

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

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Significant Anniversaries

**See Editorial – "Deckers and Hankos Feted"
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In This Issue...

Propositional revelation.
What is that?

Two of the writers for the rubric "Taking Heed to the Doctrine" will together deal with Reformed doctrine following the order of the traditional six loci of Reformed theology. Rev. Kamps, however, is leading off with a series of articles not on the doctrine of God but on the doctrine of Scripture. He does that for good reason. For the truth is that we are virtually surrounded by a sea of *relativism*. Within the same denomination, Rev. Kamps points out, there are men who hold to absolutely contradictory opinions about who God is. And to what can this state of affairs be traced but to a rejection of the Scriptures as "propositional revelation."

If God's revelation is not propositional, if Scripture is not seen to be God's Self-disclosure, then truth can only be relative, then there is little to be said for the writing of creeds, then this series of articles on the doctrines of Reformed theology is an exercise in futility. This must be established first, therefore, that Scripture is authoritative, that God in the Scriptures reveals to us the truth about Himself, the truth which is not discoverable by any natural means or by any human intellect, no matter how brilliant. Scripture *commands* us what to believe about God, about Christ, and about ourselves. Only if we maintain this, only if we appeal to Scripture as our divinely inspired standard of truth, only if we hold to "propositional revelation," do we have an *anchor* for our faith. The doctrine of Scripture, therefore, is *first*.

Read "Is the Bible the Word of God?" □

—DD

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Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

Love That Reconciles

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Matthew 5:21-26

There is more than one way to kill a person.

Yes, the violent taking of a human life is the most obvious. But

Jesus said, you can kill with anger that is internalized. You can kill with vicious words like *Raca* or *Fool*!

The end result is the same, a human being is decimated, whether physically or psychologically.

Such action ought to be foreign to the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Those who are poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hungering after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers have the power to be free from such evil conduct and attitude. That power is love, the law of the kingdom of heaven.

But, are we free from such action?

You have to answer this for yourself.

In dealing with the subject of murder, Jesus had to contend with the Scribes and Pharisees who had powerful influence upon the people of that day. They taught the people that only the deed of murder was forbidden by the law of Moses. They did this on good authority, for they claimed that they had the "ancients," the men of old time, on their side.

Jesus meets them at the point of controversy, when He says, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time...." These old-timers were the leaders of the people upon the return from captivity in Babylon. During the interval of their absence in a foreign land, the people became influenced by Babylon. They lost the knowledge of their native tongue, Hebrew, and instead became adapted to the Aramaic language. The laws of Moses were written in Hebrew, so the Jews became dependent upon the "scholars," the Scribes, to speak to

them about the law and to explain it to them. Hence Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said...." — i.e., that oral tradition is.... The situation was much like the time of the Reformation when the people did not have the Bible in their native tongue and they depended upon the church to explain things.

This tradition, taught by the Scribes and put into practice by the Pharisees, was summarized by Jesus this way: "Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." On the surface, this appears to conform to the Mosaic law, i.e., the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." So far they are correct, but when they added, "and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment," they express their own commentary on that law. This was in error in two ways. First, they limited infraction to the deed which would get them into trouble. Secondly, they emphasized the judgment (which was the local judge), rather than being concerned about the Judge of heaven and earth. They did this because their concept of the law was in error. They were concerned about the letter of the law rather than the spirit. They focused their attention upon external behavior, rather than on inward attitudes and the condition of the heart. They viewed the keeping of the law as not doing evil, and they conveniently overlooked the doing of good. When the Scribes and Pharisees examined themselves in the light of the sixth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") they concluded, "I have not killed; I did not take the life of my neighbor." This made them look upon themselves as the keepers of the law, righteous

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before God, and therefore self-righteous and better than others.

This aroused righteous indignation in Jesus.

It hath been said..., but I say unto you. That is the contrast. Will we follow the ancients with their tradition of men, or will we listen to Jesus who said, not one jot or one tittle of the law shall pass away, until all be fulfilled. The real issue is the fulfillment of the law by Jesus, the demands of the law required of Him that cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Hence it smells of the sulfur of hell. It requires of Him the sitting at the right hand of God, dispensing the Holy Spirit upon His beloved church, by which the law is written in our hearts.

That law then is not limited to avoiding murder; it includes loving the brother and sister.

Jesus deals with the negative aspect first.

Whoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of the judgment. Jesus does not say that anger is sinful. God Himself is angry with the wicked every day. Jesus was angry with the Pharisees. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26, "be ye angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Anger without cause is sinful anger. It puts us in the wrong. We have no justification for it. The emphasis of this word is also anger that is internalized, when we do the slow burn, when we let our minds play over and over how angry we are at someone, and we have thoughts of contempt and evil about him. At other times, we may vent this anger by name-calling. Jesus uses two illustrations. We might, first of all, call a man "Raca" — a word of contempt used in the days of Jesus. It had the connotation of judging worth, mental ability. At its root it means empty, hence empty-head, stupid, numskull, or, in today's usage, airhead. The other word, "thou fool," is more severe. It judges the brother's character before God. The fool says there is no God. Moses used this terminology when he smote the rock and called Israel "rebels" (Num. 20:10), on account of which

he never entered into the land of Canaan. It is playing God and assassinating another's character.

The concern of Jesus focuses upon the brother (or sister). We may not do this with any neighbor; but particular emphasis falls upon the family of God. This applies to our marriages, the way we treat each other as husband and wife, parent and child, fellow members of the church, our Christian neighbors with whom we work or next to whom we live. Sin against the sixth commandment is not just taking another's life. It has to do with the condition of our heart as it is manifest in the way we treat the neighbor and speak to him or about him.

Accountability for such conduct is before God. Jesus says in verse 22 that whether we are called before the judgment (the local judge which in the day of Jesus had the power to kill by the sword, with the approval of the Roman government) or the council (the Jewish Sanhedrin, which functioned like a supreme court in Jerusalem and had the power to stone to death), ultimately we have to deal with God. He alone has the power of Gehenna, the fires of hell. What a powerful way to expose the Pharisees' concern for men while they ignore the God of the law.

Now Jesus deals with the positive aspect of the law, that is, with love. What better way to demonstrate love than to be reconciled to our brother or sister who has a grievance against us.

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift at the altar and first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." Jesus refers to the act of sacrifice. The people would come with their gift (a lamb, a turtle dove) to the priest at the altar for sacrifice. Part of their worship required spiritual reflection. They had to meditate upon their sins, on how they related to God and their neighbor. Upon doing this, if such a person remembers that his brother has a grievance against him, he must first be reconciled.

Jesus deliberately chose to say "hath ought against thee." Sometimes we have something against our brother. This we are instructed to resolve in Matthew 18. But, here, we either know or imagine that our brother has something against us. We might be in the wrong, as far as he is concerned, and this causes a rupture in our relationship. Probably he is not on speaking terms. He might be avoiding us. We are suspicious that something is wrong. This would be the easiest for us to brush aside, for we could easily reason, "That's his problem. If he doesn't like the way I live, let him come to me." This applies to our home life within marriage, to our dealing with our children, and to our dealings within the church.

Be reconciled to thy brother. Then come and offer thy gifts. The initiative must come from us. We cannot pray at home; we cannot come to church on the Lord's Day; we cannot take the Lord's Supper, until we are sure that not only am I right with my brother, but he is right with me.

Why is this? The answer is the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven and the law of love that governs its citizens. If we truly love each other we will be reconciled. We cannot be right with God if we are wrong with each other. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Or listen to Psalm 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

God's love for us is experienced in our love for Him and each other. Anger, hatred, is a barrier in the covenant of love.

The seriousness of this is that we have to deal with God. In verses 25, 26 Jesus illustrates this. If a man has financial difficulty, he ought to deal with his creditors, lest he be taken to court and the judge find him guilty and he be imprisoned until he pay the last cent.

We had better settle our differences here, rather than have to stand before God's judgment seat in the day of Christ. He has the power of Gehenna, the fires of hell.

How these words must humble us all.

Rather than being self-righteous, let us cling to the cross of Jesus and

look to our Lord and cry for His Spirit of love.

The love that reconciles! □

Editorials

■ Deckers and Hankos Feted

■ The Approach to Covenant Children

■ Deckers and Hankos Feted

On the evening of October 5, 1990, the Theological School Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches observed significant anniversaries in the lives of Professor Herman C. Hanko and of Professor Robert D. Decker. This year marks Professor Hanko's 35th year and Professor Decker's 25th year in the ministry of the gospel.

Professor Hanko was ordained into the gospel ministry in 1955 in Hope PRC of Grand Rapids. He served the Hope congregation as pastor until 1963. From 1963 until 1965, he was pastor of the Doon, Iowa church. Professor Hanko has served the churches as professor of theology in the PR Seminary for 25 years, since 1965.

Professor Decker was ordained into the gospel ministry in 1965. His first pastorate was the PRC of Doon, Iowa until 1969. From 1969 until 1973, he served as pastor of the PRC of South Holland, Illinois. Professor Decker has served the churches as professor of theology in the PR Seminary for 17 years, since 1973.

After a dinner in a local restaurant, the members of the TSC and the faculty and staff of the Semi-

nary, with their wives, gathered at First PRC of Grand Rapids for a program in honor of Professor and Mrs. Decker and Professor and Mrs. Hanko. The group praised God in the singing of Psalms and in prayer for His goodness in blessing His church with these ministers of the Word and their wives. They heard taped reflections on the ministry of each man in his first pastorate by one who had been an elder in the church during the ministry. The warm fellowship included many expressions of heartfelt congratulation.

On behalf of the PRC, the celebrants gave thanks to the ascended Jesus Christ Who gives pastors and teachers to His church (cf. Ephesians 4:11). Just for this reason, they could recognize the gifts, labors, and faithfulness of Professors Decker and Hanko.

May Christ continue to bless the work of our two brothers, making it fruitful for the welfare of the PRC and the church universal. □

■ The Approach to Covenant Children

In the letters column of this issue of *The Standard Bearer*, Dr. J. R. Beeke and Elder J. W. Beeke of the

Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) challenge my analysis of the covenant-view of the NRC. At the same time, they sketch the covenant-conception of the NRC, pointing out how, in their judgment, the view of the NRC differs from that of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Because the editorial to which they refer appeared some time ago (May 1, 1990), I quote the pertinent section:

But what then does the Reformed faith mean by the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant of God?

There are three possible explanations of the inclusion of children in the covenant. All are proposed by various Reformed churches.

The first explanation is that because of their privileged position in a Christian home and in the environment of the church these children are more likely to be converted than the children of unbelievers. In fact, the children are unsaved, and must be regarded as unsaved until such time as they give evidence of faith, but they are in a better position to be saved than other children. This was the view of some Puritans and of Jonathan Edwards. It is the view of certain Reformed churches today, including the Free Reformed Churches of North America and the

Netherlands Reformed Congregations of the United States and Canada.

As Dr. and Elder Beeke point out, there is agreement between the NRC and the PRC in teaching that God establishes the covenant of grace with the elect alone. One of the theologians of the NRC, Rev. G.H. Kersten, sharply criticizes the covenant-view of "Heyns...Schilder, and many Christian Reformed ministers." The reason for this criticism is that these men teach that all the natural children of believing parents are in the covenant. In this connection, Kersten denies that the covenant is conditional. He does not like to speak of faith and repentance as conditions, even if it is added that the conditions are fulfilled for Christ's sake. "Without any condition, out of mere grace, He applies salvation to His people when He establishes the covenant with them....A conditional covenant of grace is actually a covenant of works" (G. H. Kersten, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. I, pp. 233-258).

Agreement that God establishes the covenant of grace unconditionally with the elect alone does not, however, rule out the possibility of serious difference between the churches in the matter of the inclusion of the children in the covenant. All Reformed churches confess that the children of believers are "in the covenant." This is the basis of their baptism of infants. But what do they mean by this? This was the point of comparison in my analysis of the covenant-doctrine of various Reformed churches in the editorial with which the Beekes take issue.

Specifically, what do the NRC mean by the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant?

First, they mean that all elect children are in the covenant eternally by virtue of God's election: "The elect are in the Covenant of Grace from eternity" (G.H. Kersten, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 244).

But, secondly, as regards the actual, spiritual state of the baptized children, they teach that these children are to be viewed as unregenerated and unsaved. The spiritual condition of the baptized children, in infancy, at five or ten years of

age, and even in youth, does not differ from that of a heathen. Both the covenant children and the pagans are spiritually dead. Not until the child gives evidence of regeneration is he or she viewed as a saved child of God. The children of the covenant, therefore, are not in the covenant in the sense that God has translated them into the covenant and kingdom of His dear Son by the regenerating Spirit (Col. 1:13). They are not in the covenant in the sense that there is living, spiritual fellowship between God and them inasmuch as they are united to Christ by the bond of faith. They are not at all in the covenant in the same way in which their believing parents are in the covenant. They are in the covenant merely in the sense that there is an external, formal connection with the outward manifestation of the covenant in the visible church.

The Beekes express this when they write, "the NRC believe that we may not view our children as saved before they reveal biblical evidences of salvation...." Also: "Our children who are raised under the sphere of God's covenant and are as yet unregenerate...." Adult believers are in the covenant; their children are merely "under the sphere of the covenant."

This is how J. W. Beeke explains the inclusion of children in the covenant in his book, *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults*, Book I (Eerdmans, 1987):

Scripture forbids us from viewing or speaking of anyone as being saved, one of the elect, or in the essence of the Covenant until he has personally experienced something of the inward-working graces and evidenced something of the outward-working fruits. Therefore, a clear distinction, a line of separation must be drawn in church between those who are only outwardly related to the covenant through baptism and those who are placed in the covenant in an inward manner through personal regeneration and conversion to God (pp. 364,365).

Since the baptized infants obviously cannot experience anything of the inward-working grace of God, much less evidence anything of the outward-working fruit of

grace, parents and church must view all baptized children as outside the essence of the covenant. They must view all the children as outside the essence of the covenant because all the children are outside the essence of the covenant. With the exception of elect children of believers who die in infancy (the NRC allow for their regeneration in infancy), all the little children of believing parents are "in the covenant" merely in the sense that they are "only outwardly related to the covenant."

As Mr. Beeke does not hesitate to state, this means that all the little children are, and must be viewed as, unsaved (p. 361).

This view of the children determines the approach that the church and the parents (and Christian schoolteachers) take toward the children in the rearing of them. The approach is not, and cannot be, that the young members of the covenant, possessed of covenant-life by the Spirit of Christ, are trained to develop in that life—the life of daily conversion, of thankful obedience, and of prayer to their loving Father in Jesus. Rather, little, lost sinners under the wrath of God are taught to regard themselves as little, lost sinners under the wrath of God and to hope that someday they may be born again into the covenant family of God. The church's aim with the covenant children is not nurture, but conversion—the more-or-less dramatic and even instantaneous turning to God for the first time that the church also seeks in the heathen on the mission field.

Strangely enough for a church that confesses the total depravity of the unregenerated sinner, the NRC also urge the children, unsaved sinners all, to pray for their regeneration into "a saving, eternal, unbreakable covenant relationship with (God)": "Prayerfully seek God through the use of the means of grace that He has given you in your outward relationship with Him. Plead with Him and do not let Him go until He has confirmed the saving truths of His Word in the experience and fruits of your life" (*Bible Doctrine*, p. 366). Can an unregen-

erated child pray? Can the unconverted desire God and seek His salvation? Is it not rather the case that pleading with God for the experience and fruits of His covenant is itself evidence and fruit that one is already in the covenant—in “the essence of the covenant”? Is not prayer the chief expression of the life of the covenant, according to the Heidelberg Catechism in Question 116?

Whatever may be their explanation of the praying of the unconverted, the NRC view their children as lost. It was with regard to their view of the actual spiritual

state of the baptized children that I analyzed the teaching of the NRC on the inclusion of the children in the covenant. I remain convinced that the analysis is accurate. It was in the matter of their view of, and approach toward, the children of the covenant that I distinguished the covenant-doctrine of the PRC and the NRC.

Despite the churches’ agreement as to the covenant’s being made with the elect, this difference in covenant-conception is important. For it concerns the urgent, practical matter of the parents’ rearing of their children as truly members of

the covenant; of the children’s glad recognition of themselves as friends of God; and of the church’s acceptance of Christ’s little people as really members of the congregation. Indeed, the difference concerns nothing less than doing justice to the biblical teaching that our children are in the covenant, no less and no differently than we ourselves.

This is the Reformed confession: Our infants are to be baptized “since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God” (Heid. Cat., Q. 74). □ (to be continued) – DJE

Letters

Correction from the NRC

Recently we have read Prof. Engelsma’s series of articles on “The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers” with interest and appreciation (*The Standard Bearer*, March 15, April 1, April 15, May 1, July 1, and September 15, 1990). In the fourth article of this series, we read your brief explanation of the Free Reformed and Netherlands Reformed (hereafter, NRC) denominational views of the covenant of grace. As a NRC pastor/theological instructor and an elder/principal, we were surprised to find these denominations’ covenantal views grouped together in your explanation. The Free Reformed teach a three-covenant view in which the covenant of grace is established with all the baptized seed as an offered promise of salvation, while the NRC teach a two-covenant view in which the covenant of grace is established with the elect only.

Rev. G.H. Kersten, who provided a leading role in the organization of the NRC (1907), wrote the following in his *Reformed*

Dogmatics: “The elect are in the covenant of grace from eternity, given by the Father to the Son. Those that were given by the Father and purchased by the blood of Christ, are incorporated by regeneration into the covenant of grace in time by the Holy Spirit, so that they and they alone become partakers of the benefits of the covenant. *The elect, and only they*, receive an actual right to the riches of the covenant, and the Lord shall be their God and they shall be His people” (vol. 1, p. 244). This has been the covenant position of all NRC teaching; consequently, the NRC view fits more accurately under the “third explanation” in your article than under the “first” where you placed it.

Where the NRC emphasis would differ from that of the Protestant Reformed, we believe, lies more in how we view those who are *under* “the sphere of the covenant” (i.e., the visible church), but are not spiritually incorporated *into* the covenant (i.e., the invisible church). In its desire to clearly maintain this biblical distinction, NRC teaching emphasizes that no person has a biblical right to view himself as a

saved, covenant child of God, who is not bringing forth fruits of saving faith, such as love to God and others, “true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.” (*Canons of Dordt*, I, 12b). The NRC view disagrees with both presumptive and dormant regenerational views which imply regarding children as regenerate before fruits of regeneration are evident. “And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Mt. 3:9, 10; cf. Mt. 7:17-20; Jn. 8:39). In short, the NRC does not believe that Scripture and our Reformed confessions speak of regeneration as something dormant or to be presumed, but as a new birth which is real, personal, and fruitful by the grace of God (cf. *Canons III-IV*, 12).

Finally, because the NRC believe that we may not view our children

as saved before they reveal biblical evidences of salvation (unless physically or mentally incapable of doing so), this does not mean that we view our children as "heathen" or that "a dead person in a Christian home and in the sphere of the church has no advantage over a dead person outside of a Christian home and the church" as your article states (page 341). God has chosen to work salvation through the means of His Word (Rom. 10:13-17). A heathen is one who has never heard or read God's Word. Our baptized children are outwardly separated by God from the heathen to be brought up under His Word, the means which God has promised to savingly bless. After distinguishing the inwardly from the outwardly circumcised (or baptized), Paul states that those in the outward sphere of the covenant have an important "advantage" because the oracles (Word) of God are committed to them and not to the heathen. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 2:28-3:2).

In summary, NRC teaching stresses:

1. The covenant of grace is made with the elect in Christ only, not with all the baptized seed (as taught by the Free Reformed).
2. We may not view ourselves or others as regenerate if we are not evidencing the biblical fruits of regeneration.
3. Our children who are raised under the sphere of God's covenant and are as yet unregenerate, are distinguished from heathen children in the same manner as the children of Old Testament Israel were, for they are reared under the oracles of God, which are the Lord's primary means of grace. Out of sovereign grace, the

covenant-keeping God is pleased to normally work along covenantal lines in regenerating the seed of believers through Spirit-worked application of His precious, inerrant Word.

We would sincerely appreciate the printing of this correction of the NRC view of the covenant of grace for your readership. We are encouraged to find in your article a clear, biblical explanation that God's covenant is established with the elect only in Jesus Christ. We continue to appreciate the quality of biblically-based instruction provided in *The Standard Bearer* under your editorship. May God bless and guide us in His truth.

(Dr.) J.R. Beeke (Pastor/
Theological Instructor)
Grand Rapids, MI
(Elder) J.W. Beeke (Principal)
Chilliwack, British Columbia

Response

The contribution to our discussion of the covenant from the quarter of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) is welcome. Because the brothers Beeke question my analysis of the covenant-view of the NRC and because they call attention to the important, practical issue of our approach to-

ward our children in our rearing of them, I think it necessary to answer their letter in the editorial column of *The Standard Bearer*. The first installment appears in this issue.

— Ed.

Appreciation of Convocation Address

Twice I read the article by Prof. Decker, "Earnestly Contending for the Faith" (*The SB*, October 1, 1990). Each reading afforded a fuller meaning of the seriousness of the times in which we are living, especially as we can see what is happening in the church, and more recently in the churches of Reformed traditions. The second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, the first few verses, tells that there will come a "falling away first" before the "man of sin be revealed."

I find Prof. Decker's writing very pleasant reading, and most edifying. It is also evident from the photos accompanying the article that the PR Seminary now has a good number of students. For such blessings the entire PR populace is no doubt most thankful.... Your article was indeed food for the soul. □

Henry Doorn
Kentwood, MI

*They are evermore around us, though unseen to mortal sight,
In the golden hour of sunshine and in sorrows' starless night,
Deepening earth's most sacred pleasures with the peace of sin
forgiven,
Whispering to the lonely mourner of the painless joys of
heaven.*

*Seeing of our guilt and weakness, looking down with pitious
eyes,
For the foolish things we cling to and the heaven that we
despise;
They have been our guardian angels since the weary world
began,
And they still are watching o'er us for His sake who died for
man.*

— SB, January 1, 1932

All Around Us

■ Boesak Resigns

The Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak, a prominent anti-apartheid leader in South Africa and a noted church leader, has resigned as pastor of the Bellville congregation of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. South African newspapers reported that Boesak had spent four days at a resort hotel with a woman reporter. His wife, Dorothy, then announced that she would be ending their 21-year marriage. On Sunday, July 8, Dr. Boesak announced to his congregation that he was resigning as pastor. On August 12 the Bellville classis declared to the church that "Boesak's office as minister was ended."

Boesak also resigned as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). The executive committee of WARC accepted his resignation "with deep regret" and expressed gratitude for the "outstanding leadership" Boesak provided for WARC. The executive committee reaffirmed the Alliance's commitment to struggle against discrimination and oppression in all parts of the world, "a struggle particularly symbolized by Dr. Boesak's leadership." The committee elected Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass as President, effective immediately. Douglass was one of three vice-presidents of WARC. She is an elder in the Pres-

byterian Church (USA) and a professor of historical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Douglass is the first woman ever elected head of a major ecumenical body. (*REC News Exchange; National and International Religion Report*)

■ Calvin Congress

Scholars from all over the world explored John Calvin's view of Scripture, his personal spirituality, and some of his historical roots at an international congress in late August. About 100 scholars gathered at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. The congress has been held every four years since its first meeting in Geneva in 1974. Interest in Calvin studies has grown so much that the event has become one open only by invitation. The meeting in August was the first held in the United States. Wilhelm Neuser, a German theologian who is secretary of the Congress, said there were two basic thrusts to the meetings. The one angle is basic historical research. They ask, "Who is this man who influenced Europe?" The second perspective is contemporary: "What does Calvin say about today's theological problems?" The Rev. David Engelsma, professor of Dogmatics at our Protestant Reformed Seminary, accepted an invitation to attend the Congress. (*REC News Exchange*)

■ Mission News

Donald A. McGavran, 92, father of the church growth movement and founding dean of Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World

Mission, died on July 10. The son of missionary parents, McGavran received his education at Butler University, Yale Divinity School, College of Missions, and Columbia University. After serving as missionaries in India for 30 years McGavran and his wife returned to the U.S. in 1954. After spending a few years at Yale Divinity School doing research in missiology and lecturing widely in seminaries around the world, McGavran founded the Institute for Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in Eugene Oregon in 1961. In 1965 McGavran founded the School of World Mission at Fuller. At 84 years of age McGavran retired from teaching. Paul McKaughan, executive director of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association in Washington, D.C., is correct when he says: "Regardless of what one may think about a particular point of Donald McGavran's missiological rendering, you face the inescapable conclusion that he influenced the missions movement to a greater degree than any other thinker of his time." (*Pulse*)

■ About two thirds of the world's population live in nations that restrict the church in some way, according to a recently published study by Issachar Frontier Missions Strategies. Saudi Arabia leads a list of 54 "restricted access nations." Among the criteria used by Issachar are a country's accessibility to missionaries, freedom to publish Christian literature, and freedom of Christian assembly. Issachar researchers expect the list of restricted nations to grow over the next decade to include as much as 85 percent of the world's population.

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

If these findings are accurate, and we have no reason to doubt that they are, should we not with renewed zeal be preaching the gospel "while it is day, ere the night cometh in which no man can labor"? (*Pulse; Christianity Today*)

■ A New Seminary

Knox Theological Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida began its first semester of instruction in September. The Seminary classes are held at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, the largest Presbyterian Church in America congregation. Coral Ridge's well known Senior Pastor, Dr. D. James Kennedy, is chancellor of the new Seminary.

Dr. George Knight, formerly a professor at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, is Administrator of Knox Seminary. Some seventy students are in their first year. Some big names are on the faculty. John Gerstner will teach during the interim, and Jay Adams will be a guest lecturer in November. Other professors from Covenant are Addison Soltau, Robert Reymond, and Joseph Hall. Knox Seminary expects to offer the full four year curriculum leading to either a Master of Divinity or a Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies by the 1992-'93 school year. (*The PCA Messenger*) □

A Soul's Satisfaction

Thy shining grace can cheer
The dungeon where I dwell;
'Tis paradise when Thou art here;
If Thou depart, 'tis hell.

The smilings of Thy face,
How amiable they are!
'Tis heaven to rest in Thy embrace,
And nowhere else but there.

Nor earth, nor all the sky,
Can one delight afford;
No, not a drop of real joy
Without Thy presence, Lord.

—SB, December 1, 1931

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Augustine, Theologian of Sovereign Grace

There are times in the history of the church of Christ when God has such an important work in the defense and development of the faith for a man that in a special way God determines his life, almost from infancy, to prepare him for that calling. This was the case with Martin Luther, whose deep struggle with the assurance of his salvation was used by God to lead him to the great truth of justification by faith alone. This was also true of Augustine, whose wayward and sinful youth was used by God to prepare him for the development of the truths of sovereign and particu-

lar grace. Herman Hoeksema writes:

God had prepared Augustine also spiritually for this battle (against Pelagianism). He had been forcibly drawn out of the forces of sin unto the redemption there is in Christ Jesus. He had tasted that, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It had become a fact of experience to him that only efficacious grace was sufficient to draw the sinner out of darkness into light and the free-will moralism of Pelagius was an abomination to him because of that experience . . . We can understand that when . . . the refined but highly superficial Pelagius and his disciple began to make propaganda for a doctrine that was not only clearly in conflict with Scripture but also militated against all that Augus-



tine had experienced of the grace of God, he threw himself into the battle with all his heart.¹

Augustine was born on November 13, 354 in Tagaste, a part of

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North Africa which is known today as Algeria. One wonders what happened in the days of the courtship and marriage of his parents, for his father, Patricius, was an unbeliever whose interest in his son was limited to preparing Augustine for a career which would lead to fame and fortune and his mother, Monica, was a woman of exceptional piety and godliness whose great sorrow in life was her wayward son. So long and bitterly did she weep and pray for her son that he has become known as a "son of tears."²

Although Augustine attended classes for catechumens, he early fell into the sins of idleness, dissipation, and immorality. When he was only 17 years old, the same year his father died, he took a mistress, and a year later fathered a son, Adeodatus.

All this time he was pursuing his education and proved to be an able student. But, as is so often true, his very ability proved his downfall. He drifted, as a bumblebee looking for nectar, from one heresy to another. First it was the Manichaean error, which taught that there are two eternal and independent principles in the world: Light or the good god, and darkness or the evil god. These two principles are in eternal conflict, with the outcome forever undetermined. Then it was astrology, with its vain and empty superstitions. From astrology he drifted into skepticism, a philosophy which is nothing but an intellectual shrug of the shoulders: it is impossible ever to know what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong.

During this period of immorality and apostasy Augustine began to develop a career. In 376 he taught grammar in his birthplace; a short time later he went to Carthage to teach Rhetoric. In 382 (now 28 years old) he determined to go to Italy, but did not want his mother with him. He left without telling her of his departure or destination, but took with him his mistress and son. He briefly taught Rhetoric in Rome, but then went to Milan and came under the influence of the powerful preacher, Ambrose, godly

and courageous bishop of the church in Milan.

Although Augustine went to hear Ambrose preach only in order to learn more of Ambrose's skills as an orator and rhetorician, he soon came under the power of the gospel. Gradually his errors were stripped away, although he resisted with all his might, especially because of the lusts of his flesh. It was a time of struggle.

*Obstinate in seeking truth outside of her only sanctuary, agitated by the stings of his conscience, bound by habit, drawn by fear, subjugated by passion, touched with the beauty of virtue, seduced by the charms of vice, victim of both, never satisfied in his false delights, struggling constantly against the errors of his sect and the mysteries of religion, an unfortunate running from rock to rock to escape shipwreck, he fled from the light which pursues him — such is the picture by which he himself describes his conflicts in his Confessions.*³

It was this fierce struggle which finally brought Augustine to understand with a profound awareness that the grace of God which delivers from sin is sovereign and irresistible, overcoming and defeating all our resistance, accomplishing a work the Author of which is God alone.

Augustine himself tells us the story of his final conversion in his Confessions, and we can do no better than hear him tell it. One day, torn by violent struggles, he fled to a garden to attempt to find calm. While in the garden he heard a voice say, "Take up and read. Take up and read." Augustine tells us that he picked up "the volume of the Apostle."

I seized it and opened it, and in silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell. "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness . . . But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of faith flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.

Later, explaining it all, he wrote in a touching confession:

I have loved Thee late, Thou Beauty, so old and so new; I have loved Thee late! And lo! Thou wast within, but I was without, and was seeking Thee there. And into Thy fair creation I plunged myself in my ugliness; for Thou wast with me, and I was not with Thee! Those things kept me away from Thee, which had not been, except they had been in Thee! Thou didst call, and didst cry aloud, and break through my deafness. Thou didst glimmer, Thou didst shine, and didst drive away my blindness. Thou didst breathe, and I drew breath, and breathed in Thee. I tasted Thee, and I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burn for Thy peace. If I, with all that is within me, may once live in Thee, then shall pain and trouble forsake me; entirely filled with Thee, all shall be life to me."

After a year of preparation Augustine and his son Adeodatus were baptized by Ambrose. He soon left Milan to return to Africa. His mother, who had followed him to Italy, now set out to travel back with him to Africa, but died at the port on the River Tiber in the arms of her son, with the joy of answered prayer in her heart, and after a profound and moving discussion with him of the glories of heaven.

Augustine journeyed to Africa, revisited Rome, returned again to Africa, and began his work in the cause of Christ. In 389 he was, against his will, ordained presbyter at Hippo Regius by Valerius, its bishop. In 395 he was ordained assistant bishop, and in 396, at the death of Valerius, he was ordained his successor. He spent the rest of his life as pastor of this large flock, as prolific writer, as ardent defender of the faith, as faithful man of God in the service of the truth. He asked, as he lay on his death bed, to have the Penitential Psalms written on the wall so that they might be constantly before him to read at will. He died on August 28, 430 at the age of 75, just a short time before the Vandals (a barbarian tribe from Europe) sacked the city of Hippo and destroyed it.

Augustine produced an enormous amount of work after his conversion,⁴ most of it of enduring

value. Some of his better known works are: *Confessions*, a book which every child of God ought to read at some time in his life;⁵ *City of God*, written to explain the fall of Rome before the barbarian hordes, but including a Christian philosophy of history which is a clear exposition of the antithesis and in which one will find some of Augustine's teachings on sovereign predestination; a treatise on *The Trinity* which is the clearest exposition of this doctrine prior to the writings of Calvin;⁶ *Retractions*, in which he corrected all his earlier writings and withdrew statements with which he disagreed after coming to maturity of thought; and many writings against the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians.

Augustine did battle with the Manichaeans, a sect to which he had belonged prior to his conversion, and with the Donatists, a schismatic sect which he attempted to woo back into the church.

But his greatest battles were waged against the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians. About these battles we must speak.

It must be remembered that, prior to Augustine, the church had made no advances in the areas of such doctrines as the fall of Adam, the depravity of man, the work of salvation through grace, the doctrine of predestination. In fact, it was generally held in the church that, although the salvation of man was rooted in the cross of Christ, it was dependent upon man's free will. Almost all the church fathers held to this.⁷

Pelagius appeared on the scene with his superficial and God-denying teachings in which salvation was entirely rooted in the natural ability of man to do good and to earn his own salvation by good works. The Semi-Pelagianism which followed outright Pelagianism was only an early form of Arminianism and a modification of Pelagianism.⁸

Against this sort of nonsense, Augustine fought. It is a never-ceasing source of amazement to me how clearly Augustine saw the issues and developed the doctrines involved. Not only did Augustine

take issue with the errors promoted by Pelagius and the Semi-Pelagians, but he developed the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace. More specifically, he denied any kind of "free offer of the gospel" and "common grace,"⁹ even calling the so-called good works of the heathen, "splendid vices." He taught sovereign and double predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, imputed guilt, and salvation by the sovereign work of grace in the hearts of the elect. Single-handedly, he laid the whole foundation for a biblical anthropology and soteriology.

Sad to say, Augustine's doctrines were never received in the Romish Church. Semi-Pelagianism won the day shortly after Augustine's death, and a mighty defender of Augustine's views, Gottschalk by name, was martyred in the Ninth Century for teaching them. In a way this was inevitable, for the church, even in Augustine's day, had committed itself to a view at odds with Augustine's teachings: the meritorious value of good works. To embrace Augustine's teachings would have involved a repudiation of a doctrine already held dear throughout much of the church.

For this reason, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, true Augustinianism had to await the time of the Reformation for acceptance in the church of Christ. One who has even a cursory knowledge of Calvin's *Institutes* will know how often Calvin appeals to Augustine in a conscious effort to point out that he stands in the tradition of the great bishop of Hippo.

And so do we. Students and disciples of Calvin as we are, we know that the truth we love and cherish is a truth which goes back all the way to the Fifth Century and the teachings of the beloved Augustine, bishop of Hippo. And in holding to those teachings of Scripture which were dear to Augustine, we can find his words echoing in our own hearts: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee." □

1. Herman Hoeksema, *History of Dogma* (Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches: 1982) Syllabus.

2. So a well-known biography, now out of print, is entitled, "Son Of My Tears."

3. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock and Strong, Vol. I, p. 540.

4. They fill five massive volumes in the first series of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

5. It is not strictly an autobiography, though it is the story of his early life and conversion; it is rather a confession of sin and a doxology of praise to God Who delivered him. It is cast into the form of a prayer and has as its theme a statement which appears very near the beginning: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rest in Thee."

6. It is interesting that the so-called "Athanasian Creed," which is included in the back of our Psalter, was not written by Athanasius, but by either Augustine himself or those of his school. It is a mature exposition of the doctrine of the trinity and the Person and natures of Christ.

7. In a way this is not surprising because: 1) the church was totally absorbed in the controversies concerning the truth of the trinity and the Person and natures of Christ; 2) the church, consequently, had no time or energy to investigate the doctrines of soteriology and anthropology; 3) the idea of freedom of the will was thought to be necessary to avoid the Manichaean doctrine of sin as necessity; 4) in the wisdom of God, the truth concerning Christ had to be settled first, for the truth of our salvation rests upon the truth concerning Christ and His work of atonement.

8. Our Canons call Arminianism the old error of Pelagianism resurrected out of hell. Cf. Canons II, B, 3.

9. It must be remembered that these errors were not issues in Augustine's day, although the Semi-Pelagians taught similar ideas.

Strength for Today

"My grace is sufficient for thee."
Oh, ask not thou, "How shall
I bear

The burden of tomorrow?"

Sufficient for the day the care,
Its evil and its sorrow;

God imparteth by the way,
Strength sufficient for the day.

— SB, August 1, 1932

*Search The
Scriptures*
Rev. Gise VanBaren

Paul's Personal Interest in the Philippian Church

Read and study Philippians 2:19-30.

We come to a very personal section of the epistle to the Philippians. The letter itself is personal throughout — more so than other of Paul's letters. But here Paul shows in a concrete way his interest in and concern about the church which he dearly loved. He resolves to send two men, Timothy and Epaphroditus, to that church. His explanations are presented in the verses we study.

Remember: Paul is in prison at Rome. He has been there for almost two years. The time has come when judgment will be given in his case. Paul has reason to believe that he will be freed from prison, but the outcome was not certain. Under these circumstances he determines to send his two close friends to encourage and assist the church at Philippi.

First, Paul declares that he intends to send Timothy to them. Timothy had been an assistant to the apostle for many years. Timothy had learned Scripture from his youth (II Tim. 3:15). Paul met Timothy on his second missionary journey at Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1). Paul took Timothy along with him to assist him in the work. Timothy was Paul's assistant from that time on. He was sent by the apostle on

various missions (I Cor. 4:17) and had been assisting Paul while the latter was imprisoned in Rome. Timothy was with Paul still at the time of the writing of this letter.

Timothy was well-known also to the church at Philippi. He had labored in Philippi on three occasions (Acts 16:13; 19:22; 20:3). He knew the situation in that church personally. Doubtless he had many friends there. He had been present at the gathering in of some of the prominent members of that church: the Philippian jailor and Lydia.

Timothy was obviously very precious to Paul. Verse 20 states that he has "no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state." He was of like mind with Paul. Together these two sought the same thing: the glory of God in the way of the gathering of the church. In determining to send Timothy, Paul sends that one who is closest and most important to him. This is remarkable, especially in light of the fact that Paul is yet in prison. One might think that Paul needed Timothy more than did the Philippian church. But Paul will sacrifice that which is most cherished to him to assist the church.

It does appear as though there were no others with Paul who could be sent to Philippi at this time. In verse 21 he points out that "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." The statement raises questions which ought to be discussed. Were there no others with Paul who were suitably spiritual? Does Paul mean

that those who were with him were unreliable?

In sending Timothy, Paul has a twofold purpose. He sends Timothy to inform the church of the outcome of his trial. The Philippians would be very interested in that. Timothy could possibly bring good news of Paul's release. Paul knows, of course, that all that comes upon him is in harmony with God's will. This is the thrust of his remark also in verse 19, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus...." Christ, Lord over all, will bring to pass all that God has determined for the benefit of the church and for Paul's own profit.

At the same time, Paul is anxious to hear from the Philippian church as well. In verse 19 Paul mentions that he will be of good comfort when he knows their state. Obviously, he expected Timothy to return soon to Paul with a report of the state of the church at Philippi.

A more worthy messenger could hardly have been sent! He is to Paul as a son with the father. There was a precious, close relationship between these two. Therefore, Paul could also send Timothy so confidently — knowing that he would convey Paul's message properly, and quickly return with a report to Paul.

Again, Paul speaks of his hope of freedom in verse 24. His trust in the Lord is such that he is very convinced that he will be set at liberty to continue his labors in the church. Then his intention is to visit Philippi once more.

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There is another whom Paul resolves to send to Philippi: Epaphroditus. We know not much about this man except what Paul himself states in this passage. He had been a messenger from Philippi to Paul — and a welcome visitor he was! The Philippian church had sent this envoy to be a companion and assistant to Paul. Paul identifies him as “brother, companion in labor, and fellowsoldier” (vs. 25). Each term specifically identifies Epaphroditus in a special way. He is “brother” (as are all the saints) to Paul; he labors with him in the work of proclaiming the gospel; but he is also one who fights the good fight of faith. Epaphroditus does not hesitate to risk his very life for the cause of the gospel.

The dedication of this great saint is wonderfully presented in the passage. “Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death...” (vs. 30). The details are not given, but the illness was “for the work of Christ.” Some have claimed that Epaphroditus almost worked himself to death. When he became ill, he ceased not to carry out the work. Finally, he had come to the point of death. He provided the “lack of service” of the Philippians. This is not to say that the Philippians had failed Paul in some way. Rather, because of the distance which separated them, they could not perform the kind of service they might have otherwise done. Epaphroditus did what Philippi could only wish they could do. But all this was at the expense of his health.

Now this great servant of Christ had recovered. Paul speaks of the fact that this was the mercy of God on Epaphroditus and on Paul himself. God knows the cares and needs of His people — and He provides. So he would be sent by Paul back to the Philippian church to

comfort and reassure them. The church had been greatly distressed upon hearing of the illness of this man of God. They would find great comfort in seeing him again face-to-face. They were told to receive him in the Lord with all gladness. The reason for the “gladness” is simply that he has been restored to them — but they are to receive him “in the Lord.” That ought to say something to us also when we receive saints of God.

They are reminded as well to “hold all such in reputation.” Paul does not imply that Philippi might not esteem Epaphroditus much anymore. Rather, they are to esteem all ministers of the Word highly for their works’ sake. This reminder is, perhaps, more necessary today than ever before. There is the real danger that Christ’s ministers are despised. Their work is not highly regarded. Paul reminds the church of the high calling of those who literally spend their very lives for the cause of the gospel.

The return of Epaphroditus would cause the church at Philippi to rejoice — but would also make Paul “less sorrowful.” He too had been disappointed that Philippi had been in heaviness because of the illness of their messenger. Now Paul would be relieved that they were encouraged once more.

One must be struck in this entire passage by the great love which Paul had for the church in Philippi. His terms of endearment and his sacrificial actions of sending two of his most reliable assistants while he himself could have made good use of them indicate that deep and spiritual interest. It is an interest and concern which must be shown to the church by all ministers of Christ’s Word. Further, it is the kind of spiritual concern that each member of the church ought to show to the body of Christ. What a

beautiful place the church would be if that kind of love and interest were shown by all!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the significance of the first phrase in verse 19: “I trust in the Lord...”?
2. What was the mandate to Timothy by Paul?
3. Why should Paul be concerned about the “state” of the church at Philippi?
4. What is the “likemindedness” of verse 20? Find references elsewhere in Scripture that this is true. How ought that be seen in the church as well?
5. What connections did Timothy have with the church at Philippi in earlier times?
6. Is not verse 21 a harsh judgment on fellow workers? Was not Luke, for one, with Paul in Rome? Was this true of Luke?
7. Would the judgment of verse 21 indicate that such would not be Christian?
8. What do we know of Timothy’s father? mother? grandmother?
9. What indicates Paul’s conviction that he would soon be freed?
10. Explain the threefold description of Epaphroditus in verse 25.
11. Must a servant of God “work himself almost to death” for the cause of the Kingdom? Did Epaphroditus overdo in this regard? Why did not Paul, who had miraculously healed others, not do the same for Epaphroditus?
12. How would we evaluate our own labors for the cause of the Kingdom?
13. Is there a danger that we hold not in reputation those who give their very lives for the cause of God’s Kingdom? What does this statement of Paul mean to us and our attitudes toward ministers of the gospel? □

With the shade and with the sunshine, With the joy and with the pain,
Lord, I trust Thee! Both are needed; Each Thy wayward child to train.
Earthly loss, did we but know it, Often means our heavenly gain.

— SB, February 1, 1932

The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

That Wonderful Covenant (3)

Thus far we have presented the two testaments which bring us the good and better revelation of God's covenant, which assures us that we will be brought to the new Jerusalem, where we will enjoy far more richly the blessedness which the Old Testament saints enjoyed, and which we today experience.

The Old Testament brought the saints, from Adam to those who died before our Savior came into our flesh and earned for us the intimate covenant fellowship with God, that which David presented in Psalm 25:14. There he told us that God's secret is with us; and that means that we have a most wonderful, indescribably beautiful and precious fellowship with Him, which He realized by becoming one of us through a virgin birth, and by a descension into hell that we might be brought up into heaven.

At this time we present how we are to use the Old Testament and New Testament in order to enjoy that covenant blessedness already in this life. We must use both the Old Testament and the New Testament, because our covenant God has only one covenant, has revealed it very beautifully in the Old Testament, from the days of Adam onward to the coming of Christ into our flesh, and reveals it more richly in the New Testament, from the day of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and His ascension into heaven.

To go back briefly to what was already written, let us remember that a covenant is a will and testament wherein one declares how he

wants his earthly goods distributed after his death. Man writes upon a piece of paper what he wants done with his earthly possessions, and he signs the document. That document is his will and testament or covenant. It declares now what he cannot say after his death.

In the Old Testament our covenant God made known to us that He has such a covenant or testament. Both the Hebrew and the Greek words in Scripture that are translated as covenant can also correctly be translated as testament, as already pointed out in the preceding sections of this set of articles. But the New Testament is richer and clearer because many of the things presented in the Old Testament were fulfilled, and that before the New Testament was written. Now, then, we have a richer and more comforting evidence that, because Christ died for us, we will enjoy fully that covenant fellowship which is promised us in the Old Testament. We have more and richer proof that Satan's head is going to be crushed and that we are going to have our crushed heel restored to its health and strength, so that we will be able to walk the street of gold in that new Jerusalem.

Today those two testaments or covenants which present to us the same promises of God's covenant — even though one is richer than the other — assure us that what Jesus said, and is recorded in John 14:1-3, will surely happen. Places are being prepared for us, so that we may enjoy the covenant blessings in God's house of many mansions. Now that we have this picture in full color and see more

beauty than the black and white picture of God's covenant in the Old Testament, we understand more clearly that secret of the Lord which is the showing forth of His covenant.

There are three reasons why we were given both of these wills or testaments. They, the Old and New Testaments, were given us so that we might know that God has drawn up this will, this testament. We could never know what is in God's mind or what He wills until He speaks, or uses men to write unto us. And He wrote these truths about His covenant in order that we might know that He eternally made such a covenant. But that is not enough. He also wrote the truth about that covenant in order that we might believe that it will be fulfilled and that it is His promise to us — in other words, to work faith in us in regard to that covenant. In the third place, but by no means with lesser significance, He gave us the Old Testament and the New Testament so that we may become a thankful people that praises God from Whom all blessings flow.

All this the saints from Adam onward had realized in them from the day Adam fell and was born again, until Christ came and blotted out our guilt. Today the elect from various nations, tongues, and tribes have this wrought in them and know what will happen again to the true church, namely, that God will bring them to His house of many mansions which is pictured in Revelation 21, 22.

This, however, does not mean that we should brush aside the Old Testament and cease having ser-

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mons based on Old Testament passages, or cease discussing its passages in the home or in a society. As surely as we must read and study the New Testament passages, we must read and study the Old Testament passages, and explain New Testament passages by means of Old Testament verses and revelations. Did not Peter on the day of Pentecost, and thus in the New Testament dispensation, refer the church to what the prophet Joel had written? Even though the New Testament is a better covenant with better promises it depends upon the Old Testament.

Therefore all the truths in the Old Testament must be explained by reference to Christ. Remember that Paul says in I Corinthians 1:23, 24, "But we preach Christ, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power and wisdom of God." Still more, John begins his gospel narrative with the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That certainly means that Christ is in the Old Testament and referred to in Genesis 1:1, when we are told that, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." A triune God did this, and Christ in His divine nature was there. He is the Word Who with the Father and the Spirit created all things. He was also there in the types and shadows, when God shed the blood of the creature whose skin covered naked and guilty Adam and Eve. There already we have God's promises, His covenant promise, of bringing fallen man back to intimate fellowship with Him to enjoy the secret, the sweet communion of His covenant. He spoke these words so that Adam and Eve, hearing them, might know that He intended to bring forth covenant seed, whom He would cause to hate Satan and sin. But also here already He revealed that He would come into our flesh to die for our sins and blot out our guilt.

What God did at that time already clearly reveals that Christ and His cross are not in the Old

Testament concealed but revealed. This warns us also to expect Christ in every sermon today whether based on an Old Testament passage or a New Testament passage.

It is not enough merely to have His name mentioned. Unitarians who deny that God is a triune God do that. Many false doctrines today use His name but corrupt the truth of God's covenant which teaches that salvation is God's work from beginning to end, and does not depend upon man's will. And it is amazing and shameful that we hear many, who deny Christ as God and as our Savior, curse and swear and use His name in vain.

The truth of the matter is that we must in our sermons present Christ as the one through Whom God fulfills all His covenant promises. He must be presented as the one Who does not simply remove our punishment. Deeper and more wonderful is the truth that He removes our sinful natures so that we delight in sweet communion with God, in the ability to serve and glorify Him. If we only want removal of our aches and pains and death, we do not want Christ. In every Old Testament sermon Christ must be presented as the one Who brings this covenant blessedness to us.

Last, but by no means least, every sermon and all study in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament must present the cross of Christ. It is simply an undeniable fact that when the cross is not presented, the Christ who is presented is not the Christ Who saves us and brings to us all the covenant blessings. Leave the cross of Christ out of an explanation of what God declares in that protevangel of Genesis 3:15 and you leave out all that which is promised in that mother-promise. Leave out that cross and you leave out that whole wonderful covenant established by our gracious God. Then you take away that which is so essential for God's covenant promises to be fulfilled. We are guilty and deserve everlasting hell-fire! Then without the cross there is no room to speak of a resurrection and life everlasting in the new Jerusalem.

This also means that then there is no grace of God. There is absolutely no grace of God apart from that cross. God has no grace for those for whom Christ did not die. Christ crucified, according to I Corinthians 1:23, is for the unbelieving Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. Does the holy God deal with such in His grace? These things, stumbling into sin and folly, the unbelievers do every step of their way. Does the holy God for one split second give grace to those who call His Son a fool and want nothing to do with Him but to call Him a criminal who deserved to be hanged on the cross? No, God's covenant is very particular, and so is His grace. Christ died only for those whom the Father had given Him as His sheep. And all the blessings come through that cross. God's grace comes only upon those whose sins were blotted out by it. There is then nothing common about that grace. Does the holy God commit the sin of letting sins that have not been blotted out by that cross be ignored? Does He give those who intend to sin, and want only to sin, some gifts in grace? Will He, in His grace, give them material things that will help them to sin? Is He holy, if He overlooks sins which that cross has not blotted out?

Jesus said, "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15). For them only can grace be used in their treatment. And does God not say in Genesis 3:15 that instead of giving grace to some He is going to punish with a crushed head?

Then, too, we deny the cross when we present salvation as man's blessing only if and when he fulfills a condition. Then the cross alone is not enough. Man must also do something. Still more, then the spiritually dead man is viewed by God as one who has a little spiritual life. No, all our salvation rests upon what Christ did and upon His cross. How important the truth about that cross is!

The Lord willing we will next time conclude this comforting and powerful truth of God's wonderful covenant. □

Taking Heed To The Doctrine

Rev. Marvin Kamps

The Bible is God's Word

Propositional Revelation

It has always been the Reformed church's confession that the Bible gives us information concerning who God is. If one consults the Creeds of the Reformed churches he will discover that the church declared "what kind of a God God is" and "Who he is." Consider the first article of the Belgic Confession, where the church speaks of God's Being: "there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good." Notice also the Heidelberg Catechism's instruction in regard to the truth that God is a Triune God: "Since there is but one only divine essence, why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Because God hath so revealed himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God." This is emphatic and exclusive language. Other conceptions of God's Being and attributes are rejected as false and heretical.

The Reformed church was led to make this exclusive confession not only by the Reformers, but also by the ancient church of post-apostolic times. The ancient church by its great ecumenical creeds had established as church dogma the doc-

trines concerning the Being of the Triune God.

It is striking to the careful observer of the church today, that the church is rather reluctant to make dogmatic assertions about Christ Jesus, about God, and about the nature of God's work in history and time. The Christian church is timid and uncertain in its witness. Men within the same denomination, and therefore supposedly of one mind and confession, hold absolutely contradictory positions about God, His Christ, and the creative and redemptive work of God. Both positions are viewed as possibly correct, which is of course impossible. Error is not condemned. No one is declared heretical. All views may contain an element of truth. Believers are warned not to be "dogmatic" in their expressions of faith. Toleration is passionately encouraged, the result being that confusion and discouragement prevail in the "fellowship of the saints." Worse, a whole new generation of children are given no definite direction, no authoritative instruction, in regard to "Who is God" and what He has done for His people in Christ Jesus. The church cannot long exist amidst such confusion. The church's corporate worship is uncertain and half-hearted. The church's great Creeds of the Reformation are viewed more and more as quaint reminders of that pre-critical age.

How has all this come about? Why is it that many Reformed believers do not speak with the same conviction and zeal as did their fathers? Why is the church so hesitant to do Christian discipline and

so very willing to ignore all manner of departures from the historic Christian faith? These questions trouble believers. And they demand an answer.

I believe the answer is that we must view God's revelation as "propositional revelation." This expression may be new to the reader, but in fact has been used by conservative theologians for the past forty years and more. Besides, it should be pointed out that though the term is relatively new and unfamiliar, it expresses a "concept" as old as faith itself.

By propositional revelation is meant that the Bible gives us accurate information as to who God is in Himself. The Bible tells us who Christ Jesus is and who He is not. The Bible gives us Truth. Through the divinely and infallibly inspired Scriptures we are given a "true knowledge" of God, through the blessing of His Spirit. Through the Scriptures we know God and have fellowship with Him personally. The Bible declares who Christ is and what He has done and why He has done it. The Bible instructs us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). The apostle's exhortation is worthy exactly because it is possible to grow in knowledge of "Who God is" through the prayerful study of God's Word.

Ronald H. Nash, in an article in *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1977, wrote the following in an attempt to explain the meaning of the expression, "propositional revelation":

We can clarify what evangelicals have meant by the doctrine of proposi-

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tional revelation by referring to a central tenet in neo-orthodoxy, the view that no revelation can communicate information. Revelation, according to neo-orthodoxy, is always an event in which God reveals himself; it is never information about God or anything else. Concerning the question at issue here, then, the central claim of neo-orthodoxy was: No revelation expresses cognitive information.

The doctrine of propositional revelation is best understood as a denial of this thesis. The contradictory of the neo-orthodox thesis is: Some revelation expresses cognitive information. And this statement is the core of the doctrine of propositional revelation. Man can have cognitive information about God. Since a proposition is the minimal vehicle of truth, the information about God is contained in divinely revealed propositions.

The question whether God's self-disclosure is through an event exclusively is very interesting. Certainly God has revealed Himself in the event of Creation, the worldwide flood, the fall of Jericho's walls, and so on. Certainly too, revelation is given through the prophets as they interpreted and applied the revelation of God in the events of sacred history. But we would emphatically deny that revelation is an on-going reality simply because God continues to work in time and history. However, our point is simply to underscore what is meant by propositional revelation. Scripture gives us facts, information, the truth about God, Christ, and ourselves.

Many of the clergy and office-bearers in the Reformed community of churches have lost their "confidence" in the Scriptures, because of the undermining influences of subjectivism and mysticism. Many theologians of great renown have sent forth into the Christian church community theories of revelation and Scripture which are totally foreign to and destructive of the Bible as God's Word. One asserts that the Bible is not God's revelation to us, but the church's response to revelation. Another asserts that God is so great and majestic that mere human language can never serve to be the ve-

hicle of "God's Word" to man. High sounding and apparently pious is this appeal to God's transcendence, but it is nonetheless pernicious because it is false. The revelation of God, men claim, is always and only an "encounter" between the sinner and God. It is something exclusively personal and inward. Each believer, therefore, may rightly form his own conception of who God is. This subjectivism is taken so far that we are told that even the pagans are really not pagans at all and are not to be viewed as objects of missionary labors and witness by the Christian church. Rather, every man is said to "encounter God" in whatever way God is pleased to make Himself known and by whatever means.

The Reformed believer will recognize immediately that if credence is given to these "theologians of subjectivism," and consequently their writings are not rejected as destructive by way of being misleading and false, then the Reformed church will soon be a church of confusion, turmoil, weakness of faith, and lacking in conviction of the truth. Her preaching will be without power.

The Bible warns us about the presence of "false prophets" who bring into the church "damnable heresies" (II Pet. 2:1). The apostle Paul calls down the curse of God upon anyone, even if he be an angel out of heaven, who would bring another gospel than the apostle himself preached in God's name. But if God's revelation to us in the Scriptures does not give us Truth (facts concerning God, Jesus, and ourselves), on what basis would the church condemn as false the teaching of anyone? Then all we have is relativism. Yet Scripture presupposes that the truth has been made known and is known to the man of faith in Christ Jesus.

It is important in our day that the church consciously view God's revelation in Christ Jesus as real Self-disclosure to the church of Jesus Christ. All questions about the authority of Scripture, its perspicuity, and its sufficiency, are absolutely meaningless for the believer,

if God through the Scriptures did not in fact, and did not intend, or could not for whatever reason, give us the Word of Truth as His Revelation in Christ Jesus. What difference does it make to confess *sola scriptura*, if the Bible does not give us facts that are the Truth concerning God, His Christ, and ourselves. If God's revelation is not "propositional," then for a church to write Creeds and to develop a Creedal consciousness is an exercise in utter foolishness and is presumptuous. For then we cannot know God with any certainty. Worse, we cannot know Him at all. We are then left to "agnosticism" and "skepticism."

The trust that the Bible is God's Word is itself a gift of grace to the elect sinner. He who holds to the Scriptures as giving accurate information (that is, the Truth) to us as it is in God Himself, this man and this man only has "received...the spirit which is of God; that ye might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (I Cor. 2:12).

With this conviction and confidence in the Bible, we can and do "try the spirits" of our age. That which is contrary to Scripture is without hesitation rejected as unworthy of a place in God's church and the church's teaching. They that live out of faith in Christ Jesus, who is the revelation of His most glorious heavenly Father — according as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures — are to be received in thanksgiving unto Jehovah God. □

Not All the Words

Not all the words of all mankind,
However great and wise,
Can lift a sinner from the dust
And place him in the skies.
Then let Thy Word, O Son of God,
Suffice this heart of mine;
And let me count no word as true
If it conflicts with Thine!

— SB, August 1, 1931

*From
Holy Writ*
Rev. George Lubbers

Exposition of Isaiah 6 (5)

*"Then said I, Lord, how long?
And he answered, Until the
cities be wasted without inhabi-
tant, and the house without
man, and the land be utterly
desolate. And the LORD have
removed man far away, and
there be a great forsaking in the
midst of the land...."*

— Isaiah 6:11-13

The Divine Timetable for Judgments in the Goodly Land

We should never forget that the land of Canaan was truly a *goodly land*. If even a part of the earth could be singled out as being in a unique sense "God's Country," it was the land of Canaan, the accursed son of Ham in his generations. In this choice of God there was Divine wisdom and prudent foresight displayed. It was the historical manifestation that, when Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem, he would dwell with Shem in the land of Canaan. Here we see displayed what Moses teaches in Deuteronomy 28:8b: "He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." (Compare Acts 17:26.)

This land God established as being His heritage. In possessing this little part of the inhabitable world of men, He also claimed the whole earth was His, and that the glory of salvation would, from out of His

holy temple, fill the whole earth (vss. 1-30). In this land God will plant His people as a goodly vine, initially in calling Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and four hundred thirty years later by bringing them in by His servants Moses and Joshua (Gal. 3:16-18). It is in this land of promise that Israel-Judah is planted by the LORD as a goodly vine (Isa. 5:1-4).

To receive an insight into the spiritual nature of this goodly land we must read Romans 9:4, 5, where Paul explains the real, high and lofty, fertile soil on which Israel, the vine of His planting, was placed. There he writes of Israel this:

...Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Truly God as the great owner of the Vineyard, which is His peculiar people, could justly ask:

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? (Isa. 6:4)

Yes, Israel dwelt in the land of Immanuel, God with us. The land belonged to God; it was His heritage. Writes Jeremiah in chapter 2:7:

And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

And now the LORD announces wrath and condemnation upon

those who heard all these good words but spiritually understood not their spiritual import as being the land of which His Son is the Heir. And when they did see the Heir-Son pointed out in the temple and on the throne, they killed Him as the Lord of glory (I Cor. 3:7-9; Matt. 21:33-46).

Such was the essence of the sin of Israel.

It was the rejection of the Lord most high, the owner of the Vineyard as this was centered in the Temple-worship, in the keeping of the Sabbaths. They refused to enter into the Lord's rest! They were like the people at Meribah and Massah. Of these the Lord swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest (Heb. 3:7-11; Ps. 95:8-11). Of others God swore that they would enter into His rest (Heb. 4:3ff.).

With these words the Lord's answer to Isaiah agrees. The question was this: how long, Lord, must this preaching ("hear indeed and understand not") continue? The answer is not an arbitrary whim on the part of God, but it is the realization of His oath that unbelievers will not enter into His rest at all!

This "until" has in it a note of hope for the believers. Indeed, there shall be great and prolonged judgments in Israel's history. Such was the announcement of Moses to Israel of his day. He speaks to Israel which breaks the commandment concerning the Lord's Sabbaths. In Leviticus 26:2 we read, "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord."

There were various "sabbaths" given to Israel. These were regu-

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lated by the lunar calendar, and were all controlled by the number *seven*: the seventh day; the second sabbath; the fourteenth day; the seventh week; the seventh month; and the year of Jubilee, the first year after the forty-ninth year, the year when every man again received his inheritance in Israel.

These sabbaths must be kept, and this could only be done by reverencing God's sanctuary. Israel must by faith enter into the completed work of God's redemption. They must rest from their labors on these sabbaths with thankful rejoicings.

But this had not been done. Now the Lord comes in His wrath upon Israel in ever increasing tempo and intensity. Four times we read that the Lord will punish them or will chastise them "*seven times more*." (See Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24.) And then the end of the Lord's predicted judgment comes upon unbelieving Israel. It is the end God has in mind when He tells Isaiah how long the preaching to *this people* must continue by him and all the prophets, as this culminates in the crystal clear authoritative preaching of the Christ of God in the fullness of time.

This word we ought to heed, which was spoken concerning the consummation of the judgment upon the pleasant land. We read: "...and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the land" (Isa. 6:11, 12).

By whom will this forsaking of the land be? It will be a forsaking of the land by the LORD of the land, Who sits on the throne in holiness, and of Whom the Seraphim sing, day and night in His temple: HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is the LORD God almighty, Who fills the earth presently with the glory of His grace.

The form of this forsaking will be such that God's eternal covenant will stand forever, and His kingdom will come which has no end (Dan. 7:27). For we must notice that when God finally cleanses the house of the Lord from evil-doers, and destroys the earthly temple of Solomon over their heads, then the true children of God have already

been given a temporary SANCTUARY in all the lands where they have been scattered. The great burning question, the great issue was "*where is the church?*" Is it, at the time of the final forsaking of the land, in Babylon, or is it represented in Jerusalem?

Such was the question. This question arose because there was a twofold taking captive of Israel. The first was in the days of King Jehoiachin, when Nebuchadnezzar carried off the king with his mother and his servants and his officers. He then took the gold of the temple, taking with him all the nobility of the people of Judah, the *holy seed*, some ten thousand captives, among whom were also the four God-fearing young men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, men who by faith stopped the mouths of the lions, quenched the violence of fire. God took His church out of the hot boiling pot of Jerusalem. Yes, He will forsake the land utterly, but in such a way that He will not forsake His people whom He foreknew (I Sam. 12:22; Heb. 13:5). He will in no way cast off His people whom He foreknew. There is ever the remnant according to election of grace (Rom. 11:1, 2). The classic example of this faithfulness of God is iterated by God to Elijah His prophet in the mount (I Kings 19:18). Paul quotes this memorable passage in Romans 11:2-4. And the great conclusion is this: "Even so then at this moment there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if

it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:5, 6).

So God made a distinction between the two seeds in the execution of the judgments upon the pleasant land!

Such a making of the distinction is the constant *pattern* of the holy place. There is mercy in each judgment for the meek in the earth. We hope to see this when we take a closer look as to how these judgments were *punishments* for the reprobate unbelievers in Israel, and how they were *chastisements* from the hand of the Father of lights for His Son Whom He loves (Heb. 12:2-12). Truly, the holy seed had reason to lift up their hands which hang down, and also the feeble knees (Heb. 12:12; Isa. 35:3).

God makes this distinction very emphatically in the final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when the Roman hordes sack the city. Where is then the church? Oh, they are safely sheltered in God's Sanctuary, in the churches gathered from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Just as God made a little sanctuary in Babylon, a shelter in the time of storm, so here in the final desolation of the temple and land God makes a permanent sanctuary, which sanctuary is the church itself, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Yes, the word of the promise is fulfilled: God laid a Stone in Zion, elect, precious. This Stone is Jehovah God, Jesus, the Savior of the world (John 4:21-23, 43). □

All Is Well

In the center of the circle
Of the will of God I stand;
There can come no second causes,
All must come from His dear hand.
All is well! for 'tis my Father
Who my life hath planned.

Shall I pass through waves of sorrow?
Then I know it will be best;
Though I cannot tell the reason,
I can trust and so am blest.
God is love, and God is faithful,
So in perfect peace I rest.

—SB, December 15, 1931

R.F.P.A. Secretary's Annual Report

September 20, 1990

Dear Members and Supporters of the R.F.P.A. (*Standard Bearer* publication):

Until one is personally involved to some degree, it is so easy to dismiss from one's mind all the required time and effort and cost that go into a finished product — namely, in this case, Volume 66 of the *SB*, and also the related work of the Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature.

We as Board, on behalf of the Association, gratefully acknowledge and thank our Editor, the Editorial Committee, our Business Manager, Guest Writers, Department Editors, and others who contributed to put the *SB* and other of our publications in your possession.

Under the capable leadership of our Editor, Prof. D.J. Engelsma, subjects and issues were addressed in a forthright manner, demonstrating his (and all our assigned writers') deep commitment to the Truth of the Scriptures, as it is expressed in the great creeds which belong to the heritage of the Reformed Churches.

Letters to the Editor were knowledgeably, skillfully, and directly answered without compromise.

Volume 66 featured special issues and events. January 1, 1990: special issue on Reformed Faith...Theology of Hope; May 15th: on Preaching; November 1, 1989: Editorial re the San Francisco earthquake; April 1st: on Office Bearers Conference held in South Holland, IL; July 1st: on International Conference held in Grand

Rapids, MI, June 12-14 (two pages of pictures).

It is an ongoing effort and concern of the R.F.P.A. to improve and maintain the quality of our publication both in content and in appearance.

This year we have an increased working balance. We take this opportunity to thank our PR membership for their collection contributions, as well as our PR and non-PR friends who gave donations to print and mail out our magazine and books. We also acknowledge the prayers offered on our behalf that our publications might be a voice and witness in this age of indifference. Those interested in receiving our annual Financial statement and report can obtain one by contacting our Business Manager, Mr. Don Doezeema.

From the Minutes of our Board and from the desk of our much appreciated, hard-working Business Manager (also thanking his wife, Judi) we can report the following activities for the year:

Distribution of the *SB*: Of the 2,076 addresses used in the August mailing 958 were in Michigan, 968 from other states, and 150 were sent overseas. Sixty-two percent of our subscribers are PR (1,279). Thirty-eight percent (797) are non-PR.

The one-half price introductory offer brought in 106 new paying subscribers. Taking into consideration some requested cancellations, non-payment, etc. we ended up the 12-month period with a gain of 42 on our paid mailing list.

Because it is a concern of our Editorial Committee as well as our

Board, there is an on-going effort to increase and expand our readership. From our churches' Extension and Evangelism Committees we are getting mailing lists, and they in turn are enclosing with their sent-out material a special card promoting *The Standard Bearer*.

We are also exploring the possibilities of outside advertising. Our first ad was in the August 13th issue of the *Christian Observer*, a weekly Presbyterian publication. This fine magazine has in the past given us favorable recognition and publicity. We appreciate their generosity.

In an attempt to prune our list of freebies, letters were sent out to many institutions such as colleges, libraries, etc., receiving complimentary copies of the *SB*. For lack of response, 29 were dropped. At the same time, we continue to seek other institutions who might profit from our magazine on their shelves.

Commercial Printing Company recently purchased equipment which makes it possible for them to accept from their customers the copy for typesetting on a computer disk. Our Seminary received as a gift a high quality laser printer with the understanding that cooperation with the R.F.P.A. in typesetting the *SB* could generate income sufficient to take care of the Seminary computer equipment needs for the foreseeable future. Our taking full advantage of that arrangement promises to be of financial benefit also for the R.F.P.A., and at the same time give us more control over the layout of each issue.

An inventory is completed of the

number of every printed issue of each of the 66 Volumes we have on hand and in storage as of September 30, 1990.

From the Secretary of the Permanent Book Committee, Dave Harbach, we pass along the following information:

From their Distribution Committee:

1. Prepared a new catalog.
2. Developed an inventory reduction sale.
3. Prepared a letter to our churches informing them of their work.
4. Prepared a letter to be put in the SB.
5. Sent a delegate to the Psalmody Conference in North Carolina displaying our various publications.

6. Looked into outside advertising as an outlet for books, etc.

From their Publication Committee:

1. *Triple Knowledge*, Volume I & II, reprinted.
2. "Show Me Thy Way," Grade 5, will be printed as funds permit.
3. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema's material on the Doctrine of Scripture is being prepared for publication on a limited edition.
4. Prof. H. Hanko's Exposition on the Parables will be reprinted.
5. Rev. Haak's outlines on Philipians will be printed.
6. Articles from past *Standard Bearers* will be considered for publication in pamphlet form.

7. Procedures for approving new manuscripts are being developed.

* * * * *

As we end this report, we thank the three retiring Board members, Chairman — John J. Dykstra; Treasurer — Henry Kamps; and Gilbert Schimmel. In all matters re our publications let us heed the encouragement of Scripture as found in I Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." □

Respectfully submitted,
Board of the R.F.P.A.
Peter Koole, Secretary

Contribution

The Church Organist

The most important part of a church service is the preaching of the Word of God. Another very important part of our church service is the congregational singing. Because the church organist aids the congregational singing, he or she is also important.

In the past we have become increasingly aware of a decreasing supply of church organists. Perhaps organists become threatened by unsympathetic music committees and critical church membership.

The service as church organist is a wonderful service. Even though one is paid little or nothing, there is

pleasure in knowing that one's God-given talents are used for His glory.

Words and music should touch the hearts and emotions of the congregation in their worship. The organist is to serve and assist in the worship service, not to "perform."

It is common knowledge that the capacity to play an excellent organ recital does not guarantee the performer to be a good church-service organist. A recital glorifies the organist and the composer. A church service glorifies God.

In the proper playing of a psalm, the church organist becomes at once not only the accompanist, but also the leader of the congregation in the singing of that psalm. The organist should lead the congregation, stirring them up in the singing of the psalms to very joyful or prayerful praise to the Lord. The organist serves an important role in the worship service.

How does the organist accomplish this goal? How does an organist play aggressively enough, with neither too much nor too little tone? How does the organist keep the congregation moving at a reasonable pace without dragging? How does he or she help express the meaning of the psalm? How does he or she inspire the congregation to sing enthusiastically or prayerfully?

The organist should announce the psalm with an introduction, set the pace, and hold a steady rhythm. The organist should lead and direct the congregation with correct timing to sing each song with enthusiasm so that they become very cognizant of the words, so important to God's praise.

The singers should be allowed the opportunities to breathe (especially between stanzas). The organist should give adequate tonal support to the congregation but

This contribution was submitted by a long-time, and accomplished, church-organist in the Protestant Reformed Churches. We honor the author's request to remain anonymous in The Standard Bearer.

without drowning their voices in a loud sound. However, the psalmist does state "Sing unto Him a new song; Play skilfully with a loud noise" (Psalm 33:3).

Identify the mood of the text or tune — prayerful praise, rejoicing praise, etc. The tempo must be vigorous, steady, and sharply rhythmical. The organ must lead at a tempo neither too slow nor too fast. Tempo is extremely crucial to praise. Praise-worthy tempo helps

us make good the gift of our singing praise to the Lord our God.

Preludes, offertories, and postludes have an important part in our worship services. Let us choose, practice, and play these with a prayer that it will open the door to the blessing that awaits those who seek it in true worship. Let nothing break the communion between our spirits and God.

Our songs then shall arise to heaven, and our joyful noise will

please our God. Then we will walk out with the doxology and postlude in our mind and soul, and we will go through the entire week, until the next Sabbath day, singing!

Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to men that they should proclaim the Word of God through music. (Martin Luther) □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

EVANGELISM NEWS

Many of our readers know that for some time the congregation of our PRC in Redlands, CA has had correspondence with a group of Christians in Santa Cruz who are interested in the Reformed faith and our churches. Redlands has been considering various plans to help these people and at the same time investigate the possibility of future work in the Santa Cruz area.

Redlands has decided to have a series of four Lord's days of preaching services in this area. Our church in Loveland, CO has also agreed to help in this effort. Plans are that Rev. denHartog, Redlands' pastor, will be in Santa Cruz for the Lord's days of October 21 and 28. He will also give a Reformation Day lecture on October 29. Rev. Cammenga, Loveland's pastor, will be in Santa Cruz on November 4

and 11, D.V. He will also give a midweek lecture. Both pastors hope also to be contacting interested people while they are in the area, to determine the possibility of future missionary labors there.

The Evangelism Committee of our Redlands congregation also played a major role in organizing a special Lord's day in their own congregation. They planned a special worship service, for September 21, focusing on the importance of Sabbath observance. This service was like any other worship service except that every effort was made to publicize this service in the community through newspaper ads, posters, letters, and personal invitations from the congregation. The sermon that evening was based on Isaiah 58:13, 14, and it set forth the Word of the Lord concerning Sabbath observance. It was hoped that through these efforts Redlands would be able to bring the Word of God to some people from their community.

Acting upon a request from the Reformed Witness Committee, the consistory of our PRC in Doon, IA has been doing some work in Sioux Falls, IA these past few months.

This labor has consisted of a Bible or doctrine study with families of the Doon congregation along with up to four different families from outside of our churches. If this study continued to go well through August, and if at least two of the families from outside of our churches showed interest in having these studies, the work was to be continued for the coming year. Rev. DeVries has been asked to continue this work pending the approval of his Consistory.

The Evangelism Committee of our PRC in Wyckoff, NJ sponsored a public lecture on September 21. The entire congregation got together a couple of weeks before the lecture to help in the mailing and distributing of fliers advertising this lecture. Prof. D. Engelsma was the featured speaker and he spoke on the subject of God's grace and the fact that it is particular and not common.

MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES

Our PRC in Kalamazoo, MI, the calling church for a missionary to Venice, FL, has formed a new trio from which to call, consisting of the Revs. R. Dykstra, B. Gritters, and C. Haak.

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

The Consistory of our Hudsonville, MI PRC has made the following trio for missionary to Larne, Northern Ireland: Revs. C. Haak, M. Kamps, and T. Miersma.

And since Rev. T. Miersma declined the call he was considering to serve as our churches' missionary to Jamaica, First Church in Grand Rapids, MI has also formed a new trio from which their congregation will call. This trio consists of the Revs. B. Gritters, C. Haak, and J. Kortering. □

Hope Thou in God

Forsaken! no, it cannot be,
That I'm forsaken, Lord, by Thee;
For hast Thou not, my heart to
cheer,
Assured me that Thou wilt
appear? —

Appear to chase the gloom of
night;
Appear to bring the morning light;
Appear to tell me Thou art mine,
Appear to witness I am Thine.

Then why should I to doubt give
way?
Or what should fill me with
dismay?
Though many billows o'er me roll,
Not one shall overwhelm my soul.

Do Thou, dear Lord, enable me
To trust Thee when I cannot see —
To gain access to Thee in prayer,
And find a solid resting there.

— SB, April 15, 1932

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the Redlands Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to our president and one of our members, Pastor and Mrs. Arie denHartog, in the sudden loss of her father and mother, MR. and MRS. FARRAND DEUR.

May they find comfort in the following words of Scripture, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (1 Cor. 5:1).

Ed Gritters, Vice-President
Anna Mae Bodbyl, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 6, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. and MRS. JOHN DYKSTRA, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We their children thank our heavenly Father for Christian parents who have given, and still give, so much of themselves as a God-fearing example to us. We hope and pray that God will bless and keep them in His tender care. "Let the word of Christ dwell

in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

Gerald and Theresa Dykstra
Mike, Eric, Heather, Carl, Eileen,
Ken Dykstra
Dave and Wanda Kamminga
Shawn, Shannon, Kendra, Ryan,
Audra, Shane Kamminga
Hope Church, Walker, MI

NOTICE

Anyone desiring a copy of the 1990 *Acts of Synod* may contact the Seminary (616) 531-1490, or write, 4949 Ivanrest Avenue, Grandville, MI 49418. The cost of the book is \$3.00.
Rev. M. Joostens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 20, 1990, our dear parents, the REV. and MRS. DALE KUIPER, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. On this joyous occasion we thank God for the many years of covenant instruction, and for the godly example they have set for us. It is our prayer that

they may experience the blessings of the Lord together for many years to come.

"For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations" (Ps. 100:5).

David & Michelle Kuiper
Brad Kuiper
Chris Kuiper
Beth Kuiper
Philip Kuiper
Victor Kuiper
Dwight Kuiper
Lois Kuiper
Dana Kuiper

Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Victor Oosterbaan in the death of their son PAUL OOSTERBAAN.

May our covenant God comfort with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Sandy Tinklenberg, Secretary