and perhaps even ironically, it was Pelagius' zest for good Christian living which became the occasion for his stumbling into error. Pelagius was, of course, simply reacting to the spirit of his times. The church of his day was filled with unholy members who did not walk according to the gospel, because they were forced into the church by the post-Constantine government when they in fact had no interest in the gospel. On account of this many in the church began to form monastic orders to promote holiness of life. Pelagius did this too and became a monk. But he also continued to call others to a life of obedience to God's commandments. And he did that on the basis of his belief that all men are not inherently sinful but able to choose and do the good. It is at this point that Pelagius went astray, and that as a consequence he departed from the teaching of Scripture on many other points of doctrine.

What precisely was Pelagius' position? In his view the natural man has been endowed with free-will by God his Maker. This

is God's gift to every man — both before and after the Fall; this is the "grace" God gives man in salvation. With this free-will man has the ability to do the good God demands of him, if he simply exercises his free-will and chooses to do it. He argued from the point that what God commands, man must be able to do. In other words, responsibility implies ability. God does not give man things to do that he cannot do. Rather He gives man his duties and then says, "There now, I have given you free-will to will and to do this; now do it."

Pelagius was very emphatic about this. He himself placed no restrictions on the power of the natural man to do good, and he would not allow others to do so either. B.B. Warfield relates that when Pelagius heard people speaking of their inability to do what God commanded because of the weakness of their nature, he was outraged and accused such people of reproaching God Who gave them the gift of free-will. And when he heard Augustine's prayer, "Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," Pelagius would not tolerate it to be repeated in his ears, because of its implication that man is unable to do anything good without God (*Studies*, pp. 292-93).

Pelagius' view of the unrestricted ability of the human will clearly had some rather serious implications. In the first place, it involved a denial of the doctrine of original sin. Well might the question be asked, What did Pelagius do with sin? In order to support his theory of man's ability through free-will, Pelagius had to deny that Adam's sin had any effect on the rest of mankind, and this is what he in fact taught. Augustine tells us that the two most infamous statements of Pelagius in this respect were: "Adam's sin injured only

himself, and not the human race"; and, "Infants at their birth are in the same state that Adam was before the transgression" ("On Original Sin," *Fathers*, V. p. 240). It was Pelagius' teaching that no person is born either with imputed guilt or with inherited corruption. Natural man is not totally depraved; his nature is not bent in the direction of evil only. But neither did he say that man is as such inherently good. According to him, man is spiritually neutral (a so-called *tabula rasa*, "blank tablet"), but endowed with God's gift of free-will so that he is able to do both good and evil. From the pen of Pelagius himself came these words:

*Everything good, and everything evil, . . . is not born with us but done by us: for we are born not fully developed, but with a capacity for either conduct; and we are pro-created as without virtue, so also without vice; and previous to the action of our own proper will, that alone is in man which God has formed (ibid, p. 241).*

Did Pelagius then deny the existence of sin altogether? No, but what he did was to make sin exclusively a matter of man's *act* and not of his *nature*. As Warfield points out, to Pelagius man was only "a willing machine" who may sin in one act but then returns to the same spiritually neutral position as before, ready to perform the good in the next act. Always his character remains the same (*Studies*, p. 296). How then did Pelagius account for the universality of sin? This was a matter of bad habit, he said. Adam's sin was nothing but a bad example that is followed by the majority of men. Wrote Pelagius: "Nothing makes well-doing so hard as the long custom of sins which begins from childhood and gradually brings us more and more under its power until it seems to have in some degree the force of nature"



(quoted in Warfield's *Studies*, pp. 294-95).

In the second place, as a consequence of his doctrine of man's free-will, Pelagius also denied man's need for God's work of grace in order for him to be saved. Clearly according to Pelagius' conception man had everything he needed to work out his own salvation; he did not need Christ and His atonement, nor God and His saving grace. And that is the way Pelagius talked too. To him God's grace was the gift of free-will. Any other helps God gave, such as the law, the gospel, and the example of Christ, are only *external* aids to make man choose and do the good more readily; but there is no sovereign, efficacious, *internal* work of God in the heart. In the light of this, it is not difficult to argue that Pelagius really had no true doctrine of salvation. His conception of salvation was simply that of deliverance from bad habits and the improvement of moral behavior.

Pelagius' views quickly gained a following and the seeds of error were widely spread. This was due not to Pelagius himself, who disappeared from the scene as

quickly as he had appeared, but to a few of his vigorous disciples, chiefly Coelestius and Julian, who carried on his campaign of heresy. It was through them that Augustine became aware of the error and began to wage his own campaign for the truth.

#### THE SERIOUSNESS AND REL- EVANCY OF PELAGIANISM

How serious an error was Pelagianism? Very simply, it struck at the heart of the gospel. Warfield points out that Pelagius' heresy was not merely new to Christianity; it was at bottom antichristian. He goes on to describe its seriousness in these terms:

*The struggle with Pelagianism was thus in reality a struggle for the very foundations of Christianity; and even more dangerously than in the previous theological and Christological controversies, here the practical substance of Christianity was in jeopardy. The real question at issue was whether there was any need for Christianity at all; whether by his own power man might not attain eternal felicity; whether the function of Christianity was to save, or only to render an eternity of happiness more easily attainable by man (ibid, p. 291)*

Surely there can be no question as to the danger of this heresy.

But is the heresy of Pelagianism relevant to us? Indeed it is. History has born this out. Countless times it has risen anew in the life of the church. Roman Catholicism was and is essentially Pelagian in character (cf. Belg. Conf., arts. 14, 15). The Arminianism of the 16th century was nothing less than a resurrection of the heresy of Pelagianism (cf. Canons of Dordt, especially the Rejection of Errors). The Methodist revivalism of the 18th and 19th centuries in this country and in England had for its root the Pelagian error of free-willism. And its predominance in our 20th century cannot be questioned. It is evident in the rampant Arminianism of fundamentalist churches, in the social gospel of modernistic churches, in the self-esteem "gospel" of Schuller. And of course it is the heartbeat of all the humanistic systems of education, business, and religion found in the world.

All of this makes Pelagianism important for us to know and to combat. How the Spirit of truth led Augustine in the fight against it and into the development of the "theology of grace" we will consider next time. □

## The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

# The Shadow of the Coming Man of Sin

A striking thing about the first eight chapters of Genesis is that they give us such an awesome shadow of what we must and can expect in the days that lie ahead

of us. The sin of Adam and Eve introduced wickedness into this world. That devilry developed very rapidly, so that the first person born in this world committed

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the awful sin of killing his brother, because of the spiritual difference between them. Then in a relatively short period of time sin developed further and very rapidly so that it is stated in Genesis 6:5 that, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Then came the end of that world so that all the enemies of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ were wiped off the face of this earth. The church was saved; but the head of the seed of the serpent was crushed.

Now it is true that the seed of the serpent soon appeared again after the flood. For we are all conceived and born in sin; and although the seed of the woman in the ark had the beginning of a new spiritual life, they still had their old sinful natures which could only beget children that by nature were seed of the serpent, children conceived and born in sin. Covenant believing parents do not bring forth the seed of the woman. That is realized not by a natural birth but as a work of our covenant God in the way of a rebirth, that is, by a spiritual birth for which the parents receive absolutely no credit. By grace we are saved, through faith as God's gift to us. As believing children of God we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

This truth, literally stated in Scripture, ought to be taken hold of and taught our children early in life, yea, even committed to memory. Ephesians 2:8-10 ought to be written in their souls. The world today is full of the false doctrine that man makes himself a believer, by teaching that Christ comes and pleads with us to believe in Him, and that some do then accept Christ. Men are taught to ask Christ to come into their hearts. Revelation 3:20 is corrupted, for it is presented as

an invitation that Christ gives us by knocking on the door of our hearts, asking to let Him come in.

Now, in the first place, dead men cannot hear any knock on the door. Maintaining that they can is denying that basic truth of Scripture that man died the day he sinned in paradise. Who is so foolish as to maintain that Adam died physically that day? Who dares to call God a liar, when He told Adam that he would die *the day* that he ate of the forbidden fruit? God did not say that death would begin to take hold of Adam. He said that he would die that day. Who dares to call Paul a liar, when he, as moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote in Ephesians 2:1 that these Ephesians were dead in trespasses and sins before God quickened them, that is, made them alive? Paul was not writing to physically dead people. And in verse 5 Paul even includes himself. He writes, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ." Note the "we" and the "us" in this verse and that he is speaking of a spiritual death, a death in sin.

In the second place, that lie of Christ knocking at the door of man's heart corrupts the text by bringing in to it that which God did not present in it. The word heart appears nowhere in this letter to the Laodiceans; and it is not even suggested anywhere in the whole letter. The letter addressed to the church, and to the angel of that church, declares that Christ is knocking at the church's door, because there were still in it a few elect, born again children of God who must insist that Christ, Who was no longer preached in that church, be preached.

Here, again, spiritually dead men cannot hear that knock on the church's door. And the shameful insult here is that the

almighty, divine power of God can be frustrated by a dead man. God depends upon man for the realization of the salvation that He wants. Christ, the Son of God in our flesh, is dependent upon dead men for the realization of the kingdom He wants to realize. *Dead* men can perform an act whereby the *living* Christ can be frustrated in His work of salvation.

It is true that the preaching — which is essential for our faith — brings us to the consciousness of a new life within us and makes us desire what we already have. But let us take a firm grip on that truth of Ephesians 2:8-10. Let it be repeated so that we are powerfully impressed by it: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them." Notice that we are saved through faith and not because we provided ourselves with faith. We are saved because God engrafted us into Christ by that spiritual bond of faith. Listen to Jesus, Who always spoke the truth and never presented faith as that which we had to supply in order to be saved. He said, in John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." That was His answer to those who in verse 28 asked Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus did not say, Make yourselves believe, fulfill that condition and then you will do the works that are pleasing in My eyes. No, faith is God's work in us, not a work we bring to Him.

Go back again to Ephesians 2:8-10. Salvation is a gift which God brings us through, not because of, faith. Then, too, in verse 10 Paul presents the truth



that we are *created* in Christ unto this good work of believing in Him. How much did Adam help God when he was created? He did not exist when God began to create Him. WE do not exist as children of God until He unites us to Christ by that spiritual bond of faith. And Paul correctly adds that we are God's workmanship because we were created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works, not because we performed the good work of believing in Christ. We do not accept Christ; but, by God's grace, after we have been born again, we thank Him for the gift of faith.

We find then an interesting truth in Genesis 6:8. There we read: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." In chapter 7 we read of God wiping the seed of the serpent off the face of this earth. To Noah and his family He gave salvation. Upon the seed of the serpent He poured out destruction! Salvation is in its entirety a gift of God's grace. To believe is to *be* saved. It is not something that brings salvation. It is an essential part of that salvation.

And here in the early days of the history of mankind a shadow looms on the horizon. Here we see what is going to happen to the antichrist and his kingdom. It is going to perish as surely as all except the church of God in that ark perished, and found it hopeless to be separate from the church of Christ, the Seed of the woman. Here too we see that all who belong to Christ, and are the seed of the woman by God's grace, most assuredly will be saved from the awful wrath of God and enter into a new creation.

What we read in II Peter 2:5 is also interesting and instructive. Having spoken of God not sparing the fallen angels, Peter writes, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth

person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." The world which existed from the creation week until the week God sent the flood to destroy all the ungodly, Peter, as guided by the almighty and all wise God, declared to be the first world. This means that God brought into being a new world. Here also then we have a shadow of what is coming to this world in which we live. This whole world in which we now live is going to be destroyed, even as the first world was by the flood. A new, most wonderful and glorious new heaven and earth are coming; and all the seed of the serpent are going to be cast into the lake of fire, so that we will now have a spiritually perfect world, the kingdom of heaven. It was only a picture, and a shadow, when God wiped the wicked off that first world and realized a new world wherein only His church lived. Even as the first world, realized in the first six days of creation, this kingdom of heaven will NOT come forth by an evolutionistic process of billions of years. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible (I Cor. 15:52). That wonderful, glorious change — a change far greater than the one that brought forth man so much higher than the ape and beasts of the field — is not by an evolutionistic process. Look at a real object. It will determine what its shadow will be like. The shadow of a chimney upon a house will not display a billion chimneys on that house. Neither does this new creation, coming in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment, rather even than in a few years, come by an evolutionistic process of billions of years. Of that you may be sure. God says it in I Corinthians 15:52 even as He says it in Genesis 1-11. Even as He can bring forth that new creation

simply by calling it into being, so He can and did bring forth the first world by a call, and, as He said, do so in six days which each had only one evening and one morning.

Do we not also read in Psalm 33:9, "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast"? Never mind what so-called theistic evolutionists say. Listen to what God Himself says. It is not necessary to have a committee decide whether the evolutionists are right or not. It is necessary that we listen to our God, Who made all things and knows much more about how He did it, than the creatures which He made know and are able to explain how He did it.

Then too, did it take even half a billion years for Jesus to raise from the dead Lazarus, whose body had been dead already for four days? Can the evolutionist and theistic evolutionist explain how in nine months Jesus' body was formed in Mary without an earthly father? Go to the hospital and count the hours it takes for the surgeon to do that which will save the life of a person, or improve his physical condition. Today, after and through surgery that takes hours, a man's heart may be removed, and the heart of another person may be implanted in his chest. Yet Christ got the heart of Lazarus to beat again in the time it took Him to call, "Come forth." Here is no evolutionistic process. Similarly, in a moment He caused the blind to see, the lame to walk. Yes, all this was contrary to what men call scientific principles. And since in a moment God could do all these things, and tells us that He did them, how can we dare to deny that He brought forth the first world by calling it all into being in six days of twenty-four hours each? If we are going to believe — and we must — what He says of Him-



self in the New Testament, why dare we deny what He says of His work in Genesis 1-11? When the shadow is round, and has no sharp edges to it, how dare we say that the object which casts it is square with sharply defined corners? Why dare we listen to unbelievers, who call themselves evolutionists, rather than listen to God?

As already pointed out, sin developed rapidly in that first world. This is a shadow of what is happening in the world that

came into being after the flood. And as we are in the period of time foreshadowed in those years just before the flood, we do well to take careful note of what is happening all around us today. Sin is growing in the lives of the seed of the serpent. Some sins that hurt the flesh of men are still frowned upon and punished. But transgression of most of the ten commandments is not only allowed, it is even advocated. Desecrating the Sabbath is encouraged, and those who rule

our land openly tempt man to do so. Adultery is not only openly practiced, but that which entices our youth — as well as adults — to commit this evil is publicly allowed and practiced. We are encouraged to covet what our neighbors have. Dishonoring the authorities is permitted and defended.

And the awesome thing is that in the church world there is such a development of sin. This we will have to consider next time. □

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*Contribution*  
Rev. Wayne Bekkering

## Office Bearers Conference

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Once a year a committee from Classis West arranges an office bearers conference to be held in connection with the meeting of Classis. On February 28, 1989 such a conference was held in South Holland, Illinois. Two worthwhile papers were presented. The morning session dealt with a paper presented by Rev. Ken Hanko on The Psalms, Metrical Psalmody, and *The Psalter*, and the afternoon session dealt with a paper written by Rev. Dale Kuiper entitled, The Congregational Prayer.

These conferences provide not only spiritually stimulating discussion, but also a time of Christian fellowship. Ministers and office bearers from both Classis East

and Classis West are invited, as well as professors and students from our Seminary. The morning and afternoon coffee breaks as well as the noon meal provide opportunity for further reflection on the subject under discussion and for greeting the brethren from the four corners of our nation as well as from Canada.

Both of the papers for the conference are excellent, and are worthy of broader distribution. What follows is not intended to be a summary of the papers, but is an attempt to expose a few main points of each paper so that the interest of the reader is sharpened.

The topic for the morning session was The Psalms, Metrical Psalmody, and *The Psalter*. Rev. Ken Hanko conducted this session on the order of a "workshop." The nature of the subject dictated his approach. We had to

be instructed in some basic terminology and concepts peculiar to metrical psalmody. We learned that John Calvin introduced metrical psalmody, that is, Psalm singing as we know it, into the church. Before the Reformation the church chanted the Psalms. Chanting is really a form of singing which repeats the same series of notes over and over again.

Metrical psalmody presents a number of problems to those who want to sing Psalms as we do. There is the problem of rendering the words of the Psalms into a form suitable for singing, that is, with a regular meter and rhythm. The Biblical text, in metrical psalmody, has been paraphrased so that there are rhymed stanzas and a smooth English rendering. We learned that many sacrifices of Biblical faithfulness have entered into English and American metrical

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**Revs. Ron Hanco, Ron Cammenga, and Ken Hanco ponder the issues at "break" time.**

psalmody. Our psalter is not unaffected by all this. Rev. Hanco used many examples to demonstrate that point. He believes that it is possible for us, even with our limited resources, to produce a psalter of much higher quality than the one presently in use.

The afternoon session involved us in the subject of The Congregational Prayer. Rev. Kuiper showed how important the congregational prayer is for the church and thus for the pastor. The three quotes that follow demonstrate that importance. "Congregational prayer is at once the highest expression of the communion of saints and the highest expression of communion with God" (p. 3); "The saints, as they come up to God's house, have a longing to hear the Word of God, but they also have a longing to enter into prayer with God" (p. 4); "... God's people learn to pray and much else as they have heard their pastor over a period of years. Awesome responsibility!" (p. 5).

Rev. Kuiper deals with dangers to be avoided in congregational

prayer. He does this by quoting 18 points of frequent faults in public prayer taken from Samuel Miller's excellent book entitled, *Thoughts on Public Prayer*.

The need for variation and freshness is shown as Rev. Kuiper says, "What a pity if members of the congregation can anticipate, from long, painful experience, what the minister will say in the next line or next several lines!" (p. 8).

Rev. Kuiper shows that there are no shortcuts or magical remedies to good congregational prayer, but that it comes only in the way of hard work and struggle. A minister himself must be a man of prayer before he can properly lead God's people to the throne of grace. □

## Bible Study Guide

Rev. Jason Kortering

# Judges — Jehovah Delivers His Unworthy People (concluded)

We are in the midst of outlining the narrative of the Levite whose concubine had been abused by the men of Gibeah and killed. He had taken her body and cut it into twelve pieces and called the men of Israel to come to fight the men of Benjamin for this evil deed. The battle is now drawn, 400,000 men of Israel

against 26,000 men of Benjamin along with 600 men from Gibeah. After inquiring of the Lord as to which tribe should go up first in battle, Judah prepared as the Lord had instructed. The first day of conflict resulted in the death of 22,000 soldiers of Israel. That evening the children of Israel wept before the Lord and sought counsel as to whether they should fight a second day. The Lord told them to go up. The men of Benjamin killed 18,000 soldiers of Israel the second day.

Stunned by this defeat, the Israelites sought Jehovah before the ark of the covenant with tears, as they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The answer came the third time: go up and I will deliver the men of Benjamin into your hand (20:18-28). During the third attempt to do battle with Benjamin, Israel used strategy. They approached the city with a large army, but had 10,000 men lie in wait in the meadows outside Gibeah. When the army ap-

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proached the gate as before, they began to run as if they were being pursued. In the midst of this retreat, thirty men of Israel were killed. It gave confidence for the men of Benjamin to pursue after them, thereby leaving the city exposed to the men who secretly waited in the meadows. The latter entered the city, slew the inhabitants, and set fire to the city. The smoke which filled the sky was the agreed sign that the army should reverse itself and force the men of Benjamin to fight from both directions. They tried to escape from the sides into the wilderness, but they were cut off. A total of 25,000 men of Benjamin were killed that day (20:29-48).

After the battle, the children of Israel assembled before the Lord at Mizpeh. Prior to this, they had sworn that they would not give their daughters unto the Benjamites for the evil that they had done. Now, after battle, as they assemble with their tribes, it grieves them that Benjamin is missing at the time of offering sacrifices. They realize that their vow not to give them daughters in marriage will mean the end of that tribe (21:1-7). They proceed to inquire whether there is any tribe that has not heeded the call to come up to worship. None of the men of Jabeshgilead had come. They immediately send 12,000 of the most capable soldiers to kill all the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead, sparing only 400 virgins which are brought to Shiloh. Messengers are dispatched to the children of Benjamin who were afraid to come and remained at the rock Rimmon. When they came, they were given the 400 virgins of Jabeshgilead. That was not sufficient for all the men, but it preserved the tribe (21:8-15).

What were they to do about the other men of war that did not have a wife? They advised these soldiers to attend the yearly feast unto the Lord at Shiloh, on the north side of Bethel. When the daughters of Shiloh would come out to dance, the men of Benjamin should grab each man a woman and run off with her to Benjamin. The men of Israel promised that, if the inhabitants of Shiloh would complain, they would explain to them the reason, namely, that they had not left to every man a wife during battle. This took place as planned and finally each tribe returned to its place. The book closes with the words which are repeated throughout, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:16-25).

#### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is the relationship between the Book of Judges and that of Joshua which preceded it?
2. Why is this book called Judges? Describe the office and work of the people who functioned in this capacity.
3. Part of the significance of the Book of Judges is that it contains a description of the spiritual character of Israel during the years between the death of Joshua and the beginning of the kings of Israel. How do the following things demonstrate the evil predominant in this period of time? In each instance, relate this same evil to our generation.
  - a. A new generation arose which knew not the Lord (2:10).
  - b. The sordid details of the last two chapters.
  - c. The repeated phrase (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25) "there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes."
  - d. The "cycle" of the Judges, some 14 times.
4. As we study the history of the judges, we learn what was the significance of the heathen

nations which were not exterminated according to the command of God. Consider:

a. Why did God give such a command? Was that not horrible? May we compare this to genocide?

b. How must we understand God's anger with His people for not following His orders? What were their reasons?

c. What does this teach us about the antithesis?

5. Review the general history of the judges mentioned in this book and be able to demonstrate the following:

a. That God saves His people even though they do not deserve it.

b. That faith is the victory that preserves the remnant even in the darkest night.

c. That the only hope for Israel and for us is in the coming of Jesus Christ.

6. Reflect on some of the specific points of interest that come out of this history:

a. How must we understand the role of Deborah, a woman delivering Israel? Is this justification for women taking a leading role in the church today?

b. What encouragement is there for us in the deliverance by Gideon (300 soldiers)? How can we apply this to the church today?

c. How can we see a parallel between Abimelech (9:1-57) and apostasy in the church today?

d. Explain Jephthah's vow (chapter 12). Was that rash or an act of faith?

e. Consider the pros and cons as to whether Samson was a righteous man. Why did he never deliver Israel completely from the Philistines? □



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*Special Article*  
Rev. Thomas Miersma

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# The Liturgical Use of the Confession of Faith

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By the Confession of Faith is meant what is more commonly called in our churches the Belgic or Netherlandic Confession of Faith. The very language we normally use to refer to the Confession of Faith itself says something about the place this creed tends to hold in our churches and how we are inclined to regard it. That it is the Belgic or Netherlandic Confession of Faith, sets before us its historical origin from the hand of Guido de Bres and its adoption by the Reformed churches of Holland beginning in 1561, as our oldest creedal statement. That it is the Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith also distinguishes it from such other confessions of faith as the Westminster Confession of Faith. Our *Psalter* however happily includes it under its more proper title and in its proper form as the Confession of Faith, for such it is and such it ought to be.

That it is called the Confession of Faith emphasizes that it was the "Here I Stand" of the Reformed churches in the past. That we tend to speak of it in terms of its historical origin as Belgic or Netherlandic may well be an indication that we regard this document as belonging to the

past, as something remote and distant, a part of our heritage, a standard of doctrine rather than as the living Confession of our Faith. We may well ask: does this confession function for us as the "Here I Stand," the living confession of our churches? The Heidelberg Catechism we know well because it is regularly preached. The Canons of Dordt, because of their doctrinal importance over against Arminianism, are also very familiar to us. The fact is that we might be well able to quote from memory various Lord's Days, or even portions of the Canons, and we could speedily find our way around them. Is this true of our Confession of Faith? Periodically we may read this confession in the worship services to familiarize our congregations with it, and we might use it in the catechism classes. But does it serve as our living and contemporary testimony of faith? Studying it as we sometimes do in our societies certainly reveals that it is not dated, that we do not, like so many today, need another so-called more contemporary testimony. We have one which is both sound and very contemporary. One need but look at the articles which speak of the Word of God and its authority and trustworthiness to see this.

Therein lies the concern of this article and the origin also of the practice in our Edmonton congregation over the past several years of regularly reading after the Apostles' Creed an article or two of the Confession of Faith. In the first place, the Confession of Faith is ideally suited for this purpose liturgically. It breathes with the spirit of a personal and corporate confession of our faith and confidence. The opening confession sets this reality before us: "We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth. . . ." That spirit pervades the whole of our Confession of Faith. Virtually every article begins with the statement, "We believe . . ." Introduced after the Apostles' Creed with the words, "We further confess our Reformed faith as it is found in article . . . of the Confession of Faith," this sets before the congregation the reality first of all that the Apostles' Creed itself, while a catholic confession of the Christian church, is also a Reformed confession. At the same time, some point of the doctrine in the Apostles' Creed is more fully confessed and expounded. To be sure, there are some articles which may need a brief introduction to show the connection or to explain their place and purpose, such as the article which sets forth the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity (Article 9). But this can usually be done in a few brief words, and

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*Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*



the necessity for it declines as the congregation grows in familiarity with the Confession of Faith. There are also certain articles, such as those which list the canonical books of the Scriptures, which may well be condensed and abridged, which is not difficult. There are a few articles which are rather short and which can be combined with others, and also a few which are a little longer. But, on the whole, including an article or two of the Confession of Faith in the worship service after the Apostles' Creed only requires a minute or two in the service.

In the second place, the value and benefits of adding a reading from the Confession of Faith as a fixed and regular part of the worship service are many. First, it lifts our Confession of Faith up and makes it not merely part of our heritage but truly part of the living confession of the congregation. It regularly sets before the congregation in a systematic way the sound doctrine of our Confession of Faith as a matter of the personal confession of the church. While this is regularly done in Catechism preaching as well, our Confession of Faith has the added feature that it gives, in a clear and simple way, confession to a number of doctrines which are only indirectly addressed in the Catechism. Perhaps most notable among those doctrines are the ones concerning Scripture and the article on election, found in the Confession of Faith. It does so as a matter of the personal confession of the church, that these truths we believe.

Secondly a regular reading of the Confession of Faith inculcates in the congregation sound Reformed language and doctrinal terminology which serve both the preaching of the Word, the Catechism preaching, and also Catechism instruction. The

repeated reading of the Confession of Faith makes its language and contents familiar, a part of the life and thought of the congregation. The beauty of our Confession of Faith grows upon one as it is read from week to week. Such articles as that concerning Christ's intercession (Article 26) or that on Providence (Article 13) not only set forth the doctrine, but do so in a way which is for the comfort of the congregation as well as its edification. The articles on the church — the marks of the true church and the offices in the church and the Christian discipline in the church — not only set before the congregation important matters of doctrine but also lead the congregation rightly to regard the matter of their own membership in the church, to esteem the offices and order and discipline in the church.

Thirdly, it further serves to bind the church together in the unity of faith and doctrine. The regular reading of the Confession of our Faith bears this fruit, that this confession becomes a part of us. Most of us who have year after year heard the reading of the forms for Baptism and the Lord's Supper could probably with a little prompting recite long sections of them from memory. They have become a part of us, their doctrine and language are familiar, and they shape our thought and expression. The preaching of the Catechism has the same fruit, and so also does the regular reading of the Confession of Faith. It becomes more and more the living Confession of our Faith, a ready answer of the hope that is within us. In this age of doctrinal indifference, ignorance, and apostasy, it is of great value, that we be not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

Fourthly, there are also great benefits to be gained for the minister of the Word in his work and preaching. While it is not every Lord's Day that the doctrine confessed in the Confession of Faith for that day touches on the subject of the sermon, it is nevertheless not infrequently the case that one of the key concepts or indeed the central concept of the sermon is set forth in the article of Confession of Faith which is read. The result is that the language of the confession can be brought into the sermon; it serves the sermon and grounds it. That the children and young people are readily familiar with the Confession of Faith and its language serves as a tool in catechism instruction and can often make learning the doctrine in the catechism classroom easier and something which is more readily retained. That instruction is moreover again reinforced by its regular confession in the worship service.

Our Confession of Faith ought to live among us as that which we know and confess, as that which "We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth . . ." (Article 1). □

### Morning Melody

Here in the solemn solitude,  
The glist'ning lake reflects the  
glory of the morning sun.  
The moveless mountains' mighty  
majesty  
Is breathed abroad; each strand of  
breeze is spun  
With magic mist that swells across  
the plain.  
All nature seems to stand serenely  
awed,  
As with mute tongue she shouts  
the strain divine:  
Here is peace and power; here is  
God.

James Jonker  
(from *Beacon Lights*, by permission)



## The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

### Hard Questions for Young People:

# "Can I Be Sure I Am a Christian?"

Am I a child of God? Is my faith genuine? Is it really true that I am born again, so that the life of Christ is in me? Will it be true for me that when Christ comes again, the great Judge will say to me, "Come, ye blessed of my father . . ."? Can I entertain the hope for myself that "after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"?

As young people mature, and as the rest of your life becomes more stable so that your attention turns more often to serious things (like your spiritual life), you begin to ask that kind of question of yourselves. "Even though I was born of believing parents, this does not guarantee that I am a child of God. How do I know for sure? (Or: How can I be sure?)"

To doubt their salvation and the validity of their faith is not unusual for God's people; they often entertain these doubts. Our Reformed confession says, "believers in this life have to struggle with various *carnal* doubts (my emphasis: BG), and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith . . . ." (Canons, Chapter 5, Article 11).

*Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.*

*Dear Christian parents and young people,*

*This section of the Standard Bearer has always been written for the Young People. The Title "The Strength of Youth" emphasizes the unique strength that young people have in their teens and later.*

*Although there is a unique strength that young people have, in their lives there are many difficult questions to face and answer. My purpose in this rubric is to address some of those questions and try to give guidelines for answering them, so that their strengths may be used to the fullest.*

*If you have questions you would like to see addressed here, please write to me at 8360 Clyde Park SW, Byron Center, MI 49315.*

*God lead you and bless you as you face your many "hard questions."*

The knowledge that some who had been brought up in the church (who apparently were saved, who seem to have loved God) later rejected the gospel and the fellowship of Christ's church increases the worry. The question then arises, "What about me? Today I seem to be a member of Christ's church; but will I remain so?" Add to this the fact that the Bible speaks of different kinds of faith which seem to be genuine but are not, and the doubts that trouble me (even though "born of my iniquity" — Psalter #210) become all the more severe. "Is my faith simply a historical faith, a miraculous faith, a temporary faith? Or is it one that has root and will remain?"

Every child of God can be assured of his salvation and can

be convinced that his faith is genuine. He can entertain the hope that he will live into eternity of life in the body after this life ends. He can know that when judgment rolls, his soul will be secure. The question is "How can he know?"

Young people, for assurance of your salvation look not for some fantastic experience in your past life. Not something in the *past*, but something in the *present* must assure you of the certainty of your faith. Perhaps an illustration would help. I will never forget the evening that I was lying on my bed in the apartment when, like a flood, the conviction that I could run no longer from preparing for the ministry came over me. From that day on there was no hesitation or doubt that God called me to the pastorate.



But it certainly was not true then, nor is it true today, that my conviction of God's continued call rests on that evening's experience. My certainty of God's call to the ministry rests on, among other things, the present call He continues to give me through the church, and the present grace to do what He calls pastors to do. If I were to base my call on that past experience, I would continually be plagued with doubts as to the genuineness of that experience. How foolish! Well, the same holds for your salvation. Perhaps God did regenerate you later than in your infancy. But do not rest your assurance on that moment you first felt alive; rest your assurance on the present.

There are at least three points of view that you can take regarding the assurance of your salvation.

#### **FAITH**

The first concerns your faith. "Can I be sure I have faith?" is the vital question, because faith unites with Christ, the Savior, who gives life. But do not turn in on yourself and be preoccupied with examining your faith. The more a person does that, the more doubts he will have. This problem reminds me of today's concern about psychological health. The more you brood about your own situation, the more you become depressed. Psychological health does not come through contemplating ourselves, but comes through looking away from ourselves, to our work, our family, our church, our neighbor, our God! So with spiritual health. Don't look at your faith. Faith itself is an "eye." Look at what faith is supposed to observe. Look at God. Look at God's Word. Look at God's promises.

Then let me ask you some questions about your faith. Do you believe everything God has

revealed in His Word to be true — not rejecting any doctrines taught there, hating any doctrines taught there, despising any doctrines taught there, but loving them? I'm not asking about how strong your love is for the truth. I'm only asking, "Do you love it?"

For the removal of the shame of your sins, for the strength to deliver you from sin's awful power, for your righteousness in God's eyes — all of it — do you trust in the promises of God in Jesus Christ? As to your presence in the judgment day, do you anticipate calling attention to your works, or to the works of Christ for you? Again, I'm not asking if that trust is as strong as it should be. I'm asking, "Do you have that confidence?" Then you have faith. You should not doubt. You are a Christian!

There are some practical implications of this truth. First, if you know your faith is true — even if it is weak — then confess your faith (if you are old enough to discern the Lord's body). Why? Because God uses confession of faith to increase the assurance of our salvation (see Romans 10:8-10). Second, make sure that you are a church member, and remain one, where the truth is preached. If the word that you hear from the pulpit is impure or only story telling, and not the doctrines that make one wise unto salvation, either your assurance will be false or you will have no assurance. What affirmation of the truth can faith give to a sermon which was not gospel doctrine? Third, use the means of grace. Where God gives faithful preaching, give attendance to it! Prepare to hear it! Pay careful attention when it is preached! And when the minister says "Amen," respond in your heart and soul with your own, "Amen, I believe it." And you

will be assured of the genuineness of your faith.

#### **WALK**

Second, the young person's assurance of salvation and faith has to do with his life of good works.

This is not to say that your good works will earn you the assurance of salvation. The Reformed young person knows better than to think that. But good works play an important part in the life of assurance.

Let me use an illustration. Suppose you walk in a particular gross sin. (I need not list any because believing young people know just what is meant.) You will not experience any assurance that you are a child of God. You will experience severe doubts and fears and plagues of conscience. And you ought to expect that, too. Or suppose that you are not walking in an outwardly gross sin, but fail to walk in the good work of loving others. You are self-centered, concerned about no one but yourself. You have no serious desire to live in obedience to the great commandment (Matthew 22:37-40). There can be and there will be no assurance that your faith is genuine.

That only makes sense. What are good works? Every good catechism student knows that good works are the fruits of faith, so that, just as one tells the real character of a fruit tree by the fruit it produces, so the church member knows the true character of his faith by the fruits that it produces in his life. These need not be great works that men can praise, but are the works of washing the saints' feet, being sorry for sin, desiring to be more holy . . . "By their fruits ye shall know them" applies as well to yourself.



## SIN

The third aspect of your assurance (which can be distinguished but cannot be separated from the others) concerns your old man and your new man.

It has happened more than once that when I have talked to young people who have doubts about their salvation and question the validity of their faith, the first question that comes up has to do with the power of sin in their life. The experience goes like this: In the past few months, or years even, sin has gotten a hold on them. Perhaps one particular sin has plagued them. Perhaps more than one sin has the upper hand in their life. They feel almost impotent to struggle against bitterness, rebellion, sloth, or another of a multitude of sins. And then the question arises in their soul, "If I were a child of God, would this be happening to me? If I truly were united to Christ, would I have these problems with sin that I'm experiencing?"

A good pastor is very careful at this point, because it may happen that an unbelieving member of the congregation simply wants his guilty conscience soothed by some easy words from the minister (who, perhaps, has approached him about his crooked walk). Then the minister may very easily try to convince him

of the genuineness of his faith, without finding out about his true state. I want to avoid that error here, too.

Depending on the attitude expressed — true sorrow or the sorrow of the world — assurance of salvation can be gained here, too. What is the result of finding this sin in your life? How do you react when a sin gets the upper hand? What do you feel during a time like this? If you feel shame for the things you have done, if you feel guilt for the sin that boils in your blood, and if you desire to be delivered from the reigning power of sin in your life, this is indication of true spiritual life, of union with Christ. In the first place, no unbeliever feels sorrow that he has sinned against God; no unbeliever feels shame from the experience of giving in to a sinful lust. That is the difference between you and an unbeliever. You sin, but are sorry; the unbeliever could not care less. In the second place, it should not surprise you that there is this struggle going on in a child of God. This is the experience of every child of God to one degree or another. The chief of the apostles, toward the end of his spiritual pilgrimage, anguished in his heart because of the power of sin in his life, so that he could say not only, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,

and the Spirit against the flesh . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:16) but also, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). That there is a mighty struggle within you against your old man of sin is a sign that there is life. And if there is life, even a small beginning, that life will never die. God will fan the glowing ember into a flame that will never be extinguished.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let me suggest a couple of practical things you can do. Before church next Sunday (and it would be good for you to get there before the elders enter, so that you have time for meditation on worship) take out the Psalter and read carefully through the fifth chapter of the Canons of Dort. If you have not read it recently, you will be pleasantly surprised at the rich comfort in this part of our beautiful Reformed heritage. Also, if you haven't sent for it yet, we still have some pamphlets left entitled, "Christian Joy." Just a note to Byron Center PRC Evangelism Society, P.O. Box 71, Byron Center, MI, 49315, and you will have one shortly. □

# Redeemed Art Orthodox Presbyterian Churches

*All Around Us*  
Rev. Gise VanBaren

*Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

## Redeemed Art

In the Grand Rapids Press, Feb. 11, 1989, and in *The Banner*,

Feb. 27, 1989, appeared reports on the "sacred" or "liturgical" dance. The Church of the Servant



Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids has been incorporating the liturgical dance into the worship service. *The Banner* reports:

*Dance is no longer a worldly amusement. It has been redeemed as an art form.*

The suggestion to do so was made by Synod 1971. Of all the Christian Reformed churches represented at that synod, few have responded by welcoming the redeemed sinner as an art form into ecclesiastical service.

In 1978, Church of the Servant Christian Reformed church . . . began integrating liturgical dance into its worship services. Fenna Stoub, 38, has been coordinator of liturgical dance since its debut in 1978.

. . . Liturgical dance in a Christian Reformed church, no matter how unfamiliar that may be, is no stranger to Stoub.

According to Stoub, dance adds another level of meaning to the worship experience. "Any art form exegeses words," she said. "Dance gets under the meaning of words — it touches deeper than on a superficial level. It's no different than music or poetry in Scripture."

. . . Dance embodies the spirit of each liturgical season at Church of the Servant. How dancers move and what they wear symbolize what the church is celebrating. At Lent, for example, dancers don dark colors, whereas at Easter, their raiment is white with streamers of colored ribbon.

Though liturgical dance is a new art form in the Christian Reformed Church, it is not new to the Christian church. According to Stoub, dance was utilized in worship until the eighth century when an Augustinian mindset began drawing attention away from the body to the spirit.

"That's not biblical," Stoub said. "There was never a problem with dance in the Bible. In the Old Testament, David danced before the ark. When David's wife Michal condemned her husband's dancing, God put her under a curse."

The Grand Rapids Press reports on the same development:

*Arms outstretched, head bowed and hands dangling, Fenna Stoub*

*looked like the crucified Jesus.*

*She and five other dancers advanced from three different points toward the altar in Seymour Christian School's gym. Slowly, reverently, they scooped imaginary sins from the floor and cast them away in a graceful act of contrition. Then the redeemed sinners converged on the altar, palms upward, faces intent, "reaching toward salvation, toward mercy" . . .*

*Church of the Servant is unique, but less and less of an anomaly as other churches discover a place for the arts in their worship.*

"I think there's the realization that the body is involved in praise," said the . . . pastor of the church.

"Especially when the dance expresses the songs and the themes, it becomes obvious that it's a way of worship."

Because of the love of dance — she has studied ballet since she was 18 and works with Artist's Refuge, a professional dance group in town — Stoub was a natural to lead dance at Church of the Servant.

She was running her band of a dozen dancers through the regimen last Sunday. The group ranged in age from 9 to 38.

In addition to her church work, Stoub is serving her second, year-long term as president of the Sacred Dance Guild. The 653-member guild comprises members from all denominations, and even counts some Buddhists and Jews in its ranks.

For all those denominations to choose from, it is ironic that a member of the Christian Reformed Church, a church that has long cast a suspicious eye on any form of dance, should head the guild.

Stoub thinks the suspicions date back to Plato and St. Augustine, philosophers who mistrusted all things having to do with the body, and were used to support the later idea that dance is somehow sexual.

"The roots of the anti-dance thinking (in the CRC) has to do with secular dance and movie-going and card playing," Stoub explained. "It was seen as worldly" . . .

Noteworthy is the manner in which *The Banner* report introduces this subject, "Dance is

no longer a worldly amusement. It has been redeemed as an art form." It was a "worldly amusement" for the Christian Reformed Church until 1971. Then the Synod declared piously that the dance could be "redeemed" as an art form. Christ, of course, does not redeem the dance. The church does. It takes what is worldly and corrupt, and purchases it for Christ and His church. What was worldly and sinful, has marvelously been changed into an instrument of praise to God. And all this was done on the basis of Common Grace, according to the decision of the C.R. Synod. One is reminded of the wolf who comes in sheep's clothing. Here the opposite takes place. Some seem to have discovered that what appeared to be a wolf, was after all a sheep in disguise.

It is truly unbelievable that any can claim that what the church had rejected as worldly for hundreds and even thousands of years, could now suddenly be rediscovered as an "art form" to be used to glorify God. In the same manner the movie, formerly considered also a "worldly amusement," surprisingly became "film art." What a tremendous transformation!

Can it really be true that these developments in the last days in which we live mark a return of the church to its more pristine and holy form as it was manifest shortly after Pentecost? Or is it rather that we see evidence of the "dog returning to its own vomit again" (II Pet. 2:22)?

## Orthodox Presbyterian Churches:

*Clarion*, the Canadian Reformed magazine, Jan. 2, 1989, quotes a report in *Journey* magazine about activities in the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches:

*News and rumors are rife concerning some Orthodox Presbyterian con-*



gregations/pastors who are seriously considering leaving the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). In a letter dated January 6, 1988, the Rev. Mark Maliepaard announced that the New Life Presbyterian Church of Mira Mesa, California, had voted to realign with the Presbyterian Church in America. That church has since realigned.

Through the Summer and Fall there have been further developments. The New Life Church of Escondido, pastored by the Rev. Richard Kaufmann, has publicly announced that their Session is considering realignment. This is significant because this church has been so

influential at Westminster Seminary (West).

A number of private meetings, beginning with an August 6th gathering of approximately ten men, have been held to discuss realignment. Another meeting was held on September 10th where four presentations were made in the morning, and four in the afternoon. The possibility exists of six California churches realigning, including the aforementioned Mira Mesa and Escondido, as well as almost half the Orthodox Presbyterian teachers at Westminster (West) . . . .

A few churches in other parts of the country have also been mentioned as possible realigners . . . .

Some in the OPC have been strongly in favor of joining the PCA. These were greatly disappointed when a proposed merger was defeated. Now it appears that individual churches are leaving the OPC to join the PCA. It remains to be seen how extensive this realignment will be. The Canadian Reformed "Press Review" editor sees this a trend which will "strengthen the Reformed character of the OPC." He adds, "This gives all the more reason for us as Canadian Reformed Churches to intensify our contacts with the OPC." □

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## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

May 1, 1989

### CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The Church Extension Committee of our church in Lynden, WA was kept busy during the month of April in holding a Special Congregational Week from the 9th through the 16th.

Missionary Houck planned to be there to meet with the congregation. During that week one lecture was to be held in Canada and two in Lynden. An evening with Lynden's congregation was also planned for Rev. Houck. During that meeting he would address the congregation on the Missions of our churches.

Rev. Houck's lecture in Canada was on the topic, "Preaching, the Power unto True Conversion," and the one in Lynden, "Living Church Membership." Rev. Haak,

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

Lynden's pastor, was to lecture one evening on "The Believer's Love for God's Truth."

Rev. Houck hoped to find time also that week to address the students at the Covenant Christian School for one of their chapel services.

Lynden has introduced a new feature into their church bulletin. On the last Sunday of each month their bulletin contains a feature entitled, "Recommended Reading." These inserts will be reviews on good Christian books recommended to the congregation for their edification. I could add that last month's "Recommended Reading" was a review of "Perspectives in P.R. Education," by Mr. Fred Hanks Sr., a teacher at Hope P.R. School in Grand Rapids. You can get your copy of this magazine by writing to Mr. Don Doezeema, 1904 Plymouth Terrace S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

The Council of the South Holland P.R.C. in South Holland, IL called their congregation to a special worship service held on March 21. At this service, their new pastor, Rev. Charles Terpstra, was installed into office. A short program immediately followed the service. Afterwards refreshments and a get-acquainted time were scheduled in the church basement.

The Young People's Societies of the First P.R.C. in Grand Rapids, MI once again sponsored a Spring Vacation Family Roller Skating Party. Special rates were set for families so the whole family could spend a night together. First's young people extended a cordial invitation to all the churches in the West-Michigan area to come and join them.

The Activities Committee of First Church also invited the members of their congregation to meet on the Thursday before



Easter to join them in singing songs of Christ's resurrection at the rest homes in the area.

Due to Rev. Miersma's absence the first two Sundays in March on classical appointment to South Holland, the Council of our First P.R.C. in Edmonton, Alberta decided to hold their annual Prayer Day service (normally the second Wednesday in March) on the second Wednesday in April.

The Hudsonville P.R.C.'s Choral Society in Hudsonville, MI presented their annual Easter Choral Program on the night of Easter Sunday in their church auditorium.

The Young People's Society of our Loveland Church in Loveland, CO sponsored a family swim-night for the members of their congregation.

The Young People's Society of our Randolph, WI church were busy sponsoring their annual soup supper for their congregation on March 10.

#### **CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

On Thursday, March 30, Rev. M. Kamps, pastor of our Southwest Church, spoke at the annual Spring Lecture sponsored by our churches in West Michigan. This lecture was held in First Church in Grand Rapids. Rev. Kamps spoke on "Scripture: Science and Creation."

A Young People's Easter Mass Meeting was also held at First Church on March 19. Young people from the area were invited to attend. Rev. Joostens was the speaker.

The following was taken from the April issue of "A Closer Look," a monthly "newspaper" from the Hudsonville P.R.C.

Our denomination has been blessed by God with faithful preachers of His Word. Right now we have twenty-nine ministers and six ministers emeriti. Those six are no longer pastors over individual congregations, but in no way can we call them retired; for when God calls a child of His to preach, that calling is for life. Have you any idea how many sermons that calling for life might include? Rev. Heys has just recently preached his 5000th sermon since he was ordained in 1941. The sermon was delivered on February 26 to the congregation in Hudsonville. The text was Genesis 22:5-7 — "A Steadfast Trust in God."

It must be the prayer of each of us that God will convict young men among us of the calling to bring the Word to His people. Isaiah 52:7

#### **CONGREGATIONAL CALLS**

Rev. S. Key declined the call he received from the Faith P.R.C. in Jenison, MI. □

#### **NOTICE!!!**

The South Holland Protestant Reformed School is seeking applications for a teaching position at the elementary grade level beginning the 1989/90 school year. Direct all inquiries to:

Lamm Lubbers, Administrator  
16511 South Park Avenue  
South Holland, IL 60473  
(312) 339-6585

or to

James Lanting, Board Sec'y.  
16230 Louis Avenue  
South Holland, IL 60473  
(312) 596-5093

#### **ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!**

Hope Christian School of Redlands, CA is seeking to add a teacher to its staff beginning the 1989-90 school year. Teaching assignment would be either grades K and 1, or 2nd - 4th. Those interested may call Ed Karsemeyer (Principal) at school (714-793-1504) or at home (714-793-7166), or Mike Gritters (Secretary of School Board), at (714-739-4439). Applications or resumes should be sent to Hope Christian School, 1309 E. Brockton, Redlands, CA 92374.

#### **NOTICE!!!**

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School is seeking applications for a teaching position at the lower elementary grade level beginning the 1989/90 school year. Direct all inquiries to: Chester Hunter, Jr.

Administrator  
106 Fifth Ave.  
Doon, IA 51235  
(712) 726-3381

or to:

John Mantel, Board President  
R.R. 2, Box 247  
Rock Valley, IA 51247  
(712) 476-5609

#### **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

On April 19, 1989, our parents, MR. AND MRS. DOWIE VAN DER SCHAAF celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank God for the many years He has given them to us and to each other. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them, and be it His will, give them continued health and strength.

Peter and Dorothy Van Der Schaaf  
Gary and Karen Van Der Schaaf  
10 grandchildren