

THE STANDARD BEARER

A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine

Athanasius –
Church Father
(c. 296 - 373)

See "A Cloud of Witness"
– p. 111



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April 15, 1990

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In This Issue...

This issue of *The Standard Bearer* calls churches and parents to exert themselves on behalf of the godly rearing of covenant children. Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers points out the uniquely powerful role of the God-fearing mother in the home. Rev. Ron Cammenga reminds us of the responsibility of the Consistory in the matter of the children's instruction in good Christian schools. The editorial grounds all this education in the distinctively Reformed, and vital, truth of the covenant of God with the children of believers.

These last days are evil as regards the good confession and holy life of the sons and daughters of the church. We are determined not only to curse the darkness but also to light a candle.

The light for parents and church in child-rearing, as for the whole of the Christian's faith and life, is the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In his meditation, appropriate to the season, Rev. James Slopsema lets shine the inextinguishable light of life and hope that God lighted when He raised Jesus from the dead.

Do not overlook the book reviews. One advises parents of an outstanding, new book for their children. Rev. VanOverloop reviews a hard-hitting book on the heretical teachings of the popular television preachers. □ –D.J.E.

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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

The Resurrection of the Lord

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

Matthew 28:5-8

It is Sunday morning.

As the first few rays of morning light streak across the morning sky, several women are to be seen leaving Jerusalem. There are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and others.

On Friday this same group had been shocked by Jesus' death. They had seen it all. They had stood by as the crowds demanded Jesus' crucifixion. They had witnessed the soldiers whipping and misusing Him. They had followed their beloved Master to Golgotha where He was cruelly nailed to the cross. With amazement they had beheld the darkness that descended upon the land at high

noon. And when the darkness had lifted three hours later, their beloved Jesus was dead. Tearfully they had followed after, as Joseph and Nicodemus managed to bring the body of Jesus to the sepulchre just before nightfall.

After waiting through the Sabbath day, these same women return to the sepulchre at the crack of dawn with heavy hearts. Perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus had not had time Friday properly to embalm the body of Jesus. Or, if Jesus had been properly embalmed, these women are not aware of it. At any rate they are set on performing what they assume will be their last labor of love for their Lord.

At the sepulchre, however, they are surprised. And they are frightened. For the grave is empty.

The grave is empty, of course, because Jesus has risen from the dead. But the women are not aware of that fact. Oh, they should be aware. Had not Jesus told them repeatedly during the past several weeks of His life that He must needs go to Jerusalem to suffer death at the hands of the Jewish leaders? And had He not told them that after His death He would rise again? He had even told them that He would meet them afterward in Galilee.

But, you see, this did not fit into the perspective that these women and the other disciples had of Jesus. They perceived Jesus basically as an earthly Messiah. They envisioned that Jesus had come to establish an earthly kingdom in which Israel would be restored to the place of prominence among the nations that she had formerly enjoyed during the reigns of David and Solomon.

Into this framework Jesus' death and resurrection did not fit. And so when Jesus had spoken of His impending death and resurrection, these women with the other disciples had completely ignored Jesus' words. In fact, they had forgotten all about it by the time of Jesus' death. Hence, Jesus' death not only took them by surprise but completely devastated them. Nor do they now anticipate a resurrection. They are at the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus.

But Jesus' body is gone!

And then the women notice the angel sent from heaven to roll away the stone and let them into the grave.

No wonder the women are afraid.

The angel assures them, "Fear not." No, the women need not fear the angel. He had good tidings for them. Nor need they fear the empty grave. For the angel would explain that to them.

Fear not!

To calm the women's fears the angel, first, interprets the empty grave. I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.

How important these words of the angel are. For soon the report will be spread by Jesus' enemies that the disciples stole the body of Jesus. But the fact of the empty grave must not be misconstrued either by evil or by honest men. All must know that Jesus' body was not stolen but risen. Hence, the angel (a divine messenger from heaven) explains to the women the meaning of the empty grave. Jesus is risen, as He said.

The angel proceeds to confirm his message by calling the women's

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan.

attention to the place where the Lord lay.

What the women see is quite remarkable. They see Jesus' grave clothes, strips of cloth that had been wound around Jesus' body on Friday evening. From the other Gospel accounts we learn, however, that Jesus' grave clothes are not lying in an unraveled heap on the sepulchre floor. They are perfectly intact, in the exact position they had been left on Friday. Nothing has been disturbed. Everything is in place — except that Jesus' body is gone!

The grave clothes point conclusively to especially two important realities.

First, the grave clothes establish that Jesus' body has definitely not been stolen but miraculously raised to life. Had His body been stolen, the grave clothes would either have been taken also or would have been left in a heap on the floor.

Secondly, the grave clothes point to the nature of Jesus' resurrection.

To understand the exact nature of Jesus' resurrection we compare the resurrection of Jesus to that of Lazarus one month before. In the case of Lazarus, Jesus called Lazarus to come forth from the grave. After stumbling out of the sepulchre, Lazarus was there for all to see and touch. Lazarus' resurrection was obviously only a return to this life. Lazarus died, he was raised, and nothing had changed. And poor Lazarus had to die all over again one day.

But Jesus' resurrection is entirely different. Jesus is not present at the grave. He is gone. And quite obviously Jesus simply passed through His grave clothes. For they are perfectly intact. All this points to one glorious reality. Jesus has been gloriously changed through the resurrection. That which was earthly has become heavenly, that which was physical has become spiritual. Jesus has been raised into heavenly glory!

The women, of course, do not immediately understand all this. They do, however, understand that Jesus is risen from the dead.

And so the angel concludes his message. Go quickly, and tell Je-

sus' disciples that He is risen from the dead. And, behold, Jesus goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him. Lo, I have told you.

Thus ends the angel's message.

Quickly the women depart from the sepulchre with fear and great joy. Eagerly they find Jesus' disciples and relate to them the wonderful message of the angel.

Jesus is risen from the dead!

No, the women and disciples at this point do not fully comprehend the significance of Jesus' resurrection. That will have to wait until Pentecost. But they certainly understand that the resurrection of their Lord means victory. What a terrible defeat the death of Jesus had been for them. But now there is victory!

And so they are filled with fear and great joy.

In the light of Pentecost, and the full revelation of God, we are able more fully to understand the victory of Jesus' resurrection.

In the first place, Jesus' resurrection serves as God's seal of approval upon Jesus' death. No, Jesus' death on the cross was not the destruction of God's purpose, as initially assumed by the disciples. The cross was rather an integral part of the glorious plan of God for salvation. Through Jesus' death God would pay for the sins of His people. On its basis He would establish the Kingdom of heaven in which His people would find their salvation. And Jesus' resurrection is God's stamp of approval upon Jesus' suffering and death. By raising Jesus from the dead, God proclaims very clearly that through Jesus' death the price of sin has been fully paid. For, were there yet one sin left to the charge of God's elect, Jesus would be in the grave until this day!

Secondly, being raised from the dead, Jesus now lives to accomplish God's purpose in His death — the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. And our Lord Jesus Christ not only has established the kingdom in heaven, but in the power of His own death and resurrection also brings us into that kingdom. In the power of His own resurrection Jesus accomplishes a spiritual resurrection in our hearts,

transforming us wonderfully from death into life so that we become living members of His kingdom and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom.

And in the power of His resurrection He will also return to us one day to take us through the final resurrection of the body into the kingdom to enjoy in both body and soul its bliss forever.

The resurrection of Jesus is victory indeed!

With fear and great joy we too leave the empty sepulchre of Jesus, our Lord. □

The Chastisement of Our Peace Was upon Him

Darkly rose the guilty morning,
When, the King of Glory scorning,
Raged the fierce Jerusalem:
See the Christ, His cross upbearing,
See Him stricken, meekly wearing
The thorn-platted diadem.

Not the crowd whose cries assailed
Him,
Not the hands that rudely nailed
Him,
Slew Him on the cursed tree;
Ours the sin from heaven that
called Him,
Ours the sin whose burden galled
Him
In the sad Gethsemane.

For our sins, of glory emptied,
He was fasting, lone, and tempted,
He was slain on Calvary;
Yet He for His murderers pleaded,
Lord, by us that prayer is needed:
We have pierced, yet trust in
Thee.

In our wealth and tribulation,
By Thy precious cross and passion,
By Thy blood and agony,
By Thy glorious resurrection,
By Thy Holy Ghost's protection,
Make us Thine eternally.

—Author Unknown

The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers (3)

Fundamentalism Is Not Enough

■ The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers (3)

THE INCLUSION OF THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS IN THE COVENANT

The children of believers are included in the covenant as children, that is, already at conception and birth. They receive forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit of sanctification, and church membership — as children. They are called to love, fear, and obey God — as children. For they have God as their God, and are His people — as children. Therefore, they have full right to baptism. Parents must present them for baptism. And the church that would maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ must see to it.

This is an important feature of the central doctrine of the covenant. It is important to the children. Are they God's children or the devil's? It is important to the parents. We love our children and regard our rearing of our children as one of the most important tasks in our lives. May we regard them as children of God? Or are we compelled to regard them as Satan's "little vipers," as must all those who deny that children are included in the covenant and as did certain Calvinistic theologians, e.g., Jonathan Edwards. Inclusion of the children in the covenant is important to the church. The church asks, "Are they members of the church or do they stand outside?" Does the church have a calling to them too, to feed and protect them as lambs of the flock of Christ, or

are they nothing but heathens, little heathens to be sure, but heathens nevertheless, like all other ungodly people, whom the church at the most should evangelize?

But above all the place of the children in the covenant is important to God. He said, at the beginning of the history of the covenant with Abraham, "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations...to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). He inspired the apostle, on the very day that the covenant became new, to proclaim as gospel, "the promise is unto you, and to your children...even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). Rebuking His unfaithful wife, Judah, in Ezekiel 16:20, 21, God exclaims, like an aggrieved Husband and Father, "Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain My children...?" In Malachi 2:15, God condemns the divorcing that was prevalent in Judah, because divorce jeopardizes the "godly seed." (And still today the unchangeable God hates divorce in the covenant community because it is destructive of the children who, as covenant children, are His children.)

How important our children's inclusion in the covenant is to God is shown in the New Testament (Covenant) by Christ's command, "Suffer little children (infants) to come unto Me...for of such (infants of believers) is the kingdom of God (made up)" (Luke 18:15ff.). It is shown also by the careful provision God makes for the children, as members of the congregation, in Ephesians 6:1ff.: "Children, obey

your parents in the Lord...and, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Here the Reformed faith — Calvinism — parts company with all Baptists. Every Baptist seriously errs regarding a vital truth of the central covenant-doctrine in Scripture. Every Baptist holds that the children of believers are lost heathens outside the church, no different from the children of unbelievers. The advertisement that a local Baptist church placed in the paper concerning the superior holiness of the children in their congregation — their obedience to authority and their freedom from drunkenness and fornication, etc. — was deceptive advertising. There are no children in that church. Every Baptist church denies membership to all children. Only sheep belong to the Baptist fold, no lambs. Entrance into the church is restricted to those who are grown up and are able to make confession of their faith. Whatever youth do join the Baptist church do so not as children of believers but as mature individuals. The Baptist church will not suffer the little children to come to Christ, but forbids them.

Among the other implications of this grim teaching and practice is that there is no ground for any hope of the election and salvation of the children of believers who die in infancy or in early childhood. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that they perish. They are, according to the Baptists themselves, outside the church and covenant of God; and outside the church and covenant of God is no salvation.

In light of our confession of the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant (about which fact there is no dispute among Reformed people or churches), we must now answer the question, what exactly do Scripture and the Reformed confessions mean when they say that our children are included in the covenant?

The Reformed creeds are clear and emphatic about children's being included in the covenant of God. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that infants must be baptized "since they as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult..." (Q. 74).

The Reformed "Form for the Administration of Baptism" assures the believing parents and the congregation that "our young children...are again received unto grace in Christ...." It insists, with powerful, decisive appeal to the unity of the covenant in both old and new dispensations, that "infants are to be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant." And in the prayer of thanksgiving it puts on Reformed lips the words of praise, joy, and comfort, "Thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son...." In the vow at baptism, the parents confess that they believe that, "although our children are conceived and born in sin, and are therefore subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His church, ought to be baptized."

Our question, what this means, is occasioned by the incontestable fact that not all of the children of believers are saved. Both parents and church experience the hard, painful fact that some of our children grow up ungodly, unbelieving, and disobedient, and perish. God is not their God; and they are not His people. Scripture prepares us for this bitterest of all parental

and ecclesiastical sorrows. Abraham had a grandson, Esau, who was a profane reprobate (cf. Gen. 25:19-34; Heb. 12:16, 17; Rom. 9:6-13). Deuteronomy 21:18ff. prescribed the procedure by which Israelite parents of gluttonous, drunken, rebellious, and stubborn sons were to bring these children to the elders to be excommunicated and stoned. Hebrews 10:29 speaks of the baptized son of believers in the time of the new covenant who treads under foot the Son of God, counts the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and insults the Spirit of grace.

We cannot presume that all our children are regenerate and elect. To presume this is contrary to Scripture and experience. Nor may we parents be bitter about this. For it is pure mercy that any of our children is saved.

— DJE

■ Fundamentalism Is Not Enough

Early this century, a series of twelve volumes appeared setting forth the "fundamentals of the Christian faith." The books were titled, *Fundamentalism: A Testimony to the Truth*. They were intended to combat the spreading theological modernism, i.e., unbelief and heresy. Two rich Christian businessmen distributed three million individual volumes, without charge, to pastors, missionaries, Sunday School teachers, and others in influential positions in the churches. This year, Kregel Publications in Grand Rapids, Michigan has published a new edition of those volumes in one, big book, *The Fundamentals: The Famous Sourcebook of Foundational Biblical Truths* (edited by R.A. Torrey, updated by Charles L. Feinberg, 714 pages, paper, \$16.95).

Since modernism did not surrender in A.D. 1915 but has, on the contrary, been gaining victory after victory in Protestant churches and schools, including Reformed churches and schools, believing preachers, professors, and teachers will find this book helpful. Also

the concerned church member can profit from the book. What really is higher criticism of Scripture? What do modernists teach about the first eleven chapters of Genesis, indeed about the entire Old Testament? What in the end is the effect of modernism upon Christianity itself? Positively, what is the Bible's own teaching on its inspiration? on the Godhead of Jesus? on the resurrection of the body? These questions, and more, are answered clearly and pointedly in short chapters.

Writers include James Orr (on "Science and Christian Faith"); B.B. Warfield (on "The Deity of Christ"); R.A. Torrey (on "The Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit"); Thomas Boston (on "The Nature of Regeneration"); John Ryle (on "The True Church"); the lawyer, Philip Mauro (on "Modern Philosophy"); and many others.

The book has serious weaknesses. These weaknesses were, in part, the reason why the churches of the "fundamentalists" have lost the war to modernism. They are also the reason why "fundamentalism" is not enough for a Reformed or Presbyterian church.

First, there are fatal concessions to modernism. James Orr concedes to evolutionary science that Genesis 1 and 2 are no factual account of creation but "a sublime picture" of God's activity over "vast cosmic periods" (cf. pp. 133, 134). This is the theory of theistic evolution that now has a stranglehold on Protestant churches and schools. It represents the denial both of the doctrine of creation and of the doctrine of inspiration and the jeopardizing of every doctrine that rests on the foundation of Scripture and creation, i.e., the whole of the Christian faith.

Second, the "fundamentalists" include the dispensationalist, C.I. Scofield, whose chopping up of God's work of salvation and of Holy Scripture is scarcely preferable to modernism. Scofield writes the article on "The Grace of God." He shows himself a thorough-going antinomian, denying that the law of God is the rule for the life of the child of God (cf. p. 404). This

pernicious notion is directly responsible for abounding lawlessness in contemporary "fundamentalist/evangelical" Christianity.

Third, the "fundamentalism" of *The Fundamentals* does not include the Reformed doctrine of salvation by sovereign grace alone. There is no article on divine predestination. All the articles on the atonement carefully avoid teaching limited atonement. No one criticizes the basic modernist tenet of free will. The same is strikingly true of "conservatives" contending against modernism in Reformed churches today. They are silent concerning the modernist denial of the sovereignty of God in salvation. Not the denial of reprobation, not the affirmation of a desire of God to save all sinners, not the widespread preaching of universal atonement, not the acceptance within their churches of free will organizations, evangelists, and tactics, but the denial of creation and the criticism of Scripture receive all the attention. This is an attenuated fundamentalism that contrasts sharply with the robust insistence of the Reformed faith on all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

Fourth, there is no call to churches to discipline the modernists, i.e., the heretics and apostates. Without excommunication by the church, the war against the unbelief of modernism — and war it is, to the death — is lost. Modernists will allow fundamentalists to talk and write forever, as long as the modernists may occupy the seats of power in the church.

This criticism does not minimize the usefulness of *The Fundamentals* for the orthodox. Many of the issues remain crucial issues for the true church in her contending for the faith at the end of the 20th century: Scripture; creation; higher criticism; evolution; the Godhead of Jesus; the resurrection of the body; whether Roman Catholicism is genuine Christianity; and the like. In certain respects, the warnings given against the false teachings of modernism at the beginning of the 20th century carry more weight for us than they did for

those who lived at the time the warnings were given. We have the advantage of seeing that these teachings have destroyed the Protestant churches that allowed them. In The Netherlands, the Reformed church of the Synod of Dordt has become the Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerken. The Presbyterian church of Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge, and B.B. Warfield in the United States has become the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The fundamentalist authors remind us of the seriousness of the demand to hold the traditions against the modernist apostasy, particularly modernism's view of Scripture as a human book:

If this modern criticism (of the Bible—DJE) were true, then away with all so-called Christianity, which only deceives us with idle tales! Away with a religion which has nothing to offer us but the commonplace teachings of morality! Away with faith! Away with hope! Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!.... What does it offer us? Nothing. What does it take away? Everything. Do we have any use for it? No! It neither helps us in life nor comforts us in death; it will not judge us in the world to come...(pp. 32, 33).

Useful as a fundamentalist volume written in the early 1900s may

"Ye Have Not Passed This Way Heretofore"

But once I pass this way
And then — no more;
But once — and then the silent door
Swings on its hinges —
Opens — closes — and no more
I pass this way.

Through grace I'll try
While on the road
To take along
To my abode,
Whate'er the cost,
Some stranger lost.

For no man travels twice
The great highway
Through night and day,
From darkness unto light —
Lord, give me might,
Today.

—Author Unknown

be, far better would be a distinctively Reformed book written in 1990. It would call all Protestants, especially all Reformed Protestants, to hold the traditions against the apostasy in its present-day forms. In short chapters, written simply and in a popular style for the people of God, it would defend the Reformed, i.e., biblical, fundamentals: inspired Scripture; creation; the historical character of Christianity; the covenant; predestination and the sovereignty of grace; the Godhead and manhood of Jesus the only Mediator; the resurrection of the body; the authority of the ecumenical and Reformed creeds; the law as rule of life for the thankful believer; and the inviolability of the marriage bond and sexual chastity for those who hope to see the Lord, among other truths.

With utter contempt for the praise of theologians and scholars (cf. John 12:42, 43), it would expose the errors of the present day: Scripture as a human book; theistic evolution; the mythical nature of the great events of the Christian faith; the attack on the substantial Deity of Jesus as confessed in the Nicene Creed and the Symbol of Chalcedon; universalism; free will; antinomism; doctrinal tolerance and its expression in an ecumenicity that ignores the creeds; and the charismatic movement, among others.

There may still be rich Christian businessmen who would finance the distribution of the volume or volumes to thousands of Protestant preachers, professors, teachers, and others in position of influence in the churches. I know nothing of the two men who underwrote the original *The Fundamentals* than that they were rich California oilmen. But I admire them for their willingness to use their money on behalf of a testimony to the truth. Other than giving to the poor and contributing to good Christian schools, I know of no better investment in the cause of the risen Christ than this.

The Reformed Fundamentals: Holding the Traditions in the Present Apostasy — how does that sound? □

— DJE

Letters

Perceptive Articles on Suicide Fields and Winslow on the Doctrines of Grace

■ Perceptive Articles on Suicide

Thank you for the excellent articles by Mr. Joel D. Sugg on suicide (*The Standard Bearer*, Jan. 15 and Feb. 1, 1990). These are timely and perceptive articles that truly deal with spiritual issues. May the author continue to exercise his writing ministry for God's glory and the edification of the saints.

Edward W. Ojarovsky
New Rochelle, NY

■ Fields and Winslow on the Doctrines of Grace

Thank you very much for *The Standard Bearer* and the fine, firm, and facile affirmation of the Reformed faith contained therein. Your exposure of the sad doctrinal declension evident even in professedly Reformed circles is quite apt and timely. I would like to share a brief extract from the book *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul* (written in 1841 by Octavius Winslow) that I think accurately captures this important polemical aspect:

Is there not in the present day a criminal keeping back by some, and a painful undervaluing by others, of the scriptural and holy doctrines of grace? — The doctrines which unfold the eternity of God's love to His people — the sovereignty of HIS grace in their election — the effectual power of the SPIRIT in their calling — the free justification of their persons through the imputed righteousness of CHRIST....are not these Divinely revealed truths, at the present moment, and by the great mass of CHRISTIAN professors and preachers, excluded from our pulpits and exiled from our land?

Are they not considered mean and un-

fashionable? and having lost their savor with the many, are they not cast out and trodden under foot of men? We verily and solemnly believe that it is so. By some they are professedly received, but criminally held back; by others they are professedly preached, but with such timidity and obscurity, as to render them of none effect; and by the many they are disbelieved altogether, and therefore openly and boldly denied!....the undervaluing of these doctrines of grace....will wither the spirituality and obstruct the prosperity of the churches in our land.

And then, after discussing this delusive condition further, Winslow eloquently remarks:
It is then discovered, that the true prosperity of a church, its stability, its spirituality, its vigour, and its holy influence, are essentially, and therefore inseparably, connected with a fearless and holy maintenance of the doctrines of grace (pp. 121-122).

Although written in 1841 these words could have been written by a David J. Engelsma circa 1990, they seem so fresh and relevant to the state of today's church. I wanted to share the above with the readers of *The Standard Bearer*, and to again thank you for your most excellent ministry. My prayers are with you.

Greg Fields
Hamilton, Ohio

In volume 66 of *The Standard Bearer* (March 1, 1990) you reported on the colloquium on Calvin studies and cited Hesselink's paper on Calvin's "secret guidance" in which the Spirit gives the believing man or woman special insight and special empowering for the Christian walk, although this never contradicts the Word or takes place by new revelations" (p. 246).

Could you tell me how I could contact Mr. Hesselink and learn more about the topic of his paper? I am particularly interested in reading his writings on Calvin's secret guidance.

(Dr.) Bruce W. Speck
Indiana University
Fort Wayne, IN

■ Response

A copy of Dr. Hesselink's paper may be available from Western Theological Seminary, 86 E. 12th St., Holland, MI 49423. Dr. Hesselink will be interested to know that you learned of his paper from *The SB*. □ — Ed.

Come, Ye Saints, Look Here and Wonder

Come, ye saints, look here and wonder:
See the place where Jesus lay;
He has burst His bands asunder;
He has borne our sins away;
Joyful tidings!
Yes, the Lord has risen today.
Jesus triumphs! Sing ye praises;
By His death He overcame;
Thus the Lord His glory raises,
Thus He fills His foes with shame.

Sing ye praises!
Praises to the Victor's name.
Jesus triumphs! Countless legions
Come from heaven to meet
their King;
Soon, in yonder blessed regions,
They shall join His praise to sing.
Songs eternal
Shall through heaven's high
arches ring.

—Thomas Kelly

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman C. Hanko

Athanasius Against the World

It pleases the Lord, the King of the church, in crucial times during the church's history, to raise men of fearless courage who are willing to sacrifice all for the cause of the truth. Such a man was Luther; such a man was Calvin; such men were the leaders of the "Separation" in the Netherlands in 1834; the Lord has blessed our own churches with such spiritual fathers; such a man was also Athanasius. At a most critical time he was raised up by God to defend the truth of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ against almost all men in the church of his day. The epitaph attached to his name throughout all ages expresses the honored place Athanasius occupies: *Athanasius contra mundum* — Athanasius against the world.

The birthplace of Athanasius was Alexandria in Egypt, the city in which was found one of the earliest Seminaries of the early church, but also a city which was a seething cauldron of competing philosophies. Because of its strategic geographical position, it was a bustling center of trade and commerce where East and West met. Greek philosophy, Oriental mysticism, the Christian religion — all clashed and fought for supremacy in this port city of Egypt on the Nile Delta.

Not a lot is known of his early life. He was born in 296 of parents of high rank and great wealth. In keeping with the social status of his family, he received a classical and liberal education and became well-versed in Greek philosophy. But

also at an early time in his life he had come to know and love the Christian faith. The story, perhaps apocryphal, is told of a number of bishops of the Alexandrian church who, while meeting in the house of their chief bishop, saw through the window a group of boys on the street imitating certain rites of the church — as children are wont to do. Watching, while one of the boys was going through the rite of the baptism of his playmates, they decided that the game had gone too far. After calling the boys into the house and quizzing them, they learned that the "baptizing bishop" was the young Athanasius. The chief bishop of Alexandria, himself named Alexander after the name of the city, took Athanasius under his wing and instructed him more carefully in the Christian faith. This was the beginning of a long period of close friendship between Alexander and Athanasius, the latter soon becoming the spiritual and theological superior of his mentor. Athanasius was soon made the private secretary of Alexander and deacon in the church of Alexandria.

The story of Athanasius is woven into the warp and woof of one of the greatest controversies that has ever troubled the Christian church, a controversy concerning the doctrine of Christ's divinity.

The great enemy of the church, Satan, the prince of devils, has one powerful weapon in his arsenal which he repeatedly uses to attack the stronghold of Christ's church: the weapon of false doctrine. Persecution is also such a weapon, but Satan had failed in his efforts to destroy the church with this weapon, for "the blood of the martyrs had become the seed of the church."

Now he turned to false doctrine.

His weapon was aimed at the very heart of the Christian faith: the truth of Christ's divinity. If Satan could rob the church of that doctrine, the church would be destroyed forever. The Lord Himself had told His disciples that it was upon the rock of this confession that He would build His church, and the gates of hell would never prevail against it (Matthew 16:13-19). The apostle John had warned the church that everyone who denies that Jesus Christ is come into the flesh is of Antichrist (I John 4:3).

Because the church was still very young, no formulation of this doctrine had been made, and, indeed, there was much confusion over the point. How could God be the only true and living God, while at the same time both the Father and the Son were God? This was the question with which the church struggled. Various solutions to the problem had been proposed, but all had been rejected by the church as being contrary to the clear statements of Scripture. But what exactly Scripture did teach on this subject the church was not prepared to say.

Into this situation a man by the name of Arius set forth his solutions. He was a man of no little ability, but he was also vain and arrogant. He proposed that the Son, just because he was Son, God's Son, He could not be God. Though perhaps He was eternal, He nevertheless had to be created. And if He was created, there was a time when He was not. Thus He taught that our Lord Jesus Christ was not God, but a creature, even though the highest of all creatures.

Because of Arius' influence in the church, his views were widely

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accepted and many began to defend what he taught. The result was that the whole church was torn by confusion, controversy, schism, and bitterness. The unrest reached also into the city of Alexandria. Here Alexander and his bishops saw the evil of the views of Arius and resolved to do all in their power to combat them. Alexander's deacon and secretary was God's man to help in this noble cause.

Constantine was the emperor of the Roman Empire and he had thought to give a decaying empire new life and unity by embracing and supporting the Christian faith. When he saw his fondest hopes about to be dashed to pieces by internal conflicts in the church, he resolved to attempt a settlement by calling an ecumenical council at which would be present delegates from the whole church in every part of the empire.

This council is the famous and venerated Council of Nicea which met in 325, the decisions of which are incorporated into the Nicene Creed.¹

The council met in the city of Nicea in the northwestern part of Asia Minor, on the shore near the Bosphorus. Over 250 bishops from all parts of the Eastern Church were there; the emperor was present; a delegation from the West, sent by the bishop of Rome was present; Alexander and his youthful secretary were also there. Some of the members of the council came with bodies scarred and broken by the persecution of Diocletian which had ended only a little more than ten years earlier.

The council was divided roughly into three factions: one group of men who were determined to support Arius and establish his views in the church; an orthodox group to which Alexander and Athanasius belonged, very small, numbering only about 20 men, who were ready to fight long and hard for the truth of Christ's divinity; and the majority who stood somewhere between these two factions.

The orthodox group was, far and away, the most capable; and by their steady and biblical defense of

the truth, finally prevailed upon a majority to adopt the solid orthodox position, that Christ is "very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."² In the formulation of this creed, Athanasius played a leading role and emerged from the council as the most able defender of the truth of the divinity of Christ. He was recognized as a man of outstanding "zeal, intellect, and eloquence."³

One would think that the decisions of this council would have settled the matter; for the truth was set forth, Arius was condemned, and the position which he took was anathematized. But this was far from the case. The controversy continued unabated in the church; in fact, it became more bitter, more rancorous, more divisive until the church was fairly torn to pieces by the struggle. While, generally speaking, the out and out Arians declined in influence, another party arose, basically Arian, but taking the position that while Christ was truly divine, He was of a "like essence" with God and not of the "same essence."⁴

It was during this period of confusion and ecclesiastical chaos that the light of Athanasius shone brightly. In 328, after the death of Alexander, he became bishop of the church in Alexandria. While almost the whole world went chasing after the Arian heresy, Athanasius stood like a rock for the truth of Scripture and Nicene orthodoxy.

For his troubles he was banished no less than five times. Of the 46 years of his ministry as bishop of Alexandria, he spent 20 years in exile.

His first exile began with his condemnation at the Synods of Tyre and Constantinople. He was banished to Treves in faraway Gaul (now France) on the borders of the empire, where his enemies thought he could do no harm. He was banished by the emperor for refusing to permit Arian men to the table of the Lord. He was accused of being a disturber of the peace and a troublemaker in Israel. In fact, the hatred of his enemies was so intense that accusations of murder and fornica-

tion were hurled against him. The former accusation he proved false by presenting to the council the very man whom he was accused of murdering. His accusers were momentarily speechless, but continued their bitter attacks, and he was severed from his beloved congregation.

The fortunes of the orthodox party rose and fell with the emperor who happened to occupy the throne of the empire. And so, when a new emperor came to power, Athanasius was recalled from exile in 338 and returned to his congregation. But his enemies remained fierce and bitter. And so, once again, in 339 he was exiled. This time he fled to Rome to find safety with the bishop of Rome, Julius by name. The West was far more orthodox than the East and he found a sympathetic audience for his views. The time of this exile was spent in rallying the West to the orthodox position.

In 346 he was recalled, but again his labors in his congregation were interrupted. After ten years, a new emperor attempted to accommodate the Arians, and the enemies of Athanasius saw another opportunity to get rid of their opponent. While Athanasius was conducting a service with his congregation, in 356, 5000 armed soldiers stormed the church building. Calmly, he began reading Psalm 136 and asked his congregation to respond. It was a moving moment. When he read: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good," his congregation responded: "For his mercy endureth forever." This time he went into the desert to spend time with the monks who had retired from the church to find God in their own peculiar ways. The time in the desert was spent in writing, and the content of his writings was the defense of the great truth that Christ is fully God and that the Arians were idolaters who worshiped strange gods, no different from the heathen.

Again he was recalled to his flock (362), but was almost immediately driven away by those who were stung by his attacks against them. As he left his weeping congregation, he comforted them with

the words: "Be of good cheer; it is only a cloud, which will soon pass on." He escaped hired assassins on an imperial ship on the Nile and found refuge once again in the desert.

Once more he was able to return. Once more he was driven from his flock, this last time to find refuge for four months in the tomb of his father. By this time he was an aged man and longed to spend the last years of his life with his beloved sheep. The Lord granted this prayer, and he was able to return and spend the few remaining years of his pilgrimage with those whom he had so long faithfully served.

This remarkable servant of God suffered as few are called to suffer. Yet he never once deviated from his defense of the great truth of Christ's divinity. He was a man of small stature, somewhat stooped, emaciated by fasting and many troubles, but fair of countenance, possessing a piercing eye and great power of presence. Towards the end of the controversy, he was aged and weary. But he never wavered from his position though the whole world was against him. And he did not live to see his position finally vindicated at the great Council of Constantinople in 381, which emphatically reaffirmed the creed of Nicea.

His love for the truth was not rooted in a mere love of doctrinal speculation. He was intent on maintaining his position because he believed that the salvation of the church rested on the truth of Christ's absolute divinity. As he expressed it: The divinity of Christ is necessary for redemption because only God can do the impossible; i.e., only God can save poor sinners such as we are.

Other major accomplishments marked his troubled life. In 367, while temporarily at peace in his congregation, he wrote a pastoral letter to all the churches. This is an interesting footnote to history. The churches were, by this time, accustomed to celebrate Christ's resurrection on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox — as we do to this day.

The bishop of Alexandria was instructed to determine the date each year and inform the churches of the date. This instruction was due to the fact that the best astronomers were to be found in Alexandria. But the bishops of Alexandria took the occasion to write a pastoral letter to all the churches on some important point of doctrine. When this duty fell on Athanasius in 367, he took the occasion to instruct the churches in the canon of Scripture and to enumerate the books which rightly were the rule of the faith and life of the church. Athanasius' letter contained the 66 books of the Bible as we now have them, and excluded the apocryphal books.

He wrote extensively on many subjects, but concentrated on a defense of the great truths of the Godhead of our Lord. Added to his many books was one which contained a biography of the venerated monk, Anthony. Athanasius himself lived an ascetic life and was much influenced by the desert monks who gave themselves to the isolation of the desert to live near to God. It remains to this day a classic of the solitary life.

Athanasius proved his greatness "in suffering, and through years of warfare against mighty errors and the imperial court."⁵ He was "Athanasius *contra mundum*" (Athanasius against the world) because this expresses best "his fearless independence and immovable fidelity to the Scriptures."⁶

*It was the passion and the life-work of Athanasius to vindicate the deity of Christ, which he rightly regarded as the cornerstone of the edifice of the Christian faith, and without which he could conceive no redemption. For this truth he spent all his time and strength; for this he suffered deposition and twenty years of exile; for this he would have been at any moment glad to pour out his blood. For his vindication of this truth he was much hated, much loved, always respected or feared. In the unwavering conviction that he had the right and the protection of God on his side, he constantly disdained to call in the secular power for his ecclesiastical ends, and to degrade himself to an imperial courtier, as his antagonists often did.*¹⁰

Gregory of Nazianzus, a contemporary, spoke of Athanasius in these words:

He was one that so governed himself that his life supplied the place of sermons . . . He was a patron to the widows, a father to orphans, a friend to the poor, a harbor to strangers, a brother to brethren, a physician to the sick, a keeper of the healthful, one who "became all things to all men, that, if not all, he might at least gain the more." 8

May God be pleased to raise up such men in his church today.□

¹ The Nicene Creed can be found in the back of our Psalter. It is worth re-reading at this point in the narrative, for it is, in large measure, the work of Athanasius.

² Quoted from the Nicene Creed.

³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. III, p. 626.

⁴ This difference was expressed by two key words: the orthodox held to the truth that Christ was *homo-ousios* (of the same essence) with the Father; the semi-Arians, as they were known, held to the idea that Christ was *homoio-ousios* (of similar essence) with the Father. I am always a bit amused that people today can get excited about what they perceive to be useless hair-splitting in doctrinal controversies in the church, when the great truths of the divinity of Christ hung, in this controversy, on whether or not the little letter "i" ought to be included in this key word.

⁵ Schaff, III, 885, 886.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Schaff, III, 890.

⁸ Quoted from *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Second Series), Vol. IV, p. 506

Quietness

"Be still and know that I am God,"
That I who made and gave thee
life
Will lead thy faltering steps aright;
That I who see each sparrow's fall
Will hear and heed thy earnest call.
I am God.

"Be still and know that I am God,"
When aching burdens crush thy
heart,
Then know I formed thee for thy
part
And purpose in the plan I hold.
Thou art the clay that I would
mold.
Trust in God.

"Be still and know that I am God,"
Who made the atom's tiny span
And set it moving to my plan,
That I who guide the stars above
Will guide and keep thee in My
love.
Be thou still.

—Doran

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga

Promoting Good Christian Schools

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Church Order, Article 21

Introduction

This article deals with the responsibility of consistories with respect to the Christian education of the children of the covenant.

The article does NOT entrust the consistories with the responsibility for establishing, operating, and governing Christian schools. This would be to advocate parochialism. Instead the article insists that the education of children is fundamentally a parental responsibility: "...in which parents have their children instructed...." However, the article does place upon consistories the responsibility to direct parents to the discharge of their covenant obligations.

That consistories have such a responsibility is not only emphasized by the present article. This also comes out in the "Questions of Article 41" put to the delegates of each consistory at the conclusion of the classis meetings. The third question is: "Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?" This responsibility is also brought out in the "Questions For Church Visitation." One of the questions put to the full consistory is: "Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?"

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

Previous Decisions on Which Article 21 is Based

The Synod of Dordrecht, 1574, ruled:

With regard to the schools it is decided that: 1) The ministers of all the classes shall have the responsibility to determine at which places schools are needed. 2) The ministers shall determine whether in the past the school teacher at a given place was given the normal stipend from public funds. 3) The ministers shall request permission from the magistrate to hire a school teacher, and they shall request from the magistrate that he order that the normal stipend be paid. 4) The ministers shall make sure that the school teachers subscribe to the Confession of Faith, and submit themselves to discipline, and furthermore that they teach the children the Catechism and other beneficial things. 5) In case there are some school teachers unwilling to do these things, the ministers shall request from the government that they be turned down or dismissed. 6) In case the ministers cannot obtain the above-mentioned request from the local government, they shall by petition explain and pursue the matter with the higher authorities.

The Synod of Dordrecht, 1578, resolved the following:

People shall work that everywhere schools are established in which the children are instructed not only in languages and arts, but also especially in the Christian catechism and be led to the ministry.

The Synod of Middelburg, 1581, made the following decision:

The congregations shall see to it that there are professors and schoolmasters who teach not only the fine arts and languages, but also theology and the Catechism, and educate their listeners and disciples in the fear of God.

The Synod of 's Gravenhage, 1586, ruled:

All consistories shall see to it that there are good teachers (schoolmasters) who not only teach the children reading, writing, languages, and liberal arts, but also train them in godliness and in the Catechism..

The decision of Dordrecht, 1618-19, on which our present article is based reads:

All consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters who not only teach the children reading, writing, languages, and liberal arts, but also train them in godliness and in the Catechism.

Comparison of the Present Article with Previous Decisions

The language of what is now Article 21 of our Church Order derives from the revision of the Christian Reformed Church in 1914. A comparison of the present article with its predecessors indicates at least two significant differences.

First, the earlier decisions demonstrate that previously consistories had much to do with the actual operation of the schools in the Netherlands, even to the extent of being involved in the interviewing and hiring of the teachers.

Secondly, whereas our present article directs consistories to see to it that there are good Christian "schools," the earlier decisions required the consistories to see to it that there were good Christian school "teachers."

The explanation for these differences is historical. In the Netherlands the schools were operated by the state. But after the Reformation, the state turned over the promotion and supervision of the schools to the church. VanDellen and Monsma write:

Various measures were adopted during these years by the Churches and approved of by the government, which point to a very close cooperation between the Church and the government in the establishment and maintenance of Christian Schools. For instance, the law required that schoolmasters be professors of the Reformed faith, and hold membership in one of the Reformed Churches; they had to be Godly in

all their conduct; they were required to subscribe to the Reformed confessions; they had to give proof of knowing the Catechism and of ability to teach it in the school rooms; they were under special supervision of the Consistories and accountable to them. (The Church Order Commentary, p. 93).

Main Principles of Article 21

Education of children is a parental responsibility: "...in which the parents have their children instructed...." The Scriptures are clear in teaching this parental responsibility: Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:18-21; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesians 6:4. Our "Baptism Form" also emphasizes this responsibility of covenant parents. And parents are in duty bound, further to instruct their children herein, when they shall arrive to years of discretion.

And again, the third question asked of the parents at baptism: *Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion...instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?*

This responsibility of parents for the education of their children is "...according to the demands of the covenant." This indicates the positive foundation upon which Christian education is founded: the covenant of God. This covenant of God is established by God with elect believers through Jesus Christ. It is a covenant that extends to and includes the children of believers (cf. Gen. 17:7 and Acts 2:39). But this covenant is contained through the instrumentality of the instruction of covenant children in the truth and fear of God. This is the demand of the covenant, that parents instruct their children. This is their part in the covenant. This is not a condition that they must fulfill, but a matter of thankful obedience to the covenant God.

Consistories share in the responsibility for the Christian education of the children of the covenant: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools...." The children of the covenant are members of the church, and therefore under the spiritual care and supervision of the consistory. The vow that parents make at the time

of the baptism of their children is a vow that is made before the church, so that the elders have the responsibility from God to see to it that parents carry out that vow.

Ways in Which Consistories Promote Christian Education

There are numerous ways in which consistories can promote Christian education.

This can be done by the minister in the public preaching as occasion warrants. A sermon could be devoted to this subject in connection with Lord's Day 38 and the Fourth Commandment. Sermons dealing with Christian education are appropriate in connection with the administration of the sacrament of baptism. In Reformed churches the practice of preaching an annual "School Sermon" in the Fall at the beginning of a new academic year is of long standing. This is a good practice — one, I trust, that survives in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

The whole matter of Christian education, both in the home and in the Christian day school, ought to find a place in the congregational prayers. Let our ministers pray for our Christian schools, our Christian school teachers, our children and young people who study at these schools, the parents who sacrificially support our Christian schools, and the school boards and school societies.

Let the promotion of Christian education by our consistories be reflected in the offerings taken during the worship services for the cause of Christian education among us.

Let the subject of Christian education be brought up on family visitation. Let the responsibilities of covenant parents in this regard be pointed out. Let those who show deficiencies in carrying out these responsibilities be instructed and exhorted. Let the pastor and the elders direct questions to the children and young people concerning their faithfulness in applying themselves to their studies in the Christian school. And let promising young people be encouraged to give serious consideration to entering the

teaching profession in our Christian schools.

If there are parents who do not make use of the existing Christian schools, the elders should visit them to inquire concerning their reasons. If their reasons are inadequate, they should be visited periodically.

The consistory should also promote membership in the school society, active membership, and this not only among the men of the congregation who have children in the Christian school, but also among both the younger and older men who do not even have children or whose children are past school-age.

If there is no Christian school, or no Protestant Reformed Christian School, the consistory can promote the discussion of organizing a society, making plans for the establishment of a school, and sponsor public meetings at which speeches are given or there is open discussion of these issues.

Promotion of "Good" Christian Schools

The responsibility of consistories is to promote "good" Christian schools, according to Article 21. What are "good" Christian schools?

Good Christian schools are certainly Protestant Reformed Christian schools. This is the ideal, the goal that we must strive after, both in the elementary grades and at the high school level. If circumstances (i.e., God in His providence) make the immediate achievement of this goal impossible, then "good" means the best Christian schools that are available.

Under ordinary circumstances, this rules out the public schools. This is true both because a good Christian school is a parentally controlled Christian school, and because a good school does not compromise or openly deny the teachings of the Word of God, as is done in the public schools.

VanDellen and Monsma state: *The Church cannot afford, and before God cannot tolerate, to see much of her precious teachings contradicted and silenced five days a week, year after year, before our children, and that while they are in their formative years. Godless and Christless instruction clearly runs counter to the best*

interests of the Church, the Kingdom of God in general, the welfare of the child, and solemn obligation of Christian parents" (The Church Order Commentary, p. 95).

A good Christian school also means a school that is academically excellent. A good Christian school is a school that provides a well-rounded education. The decisions of the early synods quoted at the beginning of this article speak of reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts. Not only must the education be well-rounded, but it must be academically sound. Reformed Christians can never be satisfied with education that is Reformed, but academically deficient. In the final analysis, that is NOT Reformed education.

Two Questions

Two questions of a practical sort often arise in connection with the contents of this article.

First, are those parents who choose not to send their children to the existing Christian school to be put under formal church discipline?

The answer to this question is: No. The bare fact of not sending one's children to the Christian school is not a valid ground for discipline. There may be valid, or at least understandable, reasons why parents do not send their children to the Christian school. In the case of those whose reasons are not valid, for the most part consistories

should limit themselves to admonition and instruction, since ultimately the education of their children is a parental decision. The advice of VanDellen and Monsma to consistories is:

There may be cases in which parents refrain from sending their children to a Christian school for reasons which they consider valid before God, although others question or deny the validity of their position. In all such cases the matter must be left to the consciences of the parents concerned, although the Consistory should urge prayerful reconsideration repeatedly (The Church Order Commentary, p. 98).

Again:

Parents who fail to send their children to a Christian school because they assume a careless attitude toward their Christian obligation and make light of their baptismal vows, should be admonished, censured, and perhaps excommunicated because of their unChristian attitude toward God and His commands in general. In other words, mere failure to send children to a Christian school may never constitute a basis for censure and excommunication, but persistent indifference toward Christian duty, including proper child training, may. For by such indifference we clearly testify that we are either temporarily wandering away from God, or that our Christianity is only a sham, without reality, and that we are Godless at heart (The Church Order Commentary, p. 98).

A second question that is often raised is whether those who do not send their children to the Christian school, or to our own Protestant Reformed Christian schools, may be nominated for office in the church.

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1934, passed the following declaration:

Although such as heartily support Christian instruction do not thereby automatically qualify for the nomination of office-bearers, yet Synod wishes to emphasize that this element should be given very weighty consideration, and advises consistories to do so, since our principles logically call for it and our Christian schools are constantly in need of whole-hearted support from consistories.

Once again, the bare fact that one does not presently send his children to the Christian school does not in itself disqualify from serving in the special offices. The important question is: "What is his reason?"

VanDellen and Monsma also face this question:

Can one who is opposed to Christian schools serve as a Consistory member? Not very well. Those who serve in Consistory pledge to uphold the doctrine and government of the Churches. (Cf. "Form of Subscription.") Now, the Church Order, according to which they help to govern the Church, requires that they promote and sponsor Christian schools. Therefore one who is opposed to these schools cannot serve in the Consistory. He cannot do what is expected of him. Even those who assume a lukewarm attitude toward the Christian school movement are not desirable candidates for the Consistory. We should, of course, remember that every case must be judged on its own merits. A general rule in this matter should never be made (The Church Order Commentary, p. 99). □

When Thou Sittest in Thy House

Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

The Reformed Wife: Mother (1)

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents (Hebrews 11:23).

But there was one influence for highest good — constant, unvarying, and most powerful. It was that of a "mother in Israel" (Alfred Edersheim).

The three first years of life...are often...a period decisive for after life. It requires no stretch of imagination to conceive what the child Moses would learn at his mother's knee... (Alfred Edersheim).

What an encouragement is suggested by this record to mothers — to make the

very most of the early years during which children are confided to their charge. The circumstances must be exceptional indeed under which that charge can be entrusted to others (F.B. Meyer).

For all of you mothers who have diligently trained and instructed your very young children, taught them Zion's songs, and have spoken to them of the majesty and holiness of God from infancy on, but who are grieved over an unrepentant son or daughter, may Jehovah comfort your sad heart. Perhaps even yet God will bring such a wayward child to his spiritual knees. Nevertheless, the well-known words of Proverbs 22:6 are true, "Train up a child (infant) in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

* * * * *

He was only three months old, but it was not too early to begin teaching him all the ways of God and the traditions of his people. In fact, it was urgent that she should do this. Her infant son's time with her was to be brief. Perhaps she would be able to keep him through his toddler years, but much longer than that she could not be certain. Times were hard in Goshen. The state no longer looked benevolently on one's having children. And yet, God had miraculously heard and answered her prayer when she had defied the king's command and saved her well-favored child alive. Once again, He had granted a reprieve as He had done when she had weighed the king's edict against the command of God to conceive and bear children. She resolved to trust in the living God whose promises had been handed down to her from the lips of her ancestors.

And so, she began. She told him first in most simple language the treasured story of origins: how God, the Yahweh of His people, had created the whole world out of nothing. As her son grew a little older, she elaborated on the stories of the creation of the world, telling him what God had created on each successive day. She told of Adam and Eve, their falling into sin, and their redemption through the blood of the slain Lamb. She detailed the

account of the Great Flood, telling him of Noah and the animals which filled the ark, and the redemption by water. She recounted in vivid detail the history of his God-fearing, illustrious forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Above all, the mother tried to instill within her young son a love for the God of Israel and the persecuted people to whom He had covenanted Himself.

With only the spoken stories handed down to her, not even possessing the little parchment rolls which would later be used in Israel's history for the instruction of the children, she began the careful training of his memory. She taught him the poetic verses, the majestic benedictions, and the wise sayings of her people which she herself could recite flawlessly. She impressed them upon her young son with every skill at her disposal. Her son would be "a well-plastered cistern, which would not let even a single drop [of his mother's instruction, MBL] escape" (A. Eder-sheim). She filled him with the sacred thoughts of Jehovah, even while many of her own people served other gods in Egypt (Joshua 24:14), forgot the Sabbath, spurned the sacrifices, and despised that most significant sign of God's covenant with His people, circumcision.

Oh! the times were dark and evil during which this God-fearing Levite mother struggled to preserve the best religious traditions of her people and teach them to her son. Many of the Hebrews were filled with anxiety and despair during these oppressive days; they went about their business furtively; they attended to the needs of their families perfunctorily. But she was not afraid of the king's commandment. Inside her humble reed hut, within easy walking distance of the city of Memphis, center of Egypt's national life and Pharaoh's opulent court, she observed the exceeding fairness (Acts 7:20) of this child and was assured that he was a goodly, that is, a covenant child and that God would care for him.

Ever conscious that her time with him was short, she intensified

her instruction. She taught him to obey. She taught him to respect authority, even as she earnestly prayed that her son would never really consider himself the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And although it pained her, she disciplined him, for what benefit was an unruly son either to her or to Pharaoh's daughter?

She taught him to pray and to place his complete dependence upon Jehovah. First, as is natural, she folded his tiny hands and prayed for him as he stared blankly into her eyes, not understanding this strange ritual, even straining to separate his hands. Yet, his mother knew instinctively the importance of teaching this little one to pray. Soon, first out of habit, he began to pray, lisping his first halting utterances. Later, she expanded the prayer giving more content and meaning to it, teaching him not only to ask for things but also to extol God's great name in his prayers. It was so important that he learn to pray. She would not always be there to guide and direct his prayer times. She molded his prayer life so that it would become "habit" for him — a habit that would not be easy to forget or break. And how many young people today, gone astray, would have to admit that they have never forgotten their early prayers and that their conscience smites them each time they crawl into bed or eat without praying?

At a very tender age she taught him to sing the songs of Zion. At first, she sang for him the songs which she had learned from her parents and grandparents. She crooned to him the joyful alleluias to God. She hummed soft, lilting lullabies to him, with a catch in her own throat because she knew the power of Egypt's seductive music. The mother was totally unaware that the beautiful music which welled out of her soul as she worked inside her simple home would be the wellspring out of which not only this babe but also her older daughter, Miriam, would render magnificent paeans of praise to God. (Read Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32 for the Song

of Moses; Exodus 15:20, 21 for the Song of Miriam.)

Did her young son understand these deep truths? Was his tender heart able to grasp her instruction? Her faith clung to God. He, Who was able to save her son from the Nile's dark and watery grave, was able to secure her instruction on her child's heart.

Somehow, with a faith knit to God, this mother knew that the child she cradled in her arms would live to see the demise of this wicked and cruel king, and that the cruel bondage under which even now her own husband groaned in the scorching Egyptian sun was soon coming to an end. Had she not been told by her forefather, Abraham? "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years...and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13, 14). She, as well as all her people who had not assimilated with the Egyptians, was watching and waiting and counting. Surely, deliverance was imminent! History's clock was winding down. God would certainly deliver His chosen people with a mighty hand. And her tiny son must learn to love and extol this mighty God, so that the ineffectual, yet exalted mummylike gods of Egypt, whom he would be tutored to respect, would ultimately have no appeal for him.

It was out of that same faith that she had woven a little basket out of papyrus rushes and set her son in the water, knowing full well that Pharaoh's daughter and her retinue came regularly to that location to bathe. The claim might even be made that, in a way, she had obeyed the king's command: she had placed her son in the water. Later, when Pharaoh's daughter would name her foster son, his name would bear that very meaning, "drawn out of the water." At that time, as in the conception of her son in those earlier ill-fated days, she had placed her confidence in God to work out His plan and His purpose His way. He had not failed her yet. He would not

fail her now. She was not afraid. Even then, she had been confident that something of import would occur, for she had told her daughter Miriam to observe "what would be done to him."

She taught him unstintingly. She held back nothing. She taught him each day as if it were the last day that she would have opportunity to do so, until finally the day arrived when Pharaoh's royal officials came to take her little son away. With a prayer on her lips and a monumental faith in God, she watched him go.

Now Egypt's priests, teachers, and philosophers would do their utmost to train him, grooming him for Egypt's throne. But the mother was not afraid. She had trained him well. The nurture which he had received for three or four years at his mother's breast was woven into the very fabric of his soul. No stray threads would be sewn through it. Egypt's education and mores, the intrigues and wickedness of its court, the gods Ra and Isis would hold no fascination for him. All his instruction in mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry; all his knowledge of the noble skills of athletics, war, and hunting; all the luxuries that he enjoyed as a privileged prince; and all the priceless treasures of Egypt would continue to be his if only he would agree to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He refused.

For the child had listened to his mother. Indeed, he was a proper child (Heb. 11:23). He had absorbed her instruction. He had heeded her discipline. He never forgot the early training which she had so diligently given him.

And as God has promised fruit upon such instruction, when this handsome young man came to years, he chose for God and embraced Christ because he had an eye for the heavenly reward of those who are faithful to Jehovah.

The mother?
Jochebed.
Her son?
Moses. □

Christ Victorious

Oh, days of sickness, grief, and pain,
What bring ye in your mournful train?

Grey hairs, old age before its time—
The breaking down of manhood's prime,
The trembling hand, the fainting heart,
Bruises and wounds to throb and smart,
The nerve unstrung, the sleepless brain;
Oh, these come boldly in your train.

But days of sickness, grief, and pain,
Do these alone make up your train?
Not so! not so! The ranks between
Submission's gracious form is seen;
And with the boldest of the hand
Sweet patience ventures hand in hand,
While faith, Christ's honor to maintain,
Rides, dauntless, mid your hostile train.

Come, then, wild troop of griefs and pains,
And riot on my Lord's domain!
Where you lay waste another Hand
A firmer fabric long has planned;
What you destroy, Faith's radiant smile
Declares is for a little while!
And Christ himself shall come to reign
Victorious o'er your helpless train.

—S.B. Nov. 1,, 1927

Church and State

Mr. James Lanting

State Supreme Court Holds Church Liable for Discipline of Parishioner After Withdrawal of Membership

State Supreme Court Holds Church Liable for Discipline of Parishioner After Withdrawal of Membership

After she wrote a letter to the Elders unequivocally withdrawing her membership from the Church of Christ, the Elders continued their disciplinary actions against her. During Sunday services the Elders read to the congregation those Scriptures which the Parishioner violated. This exposure of her private life, done without her consent, was unprotected by the First Amendment.

Majority opinion,
Guinn v. Collinsville Church of Christ.

Churches are afforded great latitude on members or former members when they impose discipline: I therefore would hold the Elders of the Church of Christ are free to discipline Parishioners as a church member (and former member) under the protection of the First Amendment without state interference and Parishioner may not escape such discipline by unilaterally withdrawing her membership.

Justice J. Hodges,
dissenting opinion in
Guinn v. Collinsville Church of Christ

Mr. Lanting, a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, is a practicing attorney.

Five years after she became a member of the Collinsville Church of Christ in Collinsville, Oklahoma, the elders of her church confronted Marian Guinn with a rumor that she was having sexual relations with a male resident of Collinsville who was not a member of the church. During a second meeting with the elders, she admitted committing fornication, and agreed to consider ending this illicit relationship. A few weeks later, the elders again met with her and told her that if she did not repent of her continuing fornication, the church would begin its "withdrawal of fellowship" disciplinary process.

At this point she realized that the elders intended to inform the congregation of her sin. She immediately wrote a letter to the elders imploring them not to mention her name except to tell the congregation that she had withdrawn from membership. Several days later she met again with the elders and attempted to dissuade them from divulging her private life to the congregation.

The elders informed her that withdrawing membership from the congregation was doctrinally impossible and that they could not halt the disciplinary sanctions being carried out against her. The Church of Christ believes that all its members are a family; one can be born into a family but can never truly withdraw from it. Accordingly, they instructed her that a member can voluntarily join the

Church of Christ but cannot voluntarily withdraw from it.

Ignoring her request, during the next two Sundays the elders announced her name, read the scriptures she had violated, and instructed the congregation to encourage her to repent of her sin and return to the church. As part of the same disciplinary process, her elders sent notification of her transgressions to four other area Church of Christ congregations to be read aloud during Sunday services.

Mrs. Guinn then brought suit against the Collinsville Church of Christ and its elders, alleging that the church had wrongfully publicly branded her a fornicator. She charged the church with the invasion of privacy and outrageous conduct causing mental distress.

Upon trial, a jury brought back a verdict against the church and awarded her damages of \$390,000. The church appealed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court, which held in a landmark decision that the elders' discipline of their parishioner prior to her withdrawal letter was constitutionally protected, but the church's discipline after her request for termination of membership was not immune to state tort laws.

Pre-withdrawal Discipline

In a lengthy and scholarly opinion, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that First Amendment's "free exercise" clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof") "shielded

the church's pre-withdrawal, religiously-motivated discipline." The court ruled that when people voluntarily join a church for their spiritual welfare, they freely consent to the doctrinal and disciplinary tenets held by the church. When one joins a church, one also impliedly consents to the government of the church and "are bound to submit to it."

Thus, under the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment, the courts may not interfere in a church's discipline of its members, so long as that discipline does not constitute a "threat to public safety, peace or order." Accordingly, the elders' visits confronting her with her alleged sin of fornication and their demand for her repentance was constitutionally protected as "free exercise" of religion.

Post-withdrawal Discipline

Not entitled to such constitutional protection, however, were the church's disciplinary actions after she requested withdrawal of membership. The court held that when the church received her letter requesting withdrawal of membership, she thereby also withdrew her consent to submit to spiritual supervision. Thus, the disciplinary actions taken by the elders thereafter were "outside the purview of First Amendment protection."

Her letter of withdrawal, said the court, "effectively revoked any consent" to further ecclesiastical supervision, and the elders had no right to publish before the congregation private facts about her life. Accordingly, the court held that with regard to the elders' post-withdrawal publication of her fornication, a jury may find that such publication to her former church and four other area congregations constituted invasion of privacy and intentional infliction of mental distress.

The Church's Defense

The elders argued that the Church of Christ had no doctrinal provision for withdrawal of membership. According to its beliefs, a member remains a part of the congregation for life. Because disciplinary procedures against the parishioner had already begun be-

fore she withdrew her membership, the elders argued that her attempted withdrawal could not hinder their constitutionally protected religious discipline.

The court rejected this argument. Finding her letter an effective withdrawal, the court held that "Just as freedom to worship is protected by the First Amendment, so also is the liberty to recede from one's religious allegiance." The Constitution clearly safeguards the freedom to join a church, said the court, as well as the freedom to withdraw from a church.

The court also rejected the church's argument that she had waived her right to withdraw, since there was no evidence that there was a "knowing and intelligent" waiver of such a right to withdraw when she joined the church.

Church and State

This landmark case exemplifies an alarming trend in recent years of parishioners suing their pastors, elders, and churches for various civil wrongs (alienation of affection, child abuse, clergy malpractice, invasion of privacy, etc.). Although this trend is regrettable and embarrassing for the church, it is nonetheless a reality that must be faced by churches and pastors in the coming decades.

The *Guinn* case illustrates, of course, the perennial tension between church and state. Although the *Guinn* decision is technically binding only in Oklahoma, this court's scholarly and lengthy analysis of the constitutional limits on church discipline will be very influential in future decisions in many other states that confront this issue in the future. Accordingly, a few implications of this important case are noteworthy.

First, churches will be pleased to know that the courts will undoubtedly exercise judicial restraint and refuse to interfere with ecclesiastical discipline of church members. The *Guinn* court unequivocally held that membership implies submission to church discipline, and such discipline is constitutionally protected under the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment.

On the other hand, the court's

decision is very troublesome to the extent that it holds that once a parishioner requests withdrawal of membership, any further actions by the elders or the church is outside constitutional protection. In effect, the court ignored the Church of Christ's doctrine that a member may not unilaterally withdraw from the church once disciplinary procedures have commenced.

Finally, the court made it clear that if any church embraces such a doctrine of the impermissibility of post-discipline unilateral withdrawal of membership, its discipline thereafter will be subject to court scrutiny, unless the parishioner had previously given a "knowing and intelligent" waiver of his right to disassociate himself from the church at any time.

The relationship of church and state has always been a thorny and sensitive issue, and the aftermath of the *Guinn* decision should be observed very carefully by churches, elders, and pastors engaged in ecclesiastical discipline in our litigious society. □

An Evening Prayer

Dear God, another day is done
And I have seen the golden sun
Swing in the arch from east to west
And sink behind the pines to rest.
I thank Thee that Thou gavest me
The power of sight that I may see
The tinted glories of Thy skies,
An earthly glimpse of paradise;
The power to hear the evening
breeze
Swelling in organ harmonies;
The power to feel the tender grasp
Of loving hands in friendship's
clasp;
I thank Thee for these gifts to me,
But one thing more I ask of Thee;
From out Thy bounteous, gracious
hand
Give me the power to understand,
To understand – to sympathize –
To note the pain in other's eyes;
To have the power rightly to read
The kindly motive of each deed.
And this I humbly ask of Thee
Because I know Thou lovest me.

—Author Unknown

From Holy Writ
Rev. George Lubbers

Exposition of Isaiah 6 (3)

Verses 8, 9 – “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

You will remember that we have written two earlier essays in Isaiah 6:1-7. Two things we there noticed and underscored. (1) The time of the vision – that it was in the year the king Uzziah died. We noticed that this is very significant information. It sets this vision as being meaningful that, whereas no king of Judah might minister at the altar in the Old Testament Temple, in this temple we have a priest, who is also King. He is a *king-priest*, after the order of Melchisedec. For He who sitteth on the throne is Adonai. (2) We noticed that this temple in the vision is not at all like the tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness. In that tabernacle none could minister in it, when God came into the entire tabernacle and shrouded it with His glorious presence in the Cloud, the Shekinah of glory. Moses, who had seen the glory of God on the Mount from a place in the cleft of the rock, could not be in this tabernacle when God dedicated it with His presence. However, in the vision Isaiah sees another glory. It is the glory of the exalted Son of man,

Who was lifted up on the Cross and entered into the glory of the Mediator of God and man, the man Jesus Christ.

In this essay we shall see that *grace and glory* of the Son of man, high and lifted up, the forerunner Who entered for us within the veil, so that we have an anchor, sure and steadfast within the holy place! (Heb. 6:19, 20).

THE NATURE OF THE GLORY IN THE TEMPLE IN THE VISION

There are a number of Old Testament Scripture passages which we ought to read from our Bible; they should be read carefully and compared. They are Isaiah 40:5, 60:1; Ezekiel 43:2-5; Haggai 2:3, 7, 9 (Heb. 12:26); and Zechariah 2:5, 8. Space forbids us to exegete these passages; however, we shall weave these passages into our exposition of Isaiah 6.

As we have already stated above, this is the glory of the Son of man (John 12:37-41). That this glory is really far more glorious than any glory of the Old Testament forms of God-appearances (Theophanies) we see from the two occasions in the history of the salvation (heilgeschiedenis) of Israel.

The first is at the time when the tabernacle is raised up for the first time, and the priesthood of Aaron will minister in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38). So great was that glory that Moses, Aaron, and the priests had to leave the tabernacle. For God symbolically came to dwell in the most holy place upon the mercy seat on the Ark of the Testimony. That was the glory of the letter of the law that kills, while here in Isaiah's vision it is the glory which eclipsed all the Old Testa-

ment glory, in that it proclaimed a ministry of reconciliation, which changes the believers from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the Lord (II Cor. 3:1 ff.).

It is noteworthy that, from the point of view of being a glory of grace, the beautiful temple of Solomon was no advancement. Here too the priests were virtually driven from this glory when the glory of God appeared. Beautiful as this temple was, it was not yet the real tabernacling of God with His people. This temple could not be the fit abode of the God of glory. That must wait till the Word (LOGOS) became flesh, the word who dwelt (tabernacled) amongst us, *full of grace and glory*.

The great guiding principle, which we must ever keep clearly in mind, is that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth became through Jesus Christ.” Such is the key of knowledge here properly to exegete Isaiah 6 in its total scope. Only then will we understand that we are here dealing with what Peter called the more sure word of prophecy *which casts its light across the ages* until Christ shall come in His Parousia, ever to dwell with us, so that we may behold His glory (John 17:24). Then will the high-priestly prayer be fulfilled: Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!

We should notice rather carefully that in this temple-vision we have projected the ideal, final glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is the glory of Adonai, as sung by the ministering Seraphims: holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory. That the entire earth shall be full of

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the glory of the temple, and of the King on the throne, surely signifies that then all the nations shall be blessed in Abraham and in his Seed, the Christ. God will spread his tent, widen it, so that the gentile lands shall also share in its glory (Isaiah 54:1-3). For in this temple in the vision the middle wall of partition is lacking. The glory is not hid behind the veil in the temple, but the entire temple is now a holy of holies. It prefigures the time when it shall be manifested that the way into the most holy place is opened (Heb. 9:8).

Even though this temple can be the dwelling-place of all the believers, as a holy nation, a royal priesthood, yea they shall be the very spiritual temple itself (I Peter 2:4, 5), they can only dwell there as those who are cleansed from their sin, whose iniquity is pardoned. Of this we have a case-study in Isaiah, the prophet. When he sees this glory of the Son of man he becomes virtually "undone." He says really, "Lord, I perish before a holy God, as a sinner of the deepest dye!" He stands here in utter helplessness, emptiness, full of a sinful heart, from which, as he is by nature, no good can come. But that is not all. Isaiah had also received a good heart. He is also a "good man" who out of a "good heart bringeth forth good things." Out of the abundance of grace abounding, he confesses his own sins and the sins of the people. The deep cry is that of the publican in the parable, who went to the temple and who prayed, "God be merciful to me." May the blood of propitiation sprinkled by the high-priest on the mercy-seat be my complete covering (Matt. 12:35a and Luke 18:13ff.).

THE LIVE COALS FROM THE ALTAR ADMINISTERED BY A MINISTERING SPIRIT (vs. 7)

What a beautiful, touching healing of grace. Live coals from the Altar of God in the temple, where the great glory of grace is manifested. Here is the world which echoes and re-echoes in our believing hearts and is as music to our ears: "Now where remission of these is there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, bold-

ness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience . . ." (Hebrews 10:18-22)!

The great high priest which we have, Who was made higher than the heavens, sends one of His Seraphims to bring a live coal from the altar to touch Isaiah's mouth. Isaiah had confessed to be a man of unclean lips. This implied that back of these lips was a heart which needed to be purified by the Holy Spirit, Who sanctifies both the inward and the outward man. Here stands Isaiah in all his undoneness. And he is healed with the healing of the wings of Adonai, his Savior-God. What all the Old Testament sacrifices of every age could not achieve was miraculously realized. His iniquity was forgiven and his sins were blotted out. They are cast in the sea of God's everlasting forgetfulness!

O blessed forgiveness!

All Isaiah's sorrows are turned into joy, and his fears are removed. Now he can stand in the very presence of a glory which became his salvation!

Now he can serve his God in a pure conscience. When he speaks

of forgiveness and the power of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, he knows whereof he speaks. He has tasted that the LORD is good and full of kind compassion. He can "go home justified." No power in earth or heaven can bring any charge against him. Now he can be truly obedient.

HERE I (AM) SEND ME, LORD!

What an evidence of new obedience, of one who has the law written in his heart. Now he can say to all the wicked to whom he will need to preach: Who of you condemns me? There is one who judges me, even the Lord of glory in heaven, dwelling in the holy of holies as the high priest which becomes Him!

Isaiah does not yet know the full implication, the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the ministry which he must fulfil in Israel. He will be told shortly. He is now dedicated to the ministry, and he will be God's faithful *kerugg*, His authorized minister. For he is as prophet, whose mouth has been sanctified to preach, come what may! He is in safe hands, in God's hands! □

Book Reviews

WHEN THE MORNING CAME, by Piet Prins. Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: Inheritance Publications, 1989. 158 pages. \$8.50 US, paper. (Reviewed by the Editor.)

This is reading for Reformed children, young people, and (if I am any indication) their parents.

It is the story of 12-year old Martin Meulenberg and his family during the Roman Catholic persecution of the Reformed Christians in The Netherlands about the year 1600. A peddler, secretly distribut-

ing Reformed books from village to village, drops a copy of Guido de Bres' *True Christian Confession* — a booklet forbidden by the Roman Catholic authorities. An evil neighbor sees the book and informs the Roman Catholic sheriff. The result is that Martin and his parents must flee to Emden, where they will be safe. On the way, Martin must hide in a hayloft. The soldiers search for the "heretics" in the hay. "To the right and left he pushed the (pitch)fork deep into

the hay, slowly making his way to where Boudewyn and Martin lay hidden. The two remained motionless. Martin's heart beat...hard.... Suddenly Boudewyn felt a cold steel tooth of the fork go through his shirt sleeve. The steel grazed his skin...."

Although fiction, the story is based on the history of the terrible persecution of the Dutch Reformed believers by the Roman Catholic Church and the great struggle of the Dutch for freedom during the "eighty years war" from 1556-1648. Of this history, the historian, John Lothrop Motley, has written, in his *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, that it was the greatest of all the struggles for religious and political liberty. Everyone of Dutch ancestry and especially everyone who loves the Reformed faith should know this history. It cries out to God in heaven that the Dutch Reformed today, both in The Netherlands and in North America, abandon the faith for which scores of thousands gave their lives in the 16th century. deBres' *True Christian Confession* — our Belgic Confession of Faith — is despised by the "Reformed" as outdated and false.

The story is exciting. The reader learns something of the important history of the Reformed church in The Netherlands. And the spiritual things of the Reformed faith are matter-of-factly worked into the story as part of the lives of the believers. In the flight to Emden, one of the group is killed by the pursuing soldiers. The rest bury him under a large oak, near the dike. They begin to sing Psalm 103:

The Lord has dealt with us in great compassion,

Not punished us according to transgression.

High as the soaring heavens, without end,

So great His mercy is to those who fear Him,

And He the sins of all those who revere Him

Removes as far as east from west extends....

"The little group slowly walked back to the lifeboat. When they reached the top of the dike, Martin turned around with tears in his eyes to have one last look. The sun

had broken through while they were singing. Its light now filtered through the leaves of the tree on the place where Hinne Geertsz' body was buried and where it would remain until the day of resurrection...."

There will be several volumes in the series. The series is called, "Struggle for Freedom Series." *When the Morning Came* is the first volume.

These are books for your children and grandchildren. Our grade schools should have a set or two of the series in their library.

Young Roelof A. Janssen of Inheritance Publications is to be commended for publishing such Reformed literature.

In Canada, the book is available from Inheritance Publications, Box 154, Neerlandia, Alberta T0G 1R0. The telephone number is (403) 674-3949.

The outlet in the United States is Inheritance Publications, 2207 76th Street, Caledonia, MI 49316. □

THE AGONY OF DECEIT, by Michael Horton, editor. Moody Press, 1990, 284 pp. (Reviewed by Rev. Ronald VanOverloop.)

The subtitle of the book — "What Some TV Preachers are Really Teaching" — describes its contents. It is the desire of the Rev. Mr. Michael Horton, pastor of St. Luke's Reformed Episcopal Church in Anaheim, California, that this volume concern itself, not with the character and moral scandals of the popular television preachers, but with "the rotted foundation under so many of the popular ministries: errant beliefs, distorted doctrine, and unsound convictions with regard to the heart and soul of biblical faith."

The editor writes, "The contributors of this volume are concerned ultimately not with air-conditioned dog houses or sexual dalliances but with the *real* scandal: heresy." The editor, in one of the chapters he authors which is entitled "The TV Gospel," compares many of the doctrinal positions of TV preachers with the Scriptures. He concludes, "Are such doctrines as those considered in this chapter essential for

the average person? Need we burden the viewer with such theological details? Indeed we must. The viewer must sense that the issue at stake is not how satisfied he is with God and His plan, but how satisfied God is with him. Such doctrines are not theological details. They are the *big picture*. Salvation is God-centered, not human-centered. The viewer must not be flattered, but confronted."

Among the contributors to this volume are Dr. R.C. Sproul, Dr. Walter Martin, and the recently retired Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. C. Everett Koop. The contributors who might be more familiar to those in Dutch Reformed circles are Dr. Joel Nederhood of "The Back to God Hour" and "Faith 20"; Dr. Quentin Schultze, a Calvin College communications professor; Dr. Henry Krabbendam, a professor of New Testament at Covenant College; and Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, who is professor of church history at Westminster Theological Seminary in California.

Without fear, and yet with care, the different authors repeatedly speak of the "another gospel" which they hear coming from the TV preachers. It is their collective desire that the TV preachers be brought into account and examined, not for their morals, but for the contents of their preaching — is it biblical? The authors contend that the most significant problem plaguing televangelism is not a moral and ethical decline, but a gross deficiency in its doctrinal foundations. They are shouting "HERESY!" This is the strength of this book.

Early in the volume R.C. Sproul, in a chapter entitled "A Serious Charge," shows why the word "heresy," though strong, is legitimately used. He concludes, "There is such a thing as heresy. The tragedy is that it pervades the electronic church." In his chapter, "Settling for Mud Pies," Art Lindsley declares, "These preachers appeal to our selfish instincts, which may be momentarily satisfied by promises of success, unending happiness, and good times, when all the while our deepest needs, our

truest needs go untouched." W. Robert Godfrey correctly points out the serious danger that the religious TV programs have formed their own "church," to the point of denying the necessity and indispensability of the local church. He details the biblical basis for the local church and describes the failure of the "TV Church." Quentin Schultze questions the possibility of a successful marriage of television and evangelism because television turns religion into public entertainment, into a performance. Therefore, "television is biased toward the more emotionally dramatic" charismatic form of worship. Joel Nederhood, in his chapter "Send No Money to Martin Luther," finds much similarity in the cries of today's televangelists and Tetzels of Luther's day.

The book accomplishes well its goal of exposing "the errant beliefs, distorted doctrines, and unsound convictions of some televangelists." From that perspective, *The Agony of Deceit* is interesting reading. □

COMMENTARY ON MATTHEW, by John A. Broadus. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1990, pp. liii-610. \$18.95 (paper), \$24.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.)

One would be hard pressed to find a more thorough and detailed exposition of the *Gospel According to Matthew* than this commentary by Broadus. Broadus was a competent exegete who was fully committed to the inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture. This commentary is a phrase by phrase exposition of *Matthew* from the Greek. It would be useful for both lay persons and those able to work with the Greek.

John Albert Broadus (1827-1895) was born in Virginia and educated at the university of Virginia. A Baptist scholar, teacher, and preacher, Broadus was assistant professor of Latin and Greek at the University of Virginia as well as pastor of a Baptist church. In 1859 he became professor of New Testament Interpretation and Homiletics (art and science of preaching) at the newly founded Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary and served as its president from 1859 until his death. Broadus also wrote a book entitled, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, which has become a classic in the field of Homiletics.

The Commentary is enhanced by a lengthy introduction and by very helpful author, topic, term, person, and place indices.

Though Broadus was Arminian in his theology, the Reformed reader will be able to use this commentary with profit.

Kregel Publications is to be commended for making this commentary, which was first published in 1886, available for today's Bible student. □

Report from Classis West

Classis West met on Wednesday, March 7, 1990, in South Holland, Illinois. Classis met in two sessions and finished its business at about 3:00 Wednesday afternoon. Rev. C. Haak served as President of Classis and Rev. R. Dykstra as Clerk. As President of the previous Classis, Rev. R. Dykstra also led Classis in its opening devotions.

Most of the business conducted by Classis was routine. Classical appointments were scheduled for Hope PRC of Isabel, SD and for the Randolph, WI PRC. Nine subsidy requests totaling \$107,081.00 were approved for 1990 and 1991 and will be forwarded to Synod, 1990 for its approval.

Various elections were also conducted. Rev. M. DeVries was re-appointed to the Classical Committee,

Rev. R. VanOverloop was elected as delegate ad examina, and Revs. D. Kuiper and A. denHartog as Church Visitors. Rev. R. Hanco was re-elected as Stated Clerk of Classis. The ministers chosen as delegates to Synod, 1990, were Revs. A. denHartog, C. Haak, D. Kuiper, and R. VanOverloop. Elder delegates chosen were Mr. J. Flikkema, M. Poortenga, L. Regnerus, and E. VanVoorthuysen.

One congregation was advised by Classis in closed session to proceed with the discipline of a member.

The next meeting of Classis West is scheduled for September 5, 1990, in South Holland, Illinois. □

Rev. R. Hanco
Stated Clerk

For new subscribers, it is available for one year at half the subscription price!

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

April 15, 1990

Mission Activities

In a letter dated March 6, Rev. G. VanBaren, who along with his wife and daughter spent six weeks in Northern Ireland on behalf of our churches, writes to his congregation in Hudsonville, MI concerning some of his observations and impressions regarding the work there.

He writes, "I have been especially impressed by comments made by some of these people of their great gratitude for the help they have received through the preaching of the Word. One claimed that they had grown spiritually 'by leaps and bounds' in an understanding of God's Word." Rev. VanBaren was told too "that these people regarded themselves to be the fruit of the mission work of the P.R.C. It is their desire and prayer that this work may continue for the spiritual profit of themselves, their children, and so that a sound Reformed testimony may continue there."

The following is taken from a letter received by First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI from Rev. Leonard Williams, pastor of Belmont PRC in Jamaica, W.I.

"Our classis met on December 28 and one of the decisions made was that Charles Tomlinson should be examined by this classis meeting. He preached a sermon and afterwards answered the questions he was asked. After hearing him

preach and answer the questions, classis declared him qualified for the ministry of the Word and sacraments within our P.R. Churches in Jamaica. We thank the Lord for giving us another 'beautiful feet to bring the gospel' to 'as many as the Lord our God shall call through the preaching of His Word.'

"We as churches face hardships because we are a small denomination and do not have enough finances and leaders to help promote (by the power and help of God) this Reformed truth as it should be; nevertheless, we thank God for what He has given and it is our prayer and hope that we may grow spiritually and in numbers, and that God's covenant may be seen and may flourish in our churches according to God's promise in the line of continued generations."

May that be our prayer as well.

Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma spent two weeks in Venice, FL evaluating the area, as to the possibility of creating a mission field there in the future.

Congregational Highlights

It hardly seems possible, but six years ago the PRC of Grandville, MI was organized, and for those six years they have held divine worship services in the auditorium of the Grandville High School.

Well, you can imagine their joy when on Sunday morning, March 11, they met together for the first time in their new church sanctuary at 4320 40th St., Grandville, MI 49418. Their pastor, Rev. J. Kortering, chose for that happy occasion to preach from Psalm 27:4 on the theme, "Dwelling in the House of the Lord." Dedication of Grandville was tentatively set for

March 27, but more about that next time.

The Choral Society of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI presented their annual spring program on March 4 after the evening service.

School Activities

The city council of Redlands, CA has given final approval to Hope Christian School to proceed with the construction of an addition to their school building. Construction began on February 24 and will consist of one large multi-purpose room which will also see duty as a classroom.

Ministerial Calls

The congregation of the Randolph PRC in Randolph, WI will soon be calling (they no doubt have by now) a pastor from the trio of Revs. Cammenga, DeVries, and Korterling. □

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On Prayer Day, March 14, 1990, our Heavenly Father, in His sovereign good pleasure, called MELANIE ANNE FEENSTRA beloved infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ryan Feenstra, to her eternal home in glory. The consistory and congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan extend their heartfelt sympathy to the Feenstra and Wassink families.

May they find comfort within the care of the great Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom" Isaiah 40:11. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, President John VanUffelen, Clerk

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Choral Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to our fellow members, Rick and Sue Noorman and family in the loss of their loved one: **RENAE SUZANNE NOORMAN**.

May they find comfort from the words of Psalter 150:4, "Thy burden now cast on the Lord, And He shall thy weakness sustain; The righteous who trust in His word Unmoved shall forever remain."

Gord Schipper, President

Karen Daling, Secretary Jenison, MI

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On March 20, 1990 the Lord took to her eternal rest a beloved and aged member of our congregation, **MRS. ESTHER GRIESS**.

We extend heartfelt sympathy to her numerous relatives, but especially to her son, Mr. Paul Griess.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" Romans 14:8.

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President
Glen Griess, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Noorman in the loss of their dear grand daughter **RENAE SUZANNE NOORMAN**.

May they receive comfort in God's Word, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" Malachi 3:17.

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Sandra Tinklenberg, Secretary

Jenison, MI

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 13, 1990 **GIL AND GRACE SCHIMMEL** celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents, and for the love and instruction they have given us.

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them and strengthen them in the years ahead.

Jim & Carol Schimmel
Dan & Judy Schimmel
Hank & Deb VanderWaal
Steve & Ruth Kerkstra
Dave & Shelly Schimmel
Tim Schimmel
Tom Schimmel

21 grandchildren Hope, Walker, MI

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Permanent Committee of the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Neal Pastoor in the death of his sister, **CAROL PASTOOR**.

"The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace" Psalm 29:11.

Charles Kregel, President
Dave Harbach, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to Rick and Sue Noorman, Michael, Joel, and Denise, whose 3-year-old daughter and sister, **RENAE SUZANNE NOORMAN** was taken to her heavenly home on March 19, 1990. May our Heavenly Father comfort them with the assurance that His grace will supply all their needs.

"...He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" Isaiah 40:11.

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Ruth Kaptein, Secretary Jenison, MI

FAMILY FORUM

Biblical Teaching on Sex, Single Life, Marriage, and Divorce

First Protestant Reformed Church
2800 Michigan N.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan
(1/2 mile west of East Beltline)

Tuesday, April 10, at 8 PM: *Sex for Christians Outside and Within Marriage*

Tuesday, April 24, at 8 PM: *Honorable Single Life and Married Life*

Tuesday, May 1, at 8 PM: *Desertion, Divorce, and Remarriage*

Speaker: Prof. David Engelsma
Professor of Theology at the Protestant Reformed Seminary
General public invited to attend.

Question and answer period after each session.

Refreshments provided.

Tapes available upon request.

Call (616) 364-0953 for information or send request to:

Church Extension Committee
First Protestant Reformed Church
2800 Michigan N.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506