

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

... Wars, natural calamities, apostasy, and all the rest are the birth pangs of history which finally deliver Christ to us at the end.

Are you aware of this? Oh, bride of Christ, the events taking place about us shout loudly, Jesus is coming!

See "Behold, I Come Quickly" — page 147

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## In This Issue...

The end of another year is a reminder to the child of God that there will also be an end of all things. Jesus is coming. He has in fact been coming, quickly, through all of the events in the history of the world in the new dispensation. But, as three different writers in this issue point out, the signs of His coming are today intensifying. Rev. Gritters, for example, in "The End Times," writes that one sign of the end that "ought to jump right out of the news into our faces is the sign of lawlessness" — lawlessness, he says, that shows itself not only in government, in the school, in the home, in business, and in civil affairs, but also in the church. Rev. Kortering, in "Behold, I Come Quickly," mentions also earthquakes, plagues of diseases, and famine. And Prof. Decker, in "Jesus is Coming... Soon!" draws our attention to other circumstances, such as the combination of great prosperity and deadly famines; and to world events — notably the threat, not only of an impending war in the Middle East, but, what is even more ominous for the church of Christ, an impending worldwide peace. "Ominous," we say, because when the world at last achieves that peace, which is destined to be short-lived, it will turn against the church, to destroy her.

Not "ominous," however, in the sense that we should, because of what we see about us, be filled with fear. For, concerning our seeing all of these signs, Jesus said, "See that ye be not troubled." We must not think, when these events begin to come upon us, that things are going awry. Jesus told us what to expect exactly in order that we might be confident that all is proceeding according to the good counsel of God, and therefore that, even when faced with persecution, and death, we are in God's care and keeping to the last hair of our head.

And ... we have been warned in advance so that we might "in the maelstrom of this wicked world, stand strong against the current" (read "The End Times"). □

—D.D.

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## Meditation

Rev. Jason Kortering

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# Behold, I Come Quickly

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*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

*Revelation 22:6, 7*

Behold, I come quickly!

Jesus speaks these words as the Bridegroom to His Bride.

Are they spoken to you? Are you part of the Bride of Christ?

That makes all the difference as to the seriousness by which we receive these words.

There is no doubt but that these are the words of Jesus spoken to His beloved church. On the surface, I know, it might appear as if they are the words of the angel. In verse 6 we read, "And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants...." The angel is communicating the truth of God to John by way of the vision. According to verses 8, 9 John subsequently bows down to the angel and is cautioned that he must worship God alone. The message which he brings is from Jesus. When we read in verse 7, "Behold, I come

quickly," it is not a reference to the angel, but to the One who sends the message through the angel, namely, Jesus Christ.

The context also establishes clearly that Jesus speaks of His coming as a bridegroom. In the previous chapter we read, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (21:2). In the subsequent verses, the New Jerusalem is described as the bride (vs. 9ff.). Later, toward the end of chapter 22, we read, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (vs. 17). The urgency by which Jesus speaks the words of this text is that of a bridegroom assuring his bride that he is coming quickly.

There is a wedding in the future.

The bride awaits it with expectation.

As Christ's bride, we have become endeared to Him. Our Eternal Father has ordained our marriage in His counsel of election. In the fullness of time, God revealed His love to us by sending His Son for the express purpose of obtaining the marriage license. This He has done by meeting the penalty of the law of God, namely death. You see, we are not attractive or beautiful as a potential bride, in ourselves. The ravages of sin are deeply ingrained in our nature, and by that nature we have practiced every abominable form of spiritual whoredom. This did not just happen. It was exactly according to God's word: "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"; and "The wages of sin is death." It was no small thing for Jesus to obtain the legal right to become married to

us, the church. It required His love of self-denial even unto the lonely cry out of hell, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What love!

But, there is more. Having satisfied divine justice, Jesus was approved by God and raised from the dead. Having ascended into heaven He now ministers to His bride-to-be from heaven. By His Holy Spirit He deals with her whorish nature and brings her into conformity with the holy law of God. To be sure, it requires tears of repentance and daily struggle of faith, but it is real. From His exalted position in glory, Jesus has written His Word, the Bible, for the well-being of His bride. He has commissioned pastors to speak on His behalf to His bride. All of this is to encourage her, to urge her to remain faithful and to resist all temptation to be faithless and commit fornication. He holds before us the great day when He will come for the wedding, when He will clothe His bride with the white wedding garments of His perfect righteousness and take her to himself for the perfect marriage in heaven, to the glory of the Father.

He is the One who says, "Behold, I come quickly."

His coming is not an isolated event at the end of the ages.

Behold, I am continually coming! This is the idea of the book of Revelation. The three main divisions of the book revolve around the seven seals of the book, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials. There is progress in the unfolding of the secret counsel of God regarding all events in nature and history, which finally bring forth the Christ. All

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through history, Jesus is completing the gathering of His church. He sends forth the gospel ministry to the ends of the earth in order that His bride may be made perfect. At the same time, He is bringing judgment upon the wicked, in order that in the end He may justly cast all the workers of iniquity into everlasting perdition.

His coming then is directly related to the events that take place in the world about us. Jesus described it in Matthew 24 as "birth pangs." Wars, natural calamities, apostasy, and all the rest are the birth pangs of history which finally deliver Christ to us at the end.

Are you aware of this? Oh, bride of Christ, the events taking place about us shout loudly, Jesus is coming! The great upheavals in Russia and the Eastern Bloc countries have changed the political structure of the world forever. The polarization of the third world countries and the increasing threat of terrorism tell us of the nearness of the Antichrist. Even the bowels of the earth are rumbling and the rocks are rent. Terrible plagues of diseases and famine are causing a rise in the death rate throughout the world. The gospel is being brought throughout the world as never before.

Yes, Jesus is coming, and that quickly.

You may say, thousands of years is not very quick.

Jesus did not say, I come "immediately," but "quickly." The idea is "with all due speed." When President Bush declared to Saudi Arabia that we would come to their rescue and protect them quickly, it took time. We had to move more than 200,000 troops; all the heavy artillery had to be shipped by air or sea; the support services had to be arranged; and political pressures had to be applied. It was amazing how quickly all this was done, yet it did take time. So with Jesus' coming again. All the events are taking place with speed. God's time clock is ticking away steadily and persistently in order that all the plans of God and the events which must come to pass are fully realized. How reassuring are the words of II

Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Jesus understands that we might grow impatient.

Love is that way. When you long for His presence, it seems to take so long. With eagerness we await the wedding, and we ask, where is Jesus? There is also the aspect of temptation. Our faithfulness to Jesus is being sorely tested. The devil comes with every form of evil. He flirts with us, trying to get us to be unfaithful toward our Lord. How frequently we commit spiritual fornication. This wears on us. There are moments when we are inclined to give up. Often we sink into deep despair, fully aware that we are not worthy of awaiting a marriage to the Son of God. We fear whether we will be able to endure unto the end, threatened as we are by the wiles of the devil as he tempts us, and by the prospect of the suffering required if we are to be loyal to our Husband.

Hence He added words of assurance that we can count on it, He is coming.

Expressions of this are found in verse 6. The first one reads, "These sayings are faithful and true."

"Faithful" reminds us that they are not fictitious, not a pipe dream, but authentic. They come to us from the Lord Jesus and are exactly according to His promise. They are "true" in that we can count on them, we can place all our trust in them. May God give us the eyes to perceive the meaning of all the events taking place about us and to cling to the blessed hope of His coming. It is real!

Such a guarantee, however, is no better than the person making it. How often we get burned in business deals because of empty promises. The Lord understands and adds, "The Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." Can anyone find a more sure foundation for future glory than words which come by way of the

prophets, who are instructed by Jesus, who carries the authority of the Lord God Himself? Some Greek manuscripts suggest the translation, "Lord God of the spirit of the prophets." Whichever one we use, the point is the same: The word of the prophets is not that of men, but of the Spirit of the Living God.

One conclusion we may draw from this is that we can safely place our future in the hands of our Bridegroom who is coming for us.

No wonder then that we read in verse 10, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." This book must be open and read for now. It forms the content of the gospel for the precious bride of Christ who eagerly awaits His coming. The day will come when it is too late. This is expressed in verse 11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." In the end there will be no more opportunity for salvation. Now is the day of salvation!

Let us then respond as the bride by appreciating the closing exhortation, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

Are you one of the bride of Christ? Out of true faith we say with the spirit, "Come!" By saying this we realize the great calling we have to be faithful. The grace for such faithfulness comes in the way of prayer, reading the Scriptures, regular worship on the Lord's day (see vs. 9).

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! □

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I need not know the path ahead;  
My Saviour's walked that way,  
And knows each step that I should take,  
He'll show me day by day.

— SB, February 1, 1932



# The Approach to Covenant Children (5)

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In response to a letter from a theologian and a Christian educator in the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (*The Standard Bearer*, Nov. 1, 1990), I have examined the covenant conception that views baptized children as unregenerated until such time as they are converted by the gospel. I have judged this conception to be biblically and creedally unreformed. A main criticism is that it makes good, healthy child-rearing impossible, practically.

It remains to explain and defend the Protestant Reformed approach to the baptized children as elect and regenerated. This must be done in light of the fear, or charge, that the view of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) amounts to the theory of "presumptive regeneration." This was the implied charge in the letter of the Netherlands Reformed men:

*The NRC view disagrees with both presumptive and dormant regenerative views which imply regarding children as regenerate before fruits of regeneration are evident.*

This was also the fear of a sympathetic correspondent in a letter in *The SB* of November 15, 1990. Referring to my assertion that we must "approach them (the baptized children of the covenant) as elect children in (our) teaching and discipline," the correspondent asked, "Does this perhaps not lean towards presumptive regeneration, that is, an equally dangerous error of presuming our children to be regenerated unless it shows otherwise in their lives?"

Perhaps others have asked themselves as they read my defense of approaching the children of believers as saved children of God, "Does he then suppose that all the natural children of believers are elect, re-born children of God?"

Before taking up the matter of presumptive regeneration, I should give a word of explanation about the charge of the men of the NRC that the PR position involves the teaching of "dormant regeneration." Not only do they suggest this in their letter, but one of them, Mr. James W. Beeke, also explicitly states that this is the doctrine of the PRC in his book, *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults* (Vol. I, pp. 367, 368, 372).

By "dormant regeneration" is meant that one may be born again with the new life of Christ in early childhood but remain unconverted for many years even though he lives under the sound preaching and teaching of God's Word. The seed of regeneration lies inactive in the heart of the person. It does not sprout into the fruit of faith, repentance, and a godly walk.

The PRC have always rejected dormant regeneration. Herman Hoeksema expresses their rejection of dormant regeneration in his *Reformed Dogmatics* in the chapter on "The Preaching of the Word":

*Some maintain that the seed of regeneration implanted in the heart of man may lie dormant for many years before it develops into conscious and active life. They claim that it is possible for a man to live in sin and iniquity; that although all his life he has*

*been under the influence of the gospel, he does not have any living part with it and is not able to see the things of the kingdom of God, and that he continue in this state for 40, 50, or 60 years, while all this time he has the seed of regeneration within his heart. Thus a person may probably be converted when he is 70 or 80 years of age, although he is regenerated from infancy. With this we cannot agree. It may very well be that a seed in nature can continue to live if it has no contact with the soil whatever for many years. But it is quite inconceivable that a seed can be implanted in the soil and be under the influence of rain and sunshine without sprouting into life and bringing forth fruit. And the same may be said of the seed of regeneration that is implanted in the heart and that comes under the influence of the preaching of the gospel. It will certainly reveal itself in faith and conversion, and that too, without delay. The work of God is throughout characterized by perfect wisdom. It would be foolish to suppose that the seed of regeneration could lie dormant and inactive for many years without ever showing any signs of life (p. 650; cf. also his *Believers and Their Seed*, pp. 134, 135).*

It is rather the teaching of the PRC that the Word of God, taught by godly parents at home and preached by the minister at church and in catechism, brings the new life of Christ in the elect child's heart to fruition in faith, repentance, and good works when the child is very young. With keen insight into the ways of the Holy Spirit with the rearing of children as regards both earthly life and



heavenly life, Hoeksema asserts the early influence of the Word on regenerated children in the covenant.

*No one can say, of course, at how early an age the Holy Spirit and the living and abiding Word of God can and do quicken the seed of regeneration and thus bring the faculty of faith to a more or less conscious activity.*

*Worldly educators realize rather clearly that from earliest infancy the whole outside world streams in upon the consciousness of the child and makes its impression upon that consciousness. Modern educators stress the importance of surrounding the child even in its cradle with objects, sounds, shapes, and colors and smells that are calculated to make the most favorable impression upon the little infant. Why then cannot the Holy Spirit in connection with the living Word of God impress the little child with all the influence of a truly covenant home, the singing of psalms or hymns, the playing of sacred music, the simple prayer uttered by the parents at the cradle, the folding of the little hands of the infant in prayer at the table in the high-chair, and many other influences of the Christian home, to bring the faculty of faith into some sort of conscious activity? We know very little, of course, of the life of an infant. But it is certain that long before what is usually considered the age of discretion there can be and is a decided influence of the Word of God upon the covenant child (Reformed Dogmatics, p. 653).*

In support of Hoeksema's contention that the Holy Spirit of Christ brings regeneration to activity in the covenant child at a very young age is the biblical witness to John the Baptist's exuberant leap of joy at Christ's presence when the regenerated John was still in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41, 44).

One implication is that godly parents establish a spiritual atmosphere for their children from infancy. Recently, I spent a weekend with a young married couple in the PRC. I praised God to see that it was their deliberate practice to involve their little son, not quite two, in daily prayer, singing of the Psalms, and reading of the Scriptures. He folded his hands, closed his eyes, and said his "amen" at prayer; said "Bible" and then sat

silently at the reading of the Scriptures; and listened to father and mother sing a Psalm. I rejoiced almost as much to hear that they had resolved to banish television from their home — the most destructive influence upon covenant children in the long history of the devil's war with the church's children. This is real power for the conversion of regenerated children in their earliest years.

In keeping with their belief that the Spirit will not allow the seed of regeneration to lie dormant, parents in the PRC take their children to church as soon as they can sit quietly. Nor do they send them out to a "children's church," whatever this may be. But they keep them in Christ's church where the Savior is in the midst of His people and where the Spirit binds Himself to work faith. Also, the PRC give instruction in the Word to the little children in catechism from the age of five or six.

Another implication of the early influence of the Word upon regenerated covenant children is that their conversion is a gradual process, rather than the dramatic, instantaneous event envisioned by those who view the children as unsaved. As the wheat seed in rich soil sprouts gradually and almost imperceptibly under gentle rain and warm sun, so does the seed of regeneration sprout in the life and experience of the covenant child under father's prayers and Bible-reading, mother's Bible stories and singing, and the preacher's sermons in church and teaching in catechism.

As for those elect children born and raised in the sphere of the covenant who are not converted until much later in life (and there are such children, even though they are the exception), they were not regenerated in infancy, but at the time of their conversion.

It is certainly possible that a regenerated child has a fierce struggle with the doubt and lust of his sinful nature. Indeed, this is always his experience. This is the experience also of the regenerated grownup. It is also possible that a regenerated young person falls

deeply into what the Canons of Dordt calls "great and heinous sins" (V/4). But it is impossible that a regenerated child completely fails to respond to the pure Word of God for years. It is not possible that the Christ in one's heart is totally unresponsive to the Christ in the gospel.

No, the PRC emphatically do not hold dormant regeneration.

"Dormant regeneration," in fact, is an oxymoron — a combination of contradictory words, like "cruel kindness." Regeneration is the renewal of the heart with the new life of the risen Jesus Christ. This new life is fairly crying out to God for the Word so that it may sprout and blossom and bring forth fruit for the comfort of the one regenerated and for the glory of the regenerating God.

The rejection of dormant regeneration by the PRC takes concrete form in the life of the congregations. When a young person comes to years and manifests no faith, no heartfelt interest in confessing Christ, no repentance, and no godliness of walk, he is not tolerated in the church as one who probably possesses a dormant regeneration (or for that matter as one who may someday come to a conversion-experience). Instead, after patient labor by the consistory, he is cut off from the church by discipline as an unbelieving and ungodly person. Thus the congregation is preserved as a "new lump" from the "old leaven" of unbelief and unholiness (I Cor. 5:7ff.) in the carnal seed of the saints. □ (to be continued) —DJE

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When I'm lonely, tempted, tried,  
Christ is ever by my side,  
He will never fail, nor lose  
One whom God in Him did choose.  
When my path is smooth or steep,  
When I wake, or when I sleep,  
God in mercy, and in love,  
Gives me grace to look above.

—SB, March 1, 1932



## Decency And Order

Rev. Ron Cammenga

# Family Visitation (2)

### Method of Conducting Family Visitation

No matter what the specific method followed in family visitation, thorough preparation on the part of elders and ministers is necessary. They must know the specific family situation of the family being visited. And they must be prepared to bring the Word of God to the specific situations in that home and family.

Because these are official visits, family visitation must be conducted by a committee of elders, usually two. In some Reformed churches today, family visitation is conducted by individual elders. This is both dangerous and un-Reformed. Decency and good order demand that this work be done by a committee of at least two elders.

Various methods have been followed. Use has been made of the question method, some even following a prescribed list of questions. The discussion method has been used, attempting to involve the members of the family as much as possible in the visits. The best method is perhaps a combination of the two. There are certain important questions that should be asked, that need to be asked, year after year. A general discussion will hardly lend itself to the obtaining of information the elders must have before leaving each home.

Nevertheless, there ought to be flexibility as far as method is con-

cerned. For one thing, the needs of the family being visited will have a bearing on the method used. For another thing, one minister or elder is going to be more comfortable with one method, while another minister or elder will be more comfortable with another method. Just as there are differences in pulpit style, there must be some freedom in the method of conducting family visitation. Rigid insistence on a particular method must not take precedence over the purpose of family visitation. Instead, method must be subservient to the over-all purpose being aimed at.

No matter what method is followed, it is usually most profitable to conduct the visits around a specific theme and passage of Scripture. This should be chosen by the consistory. It is well that at the beginning of the family visitation schedule the minister preach on this text, or a fitting passage connected to the general theme. This will provide him the opportunity of reminding the congregation of the importance and the benefits of family visitation, as well as prepare the congregation for a discussion of the theme on the visits.

One warning: Do not neglect the children! Make them as well as their parents feel involved in the visit. Ask them questions relating to their faith in their Savior, their conduct in the home, in church, and in school. The children expect to be asked some questions, and feel slighted if they are overlooked.

Written reports of each visit made should be submitted to the consistory. The reports should be specific and not general. Mention should be made of any problems encountered on the visits.

A word of caution may be in order at this point. Individual problems that arise in the course of a visit should not be pursued in the presence of the entire family. Instead, arrangements should be made by the elders for a private meeting at a later time.

### Threats to Family Visitation

There are various threats to family visitation that we ought to be on our guard against.

One serious threat is that family visitation is discarded altogether. Often family visitation is criticized as being of little practical value, a practice that has outlived its usefulness in the life of the church, a mere tradition that can safely be dispensed with. This is the trend in many Reformed churches today. From time to time sentiments of this nature are expressed even in our own churches.

There is also the danger that family visitation deteriorates into a mere social visit. Where family visitation has not been totally discarded, it has often been reduced to a mere social call by the pastor and the elders. This is wrong! It must never be forgotten that family visitation, as much as preaching, catechetical instruction, discipline, and dispensing of alms, belongs to the official labor of the church. The elders and ministers must be aware of this. The members need also to keep this in mind. In this connection, Prof. Hoeksema writes:

*Family visitation is conducted by those who are called to office by Christ Himself. When a pastor or elder visits in the home of the sheep on the occasion of family visitation, it is not the same as when that same pastor and elder make a social call or come on a Sunday evening's visit. The conversa-*

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tion of family visitation between pastor and sheep is not the same as a mere brother-to-brother conversation, even though the latter should be a highly spiritual conversation. Family visitation involves — both for those who visit and for those who are visited — an official visit. ("Family Visitation," PKTJ, p. 29.)

There is also the danger — real in our churches where family visitation is a long-standing practice — that family visitation degenerates into a mere formality. The necessary questions are asked; the expected answers are given. Everybody goes home heaving a sigh of relief that family visitation is over for at least another year. Nothing could be more destructive to the practice of family visitation — as to any aspect of religion — than mere formality. Better we ban the practice than that it degenerate into such a worthless counterfeit.

Yet another threat to family visitation is a lack of cooperation on the part of the family being visited. At times it happens that the family resents really the presence of the minister and the elders and views family visitation as an unwelcome intrusion into their personal lives. The result is that they do not "open up" to the minister and the elders. Their answers are as brief and vague as possible. Visits under these conditions accomplish little or nothing. In family visitation the people of God must willingly give themselves to the inspection of the elders. They must be honest and open with the elders, and attempt to make family visitation as beneficial as possible for themselves and for the other members of their family.

Finally, it is also a danger that family visitation degenerates into a gripe session. Then family visitation becomes the occasion on which all kinds of complaints are lodged against fellow church members and all kinds of criticism leveled against the minister and the elders. Elders and ministers must not allow this to happen on family visitation. This is not the purpose of family visitation nor the place for this sort of thing. When this begins to happen, it must be stopped, and mem-

bers must be pointed to the right way to deal with their grievances, if they are convinced that their grievances are legitimate and weighty.

#### Benefits of Family Visitation

The benefits of the practice of family visitation are many. We must be convinced of these benefits if the practice is not only going to survive in our churches, but flourish.

First of all, there are benefits for the elders. Family visitation provides an opportunity for the eldership to become acquainted firsthand with the spiritual condition of the flock over which they have been given oversight by Jesus Christ. The elders will also be able to determine whether or not the members, especially the young people, are making progress in the Christian life by diligent use of the means of grace. Family visitation will aid the elders in their oversight of the preaching, not only by providing occasion for analyzing whether and to what extent the preaching is edifying and instructing the members, but also by bringing to their attention needs that ought to be addressed in the preaching. Family visitation will also give the elders opportunity to engage in necessary pastoral work, thus giving occasion to demonstrate the care and concern of the office of Jesus Christ for His people.

Also for the members of the congregation, the benefits of family visitation are outstanding. In family visitation the members are reminded of and exhorted in their calling as God's people in the midst of the world. Needed instruction, encouragement, comfort, and rebuke are received. Through the visits the congregation is built up in its unity. The visits result in a deeper appreciation for the office-bearers. Family visitation especially serves to strengthen family life, fostering proper spiritual relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and the children mutually. And the visits serve to encourage the members in their Christian duties, as for example, prayer, reading and study of God's

Word, covenant instruction of children, attendance at divine worship services, supporting faithfully the ministry of the Word, and contributing to the relief of the poor.

God grant that family visitation remain an institution in our churches. And God grant that we continue to enjoy the benefits that result from family visitation. □

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### "Fear Not, Thou Worm Jacob; I Will Help Thee"

Before the hills, ere time began,  
Thy love was shown for guilty man;  
Such wonders in Thy Word we see,  
Unfold them, Lord, our Helper be.

While of the serpent's curse we read,  
There's triumph in the woman's Seed,  
From sin and death to set us free,  
Because Thou would'st our Helper be.

Prophets and patriarchs of old  
Desired the Saviour to behold;  
They longed His glorious day to see,  
Believed Christ would our Helper be.

Accomplished all the wondrous plan,  
Designed to rescue guilty man;  
Yet to believe, we come to Thee,  
Lord, give us grace, our Helper be.

Because Thou hast our Helper been,  
A little in Thy Word we've seen;  
Do Thou give faith increasingly,  
And still we pray, our Helper be.

— SB, February 15, 1932



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## *A Cloud of Witnesses*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

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# Columba: Missionary to Scotland

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Noah, after awaking from his drunken stupor, had blessed his two sons, Shem and Japheth. Japheth's blessing was that the day would come when he would dwell in the tents of Shem. With the work of the apostle Paul, and in subsequent centuries, God brought Japheth into the tents of Shem as the church was established first in Antioch, then in Syria, Greece, and Italy, and finally in the whole of Europe. Gradually Europe, where during the time of the apostle Paul and for many centuries later cruel and fierce barbarians lived, was brought the gospel, was Christianized, and in time became the center of the church.

At the time of the Reformation, when Rome had become apostate, Europe was split between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Only very few countries became completely Protestant, and these were not Lutheran, but Calvinistic. One can count them on one hand: The Netherlands, England, and Scotland.

Some of the greatest heroes of the faith were to be found in Scotland. There the Covenanters shed their blood for the cause of the gospel as they fearlessly raised their voices in protest against all forms of papacy and prelacy. There was established the purest of Pres-

byterian churches. From them the great truths of Calvinism spread, especially into our own country. None fought so fiercely and bitterly against every corruption of the pure gospel as the Scots.

It is hard to imagine, then, that, prior to the sixth century, Scotland was inhabited by some of the most fierce, warlike, superstitious, idol-serving and reprehensible heathen among all the barbarian tribes, the Picts and the Scots. It was the gospel which subdued them; and it was the gospel which established in Scotland the church of Christ.

The story of the conversion of Scotland is the story of the great missionary, Columba.

Columba was born probably on December 7, 521 in County Donegal in that part of Ireland which is known today as Ulster, or Northern Ireland. He was born a Celt from royal parents. The Celts were an ancient barbarian tribe in Western Europe who were supplanted by the Germanic tribes and who were the ancestors of the Irish, Welsh, Scots, and Picts. He is pictured by later biographers as a rather wild child, full of energy and mischief and always looking for a good fight. He was tall and strong, possessed a powerful and pleasing voice, and had a mischievous sense of humor. Raised from childhood in the Christian faith, he soon showed promise of intellectual achievement. He grew up in the company of a people who were quarrelsome and given to fighting; who though in some superficial sense were Christian, nevertheless retained many pagan customs and superstitions; who were fond of music and song; and who were

characterized by a rough individualism. All these native characteristics were woven into the makeup of Columba.

Under the influence of his tutor, a priest named Cruithnechan, he soon became religiously inclined. His habit of spending a part of each day in a little church soon earned him the affectionate nickname, Columcille — Colum of the church. Under the later tutelage of two different Finns, he began a systematic study of Scripture and was introduced to the monastic life. Eventually he became a deacon and a priest. As an ordained minister of the gospel, Columba was instrumental in the establishment of a couple of monasteries and several churches in Northern Ireland.

However, in about 561 two events took place which altered Columba's life forever.

The first arose out of his interest in the Scriptures. Eager to have his own copy of the Scriptures, he copied secretly the Psalms and the Gospels from a manuscript which Finnian had taken with him from Rome. When Finnian unexpectedly came upon Columba while he was copying, Finnian demanded the copy. When Columba refused, the matter was submitted to the king, who ruled in Finnian's favor. But Columba was adamant in his refusal and was consequently branded a rebel.

The second incident arose out of the first. The king who ruled against Columba was Columba's cousin. A rift developed between them to the point where it led to open war. Columba, at the head of his clansmen, went to battle against the king and decisively defeated

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him. The slaughter was great and at least 2,000 of the king's followers were killed.

After the slaughter, Columba was so smitten with remorse over the body-strewn battlefield that he determined to live the rest of his life in penance. Whether he was forced to flee Ireland because of these two events, or whether the choice to leave was his own, is not known. But, shortly after these events, in 562 or 563, when Columba was over forty years old, he took with him twelve companions and sailed for the coast of Scotland. After a rough and perilous journey and a lengthy search for a good place to settle, he found the small island of Hy, now known as Iona, where he determined to live. The island was a treeless, somewhat barren piece of land measuring about three miles in length by one mile in width, but had a breath-taking view of the sea and of the coast of Scotland.

Here, on this small island, he built a monastery, which was not an imposing structure, but a small group of huts which included a refectory, a library, a guesthouse, a kiln, a mill, two barns, and a small church. Here the monastic life was organized around Columba and consisted of three groups of residents: the seniors, who were responsible for leading in worship, preserving manuscripts, and teaching the other residents; the workers, who performed the manual labor necessary to keep the monastery functioning; and the juniors, who were responsible for miscellaneous tasks. It was a hive of activity, but was devoted especially to the training of missionaries to the inhabitants of what is now Scotland. Columba, in his own words, had now dedicated his life to bringing as many heathen to Christ as were killed in the battle with his cousin, the king.

Missionary work in those days was difficult. It required that the monks who were trained on Iona, and Columba himself, go to the mainland, where they were in constant peril of fierce people, wild animals, rugged terrain, an unforgiving climate, and the enmity of the

Druids (the priests of pagan religion who hated with all their souls the arrival of Christianity). Here too the Picts and Scots lived, who, though Christianity had made some inroads into their land, were still basically the barbarians they were long before our Lord was born in Bethlehem.

The stories that are told of his work are, in many instances, legendary. His biographers relate how he counteracted the magic of the Druids with miracles of healing; how he drowned out the chanting voices of the Druid priests with songs of praise to God sung in his own booming voice; how he gained the respect of Brude the king of the Picts who lived in a castle on the shores of Loch Ness; how he labored with unrestrained zeal for the cause of the gospel. But, stripped of all these legendary stories, the work of Columba shines as a light in the midst of the darkness of heathendom. His missionary labors were blessed by God in Scotland so that the true gospel was proclaimed there and the church of Jesus Christ was gathered. His missionary zeal is an example to all those whom God throughout the years calls to this difficult work.

He returned briefly to Ireland, the land of his birth, to attend various meetings of the church. His prestige and the respect in which he was held made all his past troubles in Ireland seem irrelevant. He worked towards the settlement of various disputes which had begun to trouble the church in Ireland, and his influence often led to a successful solution to these difficulties.

But his heart was in Scotland. To Scotland he returned, and in Scotland he died. On the last day of his life at the age of seventy-five, he spent his time in transcribing a Psalter. In the late night, at midnight, he arose with difficulty from his hard bed to take part in the traditional midnight service. He arrived somewhat earlier than his fellow monks to kneel in prayer before God. Weakened by years of difficult labor, burdened with cares of the church, and bearing the ravages of many years, he suddenly collapsed. He revived briefly when

his fellow monks arrived, took the few moments he had left to bestow on them his final blessing, and died peacefully in the early hours of Sunday, June 9, 597.

The character of Columba was never changed throughout his life, for God gives to each man his character and personal characteristics at birth. But his love of fighting, his robust constitution, his tendency towards entering into every controversy, were tempered by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And, under the tempering powers of sanctification, he became the powerful missionary that he was.

He possessed great leadership abilities. He was a man of impressive and attractive appearance. God had blessed him with a powerful voice. His singing, unusually beautiful, could be heard above all the gathering. His melodious voice was eloquent as he brought the gospel to the heathen among the Scots and Picts. But he was also forthright and uncompromising in the cause of the gospel. An old Gaelic eulogy speaks of him as "not a gentle hero." He had no patience with evil-doers and could not abide duplicity. He was and always remained quick to reprimand sinners, and he would tolerate no shame upon the gospel which he loved and preached.

There was also another side of his gifted personality. He was a man who showed great love for the poor and downtrodden. His deeds of mercy and compassion were known throughout the land. He possessed a deep love for the beauties of God's creation and reveled in the glories of God's handiwork in trees and moors, flowers and sunshine, heather and wildlife. All this was possible because he possessed a poetic soul. Some of his poetry has remained and the reading of it is still enjoyable.

It is true that he lived in an age when the Romish Church had already departed from the pure worship of God. But Columba was his own man more than he was a son of his church. That is, he was more Christ's man than a man in all things loyal to the Romish faith. This is especially evident in his



deep devotion to the Scriptures. Although he loved the poetry of the Scriptures more than other parts, to the whole of the Scriptures he was faithful. He carried them with him wherever he went. He taught his fellow monks to honor and study the Scriptures. He preached from them and taught God's people in them. His preach-

ing was simple, direct, and, above all, biblical. He urged God's people to study and meditate on God's Word. And he preached that great and glorious theme of the Scriptures: Christ crucified. If it could be said of Patrick, missionary to Ireland, that he "lived with the Bible," the same could be said of Columba.

Through these labors (as well as those of others who braved the dangers of heathen lands to bring the gospel to barbarians — for Columba is only one example among many) God was pleased to begin to bring Japheth into the tents of Shem. □

## Paradox

(I Corinthians 1:18)

He is I AM.  
Before the world began  
He was and is.  
And by His great command  
That which was nothing  
Came to light and life as planned,  
And void became His vast domain of praise.  
Ancient of Days,  
He drew a time out of eternity  
And scooped the dust to form a man,  
And breathed eternity into a lump of clay and  
sand.  
Such foolishness for One  
Who shines more brightly than the sun  
And moon and stars of all the universe  
combined!  
Who could approach unto the Mind or  
Know the ways  
Of One Who makes His highest instrument  
of praise  
To be a man with feet of clay?  
And would not wisdom say  
That suns-a million shining bright,  
An endless day to swallow up the night —  
Be fitter worshipers than this unworthy speck  
In all the universe's wide expanse?  
What builder takes a chance  
And uses dust to make a wall?  
Did He not know that man was only fit to fall?  
And fall he did. His sin and shame  
Brought no more praise to his Creator's Name  
Than pipes untuned or violins unstrung.

And all creation left its perfect song unsung  
Because of him. Better had void remained  
Than this — God's great Creation stained.  
Then His Creative Will  
Gives birth to One more foolish still.  
He scoops the dust again,  
Presents Himself as man —  
Creator, now Redeemer.  
Now from less than dust He'll raise  
An even finer instrument of praise.  
Who else with blood would wash away  
a stain?  
Who else from dust distill a cleansing rain  
Of tears to be the only sacrifice of any worth?  
And then He promises another birth?  
More foolishness. One who has proved  
his worthlessness before  
Is granted even more!  
The mortal, fallen by his own rebellious  
choice,  
Shall yet receive immortal voice,  
A perfect song, a heavenly place  
With His Creator, face to Face.

O foolishness of God — far wiser than  
Collected wisdom of the ages known to man!  
The more I contemplate what should  
have been my end,  
The higher must my praise to Him ascend.

— Suzanne Looyenga



## Contentment

The Christian virtue of contentment is expressed in Scripture with a word that is, to say the least, surprising. Contentment is translated from a compound Greek word meaning "self" and "sufficient." Literally it means "to be sufficient of one's self, to possess enough to need no aid or support," hence, "to be independent." How surprising, in light of the fact that Scripture on every page instructs us that we are dependent upon God! We live and move and have our being in the God who is near to every one of us. And the Christian depends upon the unchanging faithfulness of God for faith, preservation, and all things. How can it ever be said that it is a virtue for the child of God to live and confess that he is independent and self-sufficient?

Contentment means that our inward state of heart and mind and soul is completely independent of the outward circumstances of life. How often it is true of us that the outward circumstances of life determine how we feel. If our way is pleasant and easy, if we have more of earthly things than we need, and if there are no troubles and problems, then we are happy and content. But if there are pain, operations, oppositions, and persecutions, then we are dissatisfied and ready to rebel. This is the very opposite of contentment. How we feel must be independent of the circumstances of life, not determined by them.

Contentment has to do with the mind; with our minds we know that all things are well for us. It has to do with the will; we do not want things to be different from what they are. It has to do with the soul; because the mind knows and the will is satisfied, the soul is at ease, filled with peace and joy.

True contentment is grounded in three great truths. First, that everything that befalls us in this life comes to us from the hand of our heavenly Father. Chance or fate have nothing to do with it. There is not a single aspect of our life that is not known by God and that was not determined by Him before the world was created. Second, contentment comes only to those who know that their way was determined in love, and the hardships of life are the loving chastisements of our Father. And finally, contentment belongs to those who believe that all things are working for their eternal salvation. All our days, God leads us according to His counsel that He may afterwards receive us into glory.

Thus the Scriptures come to us with many exhortations: be content with your wages (Luke 3:4), with raiment (I Tim. 6:8), with such things as we have (Heb. 13:5). Paul writes from prison, after a life crowded with affliction (II Cor. 11), that he has learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. Have you and I learned this? Let us apply ourselves assiduously and faithfully to the learning of this kingdom lesson. □

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*From  
Holy Writ  
Rev. George Lubbers*

## Exposition of the Song of Moses Exodus 15:1ff.

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The song, which Moses sang together with all the children of Israel, is also a psalm, in the true sense of the word. In fact, we may properly call it the prototype of all the Psalms in the Old Testament Scriptures. We trust that this will be evident in our exposition.

This was a song which is denominated *the* song of Moses, the servant of the Lord (Rev. 15:3). We hold that it is the very keynote of the Song of Moses and of the Lamb. Here the singers are those who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image, and over the



number of his name, who stand at the sea of glass before the great white throne. And the keynote of this song is this: "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord (Jehovah) God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Such is the keynote here also in Exodus 15:1ff.

We should also bear in mind that this song is not of private interpretation, but was written by a holy man, Moses, moved by the Spirit of God (II Pet. 1:19-21). Also here Moses really is searching out the time and the manner of the time of the suffering to come upon Christ and of the glory to follow (I Pet. 1:10, 11).

The entire psalm here in Exodus 15:1ff. is indicative of the universal, just dealings of God in which He deals sovereignly both with the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and with the vessels of mercy to make known to them the riches of His glory. This is upon vessels before prepared unto glory (Rom. 9:19-23).

Of this we hope to see more in our exposition of this song.

#### **The Historic Moment of This Song**

It is the hour on the clock of God that has struck; it is the predetermined "hour" of Egypt's utter destruction as a great world-power. It is the hour to destroy the cruel despot Pharaoh, to whom God had said "for this self-same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared in all the earth" (Ex. 9:16; Rom. 9:17).

Yes, the hour has struck for Israel's promised deliverance (Gen. 15:12-16). God, who is the Holy I Am, who cannot lie, heard the cry of Israel and had pity on them in wondrous love (Ex. 3:7, 8). He came down from heaven on the holy Mount Sinai. He appeared in the holy fire of the burning bush. He will fulfill all these promises made to Abraham and to his Seed forever. He is not a God of the dead but of the living; He will bring Israel out of the grave of Egypt's bondage. Ultimately He will bring all the children of Abraham out of the grave into eternal

glory and immortality and life (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38).

Yes, the hour has struck which prefigures the great hour of Christ's atoning death on the Cross and of His resurrection. This is Christ's "ex-odus" (Luke 9:29-31). For the time had come to the "fourth generation" to go up out of Egypt with their thousands. The hour has struck to destroy the Amorites, whose iniquity was now full (Gen. 15:16). All things are now ready for God to fulfill His promise concerning the multitude of the seed as they came forth from Isaac, a son out of Abraham's own loins (Gen. 15:4-6)!

And what a timely "moment"! It was so full of divine wisdom, power, and glory. It came when the water was nearly overflowing Israel, and there was no human help possible. It was the darkest hour of Jacob's children. Then God came, and it was with rapid, trip hammer blows, that the mighty Pharaoh is crushed to submission. God is showing the awful majesty of His wrath upon Egyptland. All this because God had heard the cry of His beloved people in boundless grace and mercy. Says God to Moses, "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them" (Ex. 3:9).

God in heaven was moved with divine empathy. Egypt had touched the apple of His eye! And God is the great avenger of evil perpetrated against them without a cause — except that they are a holy people who will have nothing of Egypt's idol gods! It is a terrible thing to persecute the saints.

It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Then He bowed the heavens and came down. He sent ten plagues upon Egypt and her king. He honored the difference between them, the good and the evil. It was just judgment upon the vessels of wrath. Their firstborn died in the night of the Passover, when the blood of propitiation was on the doorposts of the houses of believing Israel. And Israel, the Firstborn

of God, lived. Says the Holy Spirit centuries later by the mouth of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." It was the voice of the Israel of God, the church, the mother of Jesus that cried in her birth pangs (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15).

And God led Israel, the children of Jacob, out of Egypt like a flock. His great Shepherd's staff comforted her that night. Yes, He led them toward the Red Sea. He deliberately led them into an impasse, where they were helpless, seemingly easy fodder for Pharaoh's war-machine. Had Pharaoh succeeded, the Shiloh from Judah's tribe could not have been born from the virgin Mary! What hellish, satanic glee must have been on the faces of Pharaoh and his fellow henchmen. They hastened their war steeds to the battle, fearlessly crying out "hea," to the sound of the roar of the horses hoofs. In maddening pace they descended upon Israel.

Then Israel cried unto the LORD in their distress. Yes, some cried in hopeless unbelief against Moses and against God. But God in His longsuffering over Israel answered and rescued Israel speedily. He came and made a path through the sea for Israel to march to the promised land. It was such that the sea saw God and fled. It obeyed the mighty voice of God. And Israel obeyed the command of God to Moses and "went forward!" (Ex. 14:15). They were walking on the blood-sprinkled way to the great land of promise, the Sanctuary.

And God was their rereward. He became a protective wall between Israel and the pursuing army of Pharaoh. It was the cloud of glory which was God's face shining upon Israel as a gracious face, coming to bless and help in saving power and mercy. His face was against the wicked to cut off their remembrance from the earth. And they all sank as a stone into the depths of the sea, to be seen nevermore!

It was a new day that dawned upon Israel that morning on the other side of the sea. It was a festal day. It was a day to see in proper perspective what God had



wrought. That is the genius of the song which Moses and the children of Israel sang. God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham. He had shown that He was unlike any other god. He was glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Yes, truly God is a mighty warrior, a man of war is He. Jehovah is His name! He is the I-AM-THAT-I-AM. Thus He would reveal Himself in all future generations. I, Jehovah, change not, in my sovereign mercies upon you, O Israel, therefore you are not consumed (Mal. 3:6).

At this point in her history, Israel received by divine inspiration the first psalm recorded in the Bible. Psalms are sacred songs. They are musical, victorious anthems. The

very name "psalm" means "compositions." They are not merely read as prose. They are sung from the believing heart and with sanctified lips.

#### The Prophetic Perspective of this Song

In the first place we would point out that this song is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, in its very warp and woof prophetic. Unless this is seen, the song is not clear and lucid. When studied it will be seen how true it is that also here we have the testimony of Jehovah-Jesus. It "is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

This we indicated briefly in our introductory observations in this essay. In Revelation 15 there is mentioned in one breath "the song

of Moses" and "the song of the Lamb." Both are songs that reflect the great deeds of God's judgments, as these are seen in the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath upon the wicked beast, the antichristian world-powers as they aim to destroy utterly the people of God, the church of Christ in the world. And because the beast as represented by Pharaoh, and the beast as represented by a godless Nero, are the same in nature, be it at a different date, they both fall under the final outpouring of the vials of the wrath of God, and are cast by God Almighty into the sea as a stone (Ex. 15:5, 16; Rev. 18:20, 21). □

(to be continued)

Prof. Robert Decker

## All Around Us

### ■ Jesus is coming soon!

The year of our Lord, 1990 saw several terribly significant events occur. Who at the beginning of the year would have dreamed that Communism would collapse in Eastern Europe? Who would have thought that the "cold war" would come to an end? Who would have predicted that in 1990 the Berlin Wall would be broken down and the two Germanies re-united? Would any one of sound mind have predicted a year ago that Russia would pass a law guaranteeing religious freedom during 1990, or that Romania would allow freedom of worship?

There were other events as well. Apartheid is on the way out in

South Africa. Nelson Mandela, a black political leader in South Africa, was freed last February after nearly 26 years in prison. In November leaders of both white and black churches in that country met to condemn apartheid, seek reconciliation, and plan for a segregation-free future. In the U. S. abortion dominated the headlines. After the November national elections it is unclear whether a pro-life or pro-choice position is the greater political asset.

Because of the unprecedented prosperity we enjoy in North America we hardly realize that hunger and death are daily realities for millions in this world. Over 14 million children under the age of five died in 1990 from infection and malnutrition. At least 100 million children of primary school age worldwide will never enter a classroom. Almost 23 million children are classified as severely malnourished. About half of these live in the seven nations of South Asia. Between 1980 and 1988 nearly one

million children in Southern Africa died war-related deaths—nearly a half million of these in Mozambique alone. In the U.S. 12.5 million children live in poverty, and between 6 and 10 million children under the age of 12 are hungry or vulnerable to hunger.

Add to these things the fact that persecution of the saints persists in many countries. The Middle East Christian Outreach (MECO) issued a "desperate cry for prayer for Christian believers in Lebanon." Lebanese Christian refugees fleeing East Beirut report numerous killings by Syrian troops since the Syrians ousted Lebanese General Michel Aoun last October. Also, rival Muslim and Druze forces have entered East Beirut and attacked Christians.

At the moment of this writing the world is poised for what could be catastrophic war in the desert sands of the Persian Gulf area.

Among the churches there continues to be appalling apostasy. Homosexuals are not only allowed

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full membership in the churches, but are even serving in church office. Not only is this true in "main-line" churches, it is happening among denominations which stand in the Reformed tradition, notably the GKN in the Netherlands. More and more denominations are allowing women to serve in church office. The creation/science debate continues in spite of the clear testimony of Holy Scripture on this issue. Increasingly the churches turn their attention away from the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments according to the institution of Jesus Christ, and the exercise of Christian discipline, and they concentrate instead on social issues, economic issues, and world peace.

How shall we react to all this? In faith! We shall not be discouraged or dismayed. We shall not fear. We shall understand that in the light of Holy Scripture (especially a passage such as Matthew 24) all these things mean "our redemption draweth nigh." We shall, therefore, by God's grace neither attempt to flee this world nor become its friends. We shall seek God's Kingdom and righteousness in the confidence that God will supply all our need. And, we shall live in hope, because world events and ecclesiastical events in the light of the testimony of Holy Scripture assure us that Jesus is coming . . . soon! Our fervent, daily prayer shall be: "Come Lord Jesus; yea, come quickly."

*Christianity Today  
National & International  
Religion Report*

## ■ The Reformed Alliance

*The Reformed Alliance of the Christian Reformed Church* met in Lynwood, Illinois from November 13 to 15 to discuss the recent synodical decision to open the office of minister and ruling elder to women in 1992. Thirty-nine congregations sent official delegates, while twenty more churches sent observers. According to Rev. Ralph Pontier, about 100 other observers were also present, bringing the total number of participants to around 350. According to its constitution the Alliance is an "association of Christian Reformed Councils united in effort to give effective testimony to God's truth within the Christian Reformed Church and to promote the denomination's heritage and confessional nature." Most member churches came to the November meeting asking for advice in replying to the June synod's decision to open all offices to women. The Alliance advised the councils to reaffirm the historic position and refuse to cooperate with the synod's action. While the council refused to accede to the request of two congregations that it endorse secession, the Alliance did appoint a committee (the vote was 41-35 and the issue was sharply debated) to study the practical implications involved in possible withdrawal from the denomination. Opponents argued the measure would send the wrong message and might scare people away. Further, they main-

tained that the measure would lend credence to press reports that the Alliance is schismatic. Supporters argued that the Alliance needs a forum to discuss the issue of withdrawal and be ready for it, even if the majority oppose it.

Probably because of the women issue as well as the writings of three science professors of Calvin College, the Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan has decided to withhold its quotas from Calvin College and Seminary. Classis Georgetown, in which Cornerstone CRC resides, officially reprimanded the congregation and strongly urged the church to reconsider its decision not to pay quota for the college and seminary.

What the final outcome of all this will be, only time will tell. We certainly do not glory in another denomination's troubles, especially when that denomination happens to be our "mother church." Our sympathies, of course, lie with the brothers and sisters who want to remain confessionally Reformed. If, and it appears that this is going to be the case, it is impossible to remain confessionally Reformed within the CRC, then the calling of the conservatives is to secede, as painful as that process may be.

May God give all of us who stand in the Reformed tradition much grace to "stand fast and hold the traditions which we have been taught" (II Thessalonians 2:15). □

*The Christian Observer  
The Banner*

When I wait on God in prayer,  
And I cast on Him my care,  
Then I know His love is great  
And my sins I loathe and hate.

— SB, March 1, 1932



## Taking Heed To The Doctrine

Rev. Marvin Kamps

# The Bible Is God's Word: Infallible Inspiration

Many men happily confess that the Bible is an inspired book. They will even say that this inspiration is of God. After all, the Scriptures themselves declare that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Most men then would recognize that, if they would be taken seriously by the church, they must at least pay lip service to the doctrine of inspiration. But they are determined to deny that the Bible is without error. It is the infallibility of the Word of God that is offensive to so many in our day. Consequently, they studiously avoid confessing that God's inspiration of men was infallible. Inspiration — yes. Infallibility — no! According to a report by Montgomery, far more than one half of the American clergy in the major Protestant denominations could *not agree* with the statement that the "Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God not only in matters of faith but also in historical, geographical, and other secular matters" (*God's Inerrant Word*, J.W. Montgomery, p. 22). Let us also note that to confess that the Scriptures are inspired by God would, it seems, also imply that they are inerrant. But many will not accept that implication.

The claim is made today that the Bible is indeed inerrant with regard to spiritual matters, that is, the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is argued,

however, either that there are errors in matters of history, geography, and science, or that to ask the question whether the Bible is inerrant about such secular matters is itself inappropriate. Very few men are so bold as straight forwardly to ascribe error to Scripture. Rather, men tell us that to read the Bible for factual information on history, science, and geography is to look for answers to these questions in the wrong place. The gospel is the content of Scripture. The Bible is not a science textbook. God's purpose with Scripture is to make known the good news of the gospel in Christ Jesus. With such an exclusive perspective on the content of Scripture, these same men stand aghast at the church of Jesus Christ condemning their teachings of evolution, their denial of a worldwide flood in Noah's day, their denial of the historicity of Adam and Eve, or their assertion that Adam had a mother. They are dismayed by the church's lack of acceptance and understanding, for they assure all who will hear, that they truly believe in and love the Lord Jesus. For them there is no contradiction.

Such an understanding of inspiration may appear to be helpful for the church. If we can divorce the gospel from the actual event of the self revelation of God, then all debate with a world of unbelieving scientists, historians, and others about these so-called secular matters would cease. Besides, then too the Christian scientist, historian, philosopher, and men of other "secular disciplines" could pursue their studies and work without fear of contradiction by the church institute. The church then would be

freed to preach the gospel and do the work of missions, and would no longer have to concern itself with the pronouncements of its members in matters about which the Bible does not speak authoritatively. The authority of Scripture would be limited to the matters of sin, grace, and salvation in Christ Jesus. Maybe then the church of Christ could have some peace.

But is it really that simple? And are our difficulties so easily set aside? Can the worldwide flood narrative of Genesis be declared non-factual without "corrupting the gospel"? Is it possible to reject the doctrine of an instantaneous creation, and by that very denial not also reject something of the gospel, if not all the gospel? Would not Jesus Himself of necessity be viewed as mistaken (or, worse, dishonest), for He spoke of the flood in Noah's day as a worldwide flood and as an actual miraculous work of God (Matt. 24:36-39; II Pet. 3:1-7).

It is my observation that men resent the miraculous! They refuse to believe that which they can not explain by appeal to natural causes. In addition they feel restricted and fenced in by a church that would appeal to Scripture to condemn, as unbiblical, theories that contradict the plain testimony of God's Word. This is the reason, too, why they reject the doctrine of infallible inspiration. The writing of the Bible was a miracle. It was God's work alone. This work of God cannot ultimately be explained. It is to be believed in faith. To explain this work of God is to deny it. Can one explain the sending of manna out of heaven to the Israelites in the

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wilderness? Jesus gave sight to the blind. Can anyone explain *how* this was done, other than to say that it was by the word of His command?

So too the truth of divine, infallible inspiration. Faith has as its object God. Whenever one comes face to face with God's work, he stands before the miraculous. The Bible states the fact of inspiration. We are commanded to believe this fact. Only the elect regenerated sinner can believe this truth. Here, too, they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). The fact of divine, infallible inspiration is to be believed on the testimony of God's own Word. Those who deny divine, infallible inspiration of the Scriptures have fallen into unbelief. They will not hear what the Bible says about itself. They have stopped up their ears to the Word of God, as did those who heard Stephen, when he declared to them the *miracles* of the incarnation of the Son of God and His resurrection (Acts 7:57).

Gresham Machen writes concerning the meaning of inspiration this:

*The latter doctrine means that the Bible not only is true, the writers having been so preserved from error, despite a full maintenance of their habits of thought and expression, that the resulting Book is the "infallible rule of faith and practice" (Christianity and Liberalism, p. 73).*

Further, he states:

*As a matter of fact, the doctrine of plenary inspiration does not deny the individuality of the Biblical writers; it does not ignore their use of ordinary means for acquiring information; it does not involve any lack of interest in its historical situations which gave rise to the Biblical books. What it does deny is the presence of errors that mar all other books.... But according to the doctrine of inspiration, the account is as a matter of fact a true account... (p. 74).*

Scripture teaches that God has spoken. The content of the Old Testament Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi is the speech of God. Not Moses, Joshua, David, Ezekiel, and Isaiah were speaking; but God was speaking, and these men were but His mouthpieces. That is the

simple meaning of Hebrews 1:1: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets...." Surely, the very reason to assert the fact that it was God speaking is that these men in and of themselves could not bring us God's self revelation. They were only finite, error-prone men and sinners besides. How could they then be the authors of the Word? They were not the source of their own pronouncements. God was speaking in and through them to our fathers.

In addition, Peter writes: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Here, it is emphatically stated that the prophets did not prophesy "by the will of man." They did not concoct their own messages. Rather, they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." That is, their prophecies were first given them and then they spake. Without the Holy Spirit in them they could not have given us one solitary word of the gospel. They would have not been able to declare that the great historical events of God's self revelation were indeed Jehovah God's works. They could not have understood and interpreted those miraculous events. Nor could they have applied their significance to the church. God was speaking!

It must not escape our attention that the prophecy that was spoken is identified with the written record of that revelation of God. Peter identifies the two. If you will, the spoken prophecy and the written record coalesce. They are one and the same. The written record is not inferior to the spoken prophecy in content or in power. The written record is God's Word.

In II Timothy we read: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (3:16). Here the word translated "inspiration" is literally "God breathed forth." The late, beloved H.C.

Hoeksema warns us that this expression must be understood in the passive sense. It means that God's breath is the source of Scripture. Some have tried to argue that this passage teaches only that the Scriptures are "breathing the divine spirit" (cf. *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, Dec. 1970, pp. 26-28).

The manner in which the Bible itself expresses its own origin and coming into being leaves no other conclusion possible than to confess that it is a miraculous work of our sovereign God. Scripture never attributes the source of its contents to men. The Bible itself claims to be exclusively from God.

The absolute sovereignty of God is the bedrock upon which the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture is to be understood. Deny the absolute sovereignty of God and one will be forced logically, sooner or later, to deny the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture. Only a sovereign God can bring into realization the infallible Word through the instrumentality of time-bound and culturally-conditioned men. These men were imperfect, forgetful, and sinners besides, and, therefore, could never in *their own strength* give us the Holy Scriptures. God so moved, directed, guided, and ruled over them, in respect to their persons, their time and history, the sources used, and every detail necessary to the writing of sacred Scripture, that never once did their limitations and imperfections taint or corrupt the record of God's self revelation. God chose and prepared the writers from all eternity. Think of Jeremiah and of the apostle Paul. In regard to Jeremiah we read: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (1:5). And the great apostle to the Gentiles testified: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen..." (Gal. 1:15). In this connection, it would be most beneficial to quote J.I. Packer:



To limit God's sovereignty is to undermine "sola Scriptura." This is not simply because the Bible views God's sovereignty as unlimited, though it does; it is because any such limitation strikes at the truth of inspiration. If God is not in absolute control of the free human acts generally, then he was not in absolute control of the writings done by the biblical authors, and it cannot in that case be fully true that "the mind of the Spirit is understood when the text of the document is understood." It was inevitable that Arminian and Deist theology, which both take God's governing hand away from man's self-determined actions, should have produced lowered views of inspiration and a style of exegesis which convicted the inspired authors

of making mistakes" (God's Inerrant Word, p. 57).

Let the above serve as a warning today to Reformed men and women. Deny God's sovereignty in the area of soteriology and one inevitably in his generations will accept a lower view of Scripture, to state it mildly. Error leads inexorably to more error. One cherished error requires more error, if one will not turn from his folly. Those who have been defending for decades, at all cost, an Arminian doctrine of the "offer of salvation to all" dependent upon the free-will of the sinner, now find themselves within a church affiliation that must wage a bitter battle for the doctrine of inspiration. Many Reformed churches have lost

a confessional consciousness of God's absolute sovereignty in the affairs of men. And Arminianism, with its denial of God's absolute sovereignty, leads to Modernism. Modernism is rank apostasy.

May the Lord give His people the grace ever to confess the sovereignty of God and thus, too, the miraculous character of the composition of sacred Scripture, which was made possible by the sovereignty of God over the human writers.

May our witness to the truth be used of God to turn men from the fatal error of rejecting the truth of divine, infallible inspiration, and to comfort and enlighten those who love the Lord and would honor His Word. □

## The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

# The End Times (8): The Lawless Generation

One sign of the end that ought to jump right out of the news into our faces is the sign of lawlessness. When Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24 that iniquity would abound, He said, "lawlessness would abound." Paul emphasizes the lawlessness of the last days when he says that the Antichrist is called the "man of sin," literally, the "man of lawlessness" (II Thess. 2:3), and adds that the Antichrist will be produced by the "mystery of iniquity" — again, of "lawlessness" (vs. 7). The very thing we see today in our country and in all

the world, Jesus and His apostle said would be a sign of the end.

Are your eyes open?

Our age is a lawless age, our generation a lawless people. It is not that people do not know the law, but that they hold the law in contempt. They violate the law because they acknowledge no law but their own. The law is laughed at.

Behind this contempt for the law is contempt for the Lawgiver. The law is the will of God; the authority behind the law is the authority of our sovereign God. The heart of the law is "Love God"; and the essence of lawlessness is, "I hate God." That is lawlessness at its heart.

Daniel prophesies that the head of Antichrist's empire will seek to

"change times and laws." He shall not only despise law or even ignore law, but actually change it into the very opposite. And because the spirit of Antichrist is always present, lawlessness is present and increasing.

This is not so difficult to see.

When the government *protects* children who dishonor their parents (getting abortions and purchasing birth control medicine without their consent), but *punishes* parents who discipline their children, it shows itself to be a lawless government. When our government teaches the opposite of God's Word regarding the origin of the universe, and refuses to allow God's Word to be heard, it shows itself to be a lawless government. And when our own government,

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beginning already in January of 1973 with the Roe vs. Wade decision, allows the murder of unborn infants, and at the same time refuses to execute lawless citizens, it removes all doubt. Ours is a lawless government.

When the government is lawless, it breeds a lawless generation of citizens. Students rebel against their teachers and against the government itself. Wives rebel against husbands, employees against employers. And citizens rise up against the government that feeds them. All of this is the bitter fruit of the lawlessness that began with our first parents when they revolted against God in the garden of Eden: "We will decide for ourselves what is good and right."

Nor is the family immune to lawless behavior. "For every cause" husbands and wives are telling their lawyers to go to work on their marriage. Now, marriage is no longer needed for sex; one needs only to be "ready" for it, whatever that means. The law of God in the seventh commandment is despised. I think of the rampage the homosexuals are on across the land, "leaving the natural use of the woman" and burning "in their lust one towards another" (Rom. 1:26). Justly, they receive "in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (vs. 27). Children are abandoned by their parents so that the awful question of the prophet, "can a mother forget her sucking child?" must be answered with an equally horrifying, "Yes, and frequently." The institution of marriage and the family is set on its ear by our lawless generation.

But this is not even the worst.

Matthew 24's prophecy of iniquity abounding refers to *the church*. Jesus had an eye on the woeful condition of the church, whose love waxed cold. You see, only those who "loved" can "wax cold" in love.

The church is lawless today almost beyond imagination. Failing to preach about the authority of God vested in the government and elder and school-teacher, the church has the gall to teach that re-

bellion is proper, and the audacity to fly the flag of Christ over its deviltry. A few years back, the leader of one of the largest Protestant denominations in our country said, "When a government fails to provide justice, peace or freedom for all its citizens, it is distorting true order; then Christians should ... seek to bring the needed change, even at the cost of disobeying the government." That is lawlessness.

Deeper yet is the church's failure to preach that the standard, the authority, for all law is the Word of God. Now the Scripture is outdated (stopped being applicable some years ago). Now the Bible is not to be taken literally ("in six days," you say?). The law is man; the standard, science; the goal, pleasure.

With overwhelming grief the believer weeps who loves God's law.

"Because iniquity abounds, the love of many shall wax cold." Another translation might be, "Because lawlessness abounds, the love of many shall be *blown* cold." The love of man for God, for Christ, for the Scripture, for the neighbor, is chilled by an icy wind blowing through the churches.

This is a *result* of lawlessness, and not the other way around. Jesus did not say, "Because love waxes cold, lawlessness will abound." It is not true that first love cools, and then there is lawlessness. That may happen, but that is not what Jesus said. Because lawlessness fills the church today, love for God, God's Christ, God's Word, and God's people, waxes cold.

That's practical, especially for you young people.

Some think that they can be lawless in the church, without worry. Claiming they will be able to rekindle the love of God in their hearts, or that lawlessness does nothing to quench their love for God, they are reckless in their lives. They are mistaken! The man who lives in lawlessness will also find that inevitable result — his love cools.

I say, that is practical for young people. Young people, young adults, please do not think that you can "sow your wild oats" for a few

years until there is a good reason to become responsible, make confession of faith, and live a godly life of love for God. Let the Word of God warn you here: there is no guarantee that your lawlessness will not blow an icy wind on your heart so that there is no love of God, and you will never find your way back!

Lawless behavior also cools your love for your neighbor. Has your behavior been lawless in your dating relationships? Think about it, very, very carefully. What we sow, we also reap. If we sow the wind, we reap the whirlwind of a dreadful chilling of love.

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Many shall wax cold in love. A majority of church-goers will practice lawlessness with the "Lawless One." And the love of the majority of church-goers will be blown cold with an icy wind that rages through the church. This is Jesus' testimony.

This gives us a different picture of the end times than some would paint. This is different from the view of the end times that looks for the world to become better and better and for the size of the church to be swelled through the conversion of multitudes and even nations. No, the world is always the world, exhausting the resources of sin. The church becomes smaller and smaller. Many will be deceived by false doctrine; many will follow after the Antichrist; many will be offended because of persecution; the love of many will wax cold because of iniquity.

This is possible in some because their love was never true love. They are baptized in the church, brought up in the ways of God, even confess their faith. Others join the church because it is fashionable, or because their future spouse is a member. But because they abound in iniquity, what love they thought they had for God and for the church is blown cold. The end of them is damnation, for only those that endure to the end shall be saved.

In others, love waxes cold but will not be lost. Children of God cannot perish; but the flame of their love for God and their neighbor



grows so dim, one would think there was no life there. But God is faithful to take them to glory. Still, the horror in that case, often, is that their children are cut off. They are not taught the love of God. There is no love for God in them. *They* perish.

Young people, endure to the end! You are called to stand opposed to the lawless world. Be those who keep the law of God, the law that calls you to love Him and love your neighbor. In the maelstrom of this wicked world, stand strong against the current. Guard against the entrance of iniquity in your life and in your circle of friends. Talk

about it. Pray fervently for strength.

In that way, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ preserves you unto the end, the very end. By the grace of God, nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God! And your love for Him and for your neighbor will flame on brightly into eternity.

#### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some further examples of the world or the church "changing times and seasons," that is, turning laws inside out?
2. Discuss some ways that young people are tempted to be lawless. How can this be combatted?
3. What is the Christian young per-

son's duty toward the lawlessness of our government and society? What is his duty toward the lawlessness in the church? Make sure your answers are based on the Bible.

4. In connection with the quotation from the church leader where he called the people to disobey the government, discuss Romans 13.

5. Discuss the Psalmist's (paraphrased in *The Psalter*) expression, "with overwhelming grief I weep." In what context was this said? Does it apply today?

6. Discuss how lawless behavior in dating can affect a dating relationship (see the reference to that in the article). □

## Into All The World

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

# Mission Principles (II): The Objects

One of the concerns of any true church is that for missions and evangelism. It is biblically inaccurate to say that evangelism and missions is the chief purpose or the exclusive purpose of the church. It is equally inaccurate to say that evangelism is not one of the chief concerns of the church. The true church will have a genuine, Scripturally-directed concern to proclaim the gospel to the fullest of its ability.

It is essential that clear, biblical principles are hitched to the wagon of fervent, biblical activity. A team of horses without a loaded wagon is as useless as a wagon without the team of horses. We do not want principles without activity. Nor do we want activity without

principles. The truth is to be the force which leads or drives genuine, God-honoring activity.

The first principle, which was described in a previous article of this rubric, is that the church of Christ **MUST** do this work. The explicit command of Christ, the King and Head of the church, is to go into all the world (Matt. 28:19), and to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). The church of Christ **MUST** labor to fulfill this sacred calling and privilege according to the measure of its God-given ability. Obedience must be joyfully and zealously rendered. King Jesus has spoken!

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In this article we will consider the objects of mission work.

To whom does King Jesus direct this work?

The answer is strikingly clear and simply stated. "Go ye therefore, and teach **ALL NATIONS**" (Matt. 28:19). "Go ye into **ALL**

**THE WORLD**, and preach the gospel to **EVERY CREATURE**" (Mark 16:15).

It is immediately obvious that the task is very great. Do I hear someone say that such a task is impossible? That seems to be the case. It is far beyond not only the ability of any individual congregation but even the resources of the largest of denominations to teach all nations and preach to every creature. If the object of mission work is to be "all nations," then it would seem that the task is impossible.

Two considerations must be made. First, Jesus presents two encouragements equal in greatness to the task He gives. He tells the disciples and us that He is given all authority in heaven and on earth, and that He, with this all-encompassing authority, is with the church unto the end of the age. The second consideration is that Jesus gives this seemingly impossi-

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ble task to the true church of Christ collectively as she is manifested both around the world and in every age. Any given individual congregation does not have to go into every nation by itself.

In light of these two considerations, we can draw two quick conclusions. First, the fact that the individual church cannot go everywhere does not remove from it the responsibility to obey her Lord. As is the case with all responsibilities, that of the local congregation to do mission or evangelistic work is not determined by its providentially set limitations, but by divine commandments. Each local church must obey the command of its Lord. Secondly, the church's obedience must be characterized by zeal. It must do whatever it can, and it must do so to the best of its ability, whether that be in its own evangelism work or in combining its efforts with its fellow churches in a denomination.

Now let us ask the question again. To whom is the work to be directed?

Going back to the words of Christ in the "Great Commission" we find that our work is to be directed to "all."

There may be no limits or restrictions made. No Evangelism Committee and no denominational mission committee may deliberately restrict its efforts only to a certain kind of people, or, worse, exclude any nation, nationality, or kind of people. It must be toward both the church and the unchurched, Jew and Gentile, black, brown, yellow, and white. It is to be directed to anyone God puts in our path. The neighbor whom God calls us to love is anyone who is brought, by divine providence, into the path of our life.

Who, does Jesus say, are to be taught? All. The Greek philosophers must be taught, for they are only fools who think themselves to be wise. Those who are intellectual giants must be taught, for unless they become as a little child they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Teach the poor, not first in priorities health care or agricultural trades, but teach them the most im-

portant thing they must know: the true nature of their miseries and sin and of the good news of forgiveness in Christ. Teach all.

This awesome task the church must do fearlessly. There is no individual and there are no nations incapable of being taught by the irresistible and efficacious Holy Spirit.

We may not direct our evangelistic and mission efforts only toward those of the same nationality, so that, for example, those of Dutch extraction limit their mission efforts exclusively to those who are Dutch. Regenerated saints have a citizenship which makes them pilgrims and strangers on this earth, regardless of their bloodline and roots. No Christian of Dutch extraction should have the bumper sticker, "If you ain't Dutch, you're not much." If a Christian who happens to be Dutch needs a sticker with which to cover his bumper, then do so with one which says, "If you aren't in Christ, you're in danger of hell-fire."

While saying that Christians of one nationality should not limit their evangelistic efforts to those of the same nationality to the exclusion of all others, it must be recognized as a fact that generally those of one nationality are better suited to bring the gospel to those of the same nationality. A Christian Jew is often the best suited to speak to an unconverted Jew. Converted Chinese will usually know best how to present the gospel to the Chinese. When going into India with the gospel, a Christian of Indian extraction would be better suited for the work than would the Chinese or Anglo-Saxon Christian. Such is generally the case because those of the same nationality usually know better the background and understand better the mind-set of those who are the objects of their mission work.

However, this fact has not and should not stop one from speaking to and teaching someone of a different nationality. Obviously, the first missionaries to any foreign land were not of the same nationality. Paul did not let his nationality hinder him from bringing the

gospel to the Macedonians of Philippi and Thessalonica. Although nationalities do distinguish mankind, that which unites all of humanity is that they all are the children of Adam, and in Adam they are dead in sins and trespasses and in need of the Savior.

The illegitimacy of deliberate restriction and exclusion in the objects of a church's missions is best understood when one considers that the goal of mission and evangelistic work is the glory of God in the way of the edification of the church of Christ. The goal of this work is not making Christian a nation or a nationality, but the making of disciples of Christ, whose citizenship is not of any earthly nation but of the spiritual kingdom of heaven.

No true mission work will be characterized by exclusivism.

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Having said the above, we recognize the obvious fact that there are limitations to a congregation's and denomination's ability to do the work. There are limited resources, limited manpower, limited time, limited finances. These limitations prohibit the church from doing all it wants to do.

The wisest and best use of limited resources demands that the resources be concentrated on doing the best with what is available. Jesus did not tell the early New Testament church to go into China and Africa and Europe immediately. The same Lord who gave the command to teach all nations, commanded them to begin at Jerusalem and Judea, then spread to Samaria, and then proceed unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Wisdom is the best use of the means unto the highest end. The wisest use of limited resources is to concentrate on a few aspects of the work. The danger of spreading thinly one's limited resources over several areas is that shoddy work is done and the church ends up not being a faithful steward with the limited talents and opportunities it has been given. On the other hand, when the church operates within the limited resources God has given it, then it must not feel guilty,



as long as it is being faithful (doing its best) with what it has.

Never forgetting the calling to reach all we can possibly reach, we must do the best we can possibly do with the neighbors whom God places in the path of our life. God has providentially led some Evangelism Committees to "specialize," or have an emphasis, in their work. Some have settled into that aspect of the work of missions which consists in publishing pamphlets for those who have a knowledge of the faith. This "specialization" is good, for they are able to provide materials for many of their fellow Evangelism Committees. Others make the emphasis of their evangelistic work that of tape duplication and distribution. From this perspective the individual churches and evangelism committees should lean on each other, using each other's tools

for the best performance in their work.

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The conclusion of the matter must be that, while maintaining a clear vision of the great calling to preach to "every creature," the church strives to be an obedient and faithful steward, using the finances and manpower God has given her to the best of her ability for the glory of God and the edification of the church of Christ.

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Mission work is most easily and usually divided into three aspects: local evangelism, domestic missions, and foreign missions.

Local evangelism (also called church extension) is the work performed by a local, established congregation in order to maintain a witness and testimony of the Reformed faith in its own community and for the increase of its own membership (Acts 1:8).

Domestic missions is the work which the churches of the denomination perform collectively for the spread of the gospel and for the establishment of new congregations in its own land. This work is performed through the cooperative efforts of the denominational Mission Committee and a local consistory, which is appointed to serve as the calling church of a missionary (Matt. 24:14). Normally, the goal of this work is the establishment of an instituted church which is a sister-congregation within the denomination.

Foreign missions is the work which the churches of a denomination perform collectively in a foreign land for the spread of the gospel and for the establishment of indigenous congregations. Normally, the goal of this work is the establishment of a sister-church relationship with them. □

## Book Review

**DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIANITY IN AMERICA**, Editors: Daniel G. Reid, Robert D. Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, Harry S. Stout. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990. 1305 pages. Hardcover. \$39.95. (Reviewed by the Editor.)

Breaking new ground, InterVarsity has published an enormously interesting and extremely helpful religious dictionary. 2,400 articles and 1,500 biographical entries cover the ideas, events, people, movements, traditions, institutions, and denominations that have made up the history of Christianity in the United States and Canada. The work is thorough, scholarly, incisive, and generally accurate. The preacher, seminarian, and Christian schoolteacher will find it the best single source of information on Christianity in America

available. No layman will have any difficulty understanding it. It is abundantly cross-referenced. Every article concludes with a select bibliography.

Reformed readers will recognize some of the 400 contributors: James D. Bratt; Harvie Conn; Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; and George M. Marsden, among others from the Reformed and Presbyterian community.

A random sampling of the articles indicates the scope of the dictionary: Baptism in the Spirit; Separation of Church and State; Four Spiritual Laws; the Auburn Affirmation; the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy; Louis Berkhof; M.R. DeHaan; C.G. Finney; Kathryn Kuhlman; the Biblical Theology Movement; the Charismatic Movement; the Great Awakening; the Altar Call; the World Al-

liance of Reformed Churches (WARC); and the Christian Reformed Church.

Many of the articles are fascinating, especially those on the various theologies or religious movements. The article on "Arminianism" correctly states that the "distinguishing feature" of Arminianism is "a conditional view of grace" (p. 78).

Some are controversial. Norman Geisler, who is not Reformed, writes the article on "Predestination." With reference to the doctrine of predestination taught by the Synod of Dordt, Geisler speaks of "Dortian, or Extreme Calvinism." Evangelicalism, on the other hand, which believes "in unlimited atonement"; teaches "some form of cooperation between people's wills and God's grace"; and holds "that only predestination to life is made, denying any implication that God



ordains people to hell," Geisler describes as "Moderate Calvinism" (p. 928). On this reckoning, the theory of political liberty that came out of Philadelphia in 1776 was "Extreme Democracy," whereas the

political views of V.I. Lenin represented "Moderate Democracy."

There is no entry in this volume for the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. No doubt, the editors will rectify this omis-

sion in the next edition. If they do, they should characterize the theology of these churches as "Dortian, or Genuine Calvinism." □

# News From Our Churches

*Mr. Benjamin Wigger*

## Congregational Highlights

Neither the prediction by area weather forecasters calling for near blizzard conditions, nor the call for a major earthquake along the New Madrid Fault, kept the men at our Hudsonville, MI PRC home on the evening of December 3. They met that night for their annual congregational meeting.

One proposal that might be of interest to our readers was the approval to finance the Reformed Witness Hour's plan to begin broadcasts over three Trans-World Radio stations in Great Britain. These broadcasts would cover all of Great Britain and Ireland. And it is hoped that these programs might generate contacts in the future for a missionary working in the Larne, Northern Ireland field.

A proposal for financing a new parsonage was defeated at the annual congregational meeting of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI.

You may also remember an item from our last issue dealing with an update on our Lynden, WA congregation's new sanctuary. Well, as usually happens with updates, they are outdated by the time you read them. So it is time to update the update. The Decorating Committee has progressed to the point where various paint colors, light fixtures, cabinets, etc. have been picked out and installed. A different committee has been mandated by Lynden's Consistory not only to make provision for the sound system, but also to look into information on various new organs. And the Consistory has also gone so far as to appoint a Dedication Program Committee. All things considered, the construction seems to be going pretty close to schedule; and, unless unforeseen problems arise, Lynden should be able to worship in their new church by Christmas, 1990.

The newly formed Young People's Society of our Pella, IA PRC sponsored Gordon and Marilyn Wassink (members of our Holland, MI congregation), in a travelogue-type slide program. It was held on November 16 and was entitled, "Be Still My Soul." This presentation follows the theme of the three parts of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Consistory of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI asked emeritus pastor, the Rev. George Lubbers, in honor of his office, to

administer the sacrament of baptism to his great-granddaughter, Megan Leigh Lubbers. This he did on October 28.

## Evangelism Activities

Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of our Loveland, CO PRC writes that his work in the Santa Cruz, CA area was very profitable. Approximately eight families, all with children, are part of the work. Besides conducting four worship services and teaching the weekly Bible Study, Rev. Cammenga made several visits and established some new contacts. Plans are being made to continue to supply the group with preaching. Revs. D. Kuiper and A. den Hartog were there in November, and plans were for Rev. M. DeVries to go there the first two Sundays of December.

## Ministerial Calls

Rev. J. Kortering has declined the call he was considering to serve as a missionary to the Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica.

Rev. R. Moore has declined the call extended to him to serve as pastor of our Randolph, WI PRC.

At the December 6 Council meeting of our Hudsonville PRC, the following duo was made for missionary to Larne, Northern Ireland: Revs. C. Haak and T. Miersma. The congregational meeting to decide this call will be held immediately after the Christmas Day service. □

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



# THE STANDARD BEARER

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Grand Rapids, MI 49506

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 12, 1990, our parents, EDWARD and MARY LOTTERMAN celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary. God has richly blessed their years together and has given them 10 healthy children. We are grateful to God for such loving, God-fearing parents. We hope and pray that we will have many more years with them. Their wedding text was Proverbs 31:10, which says, "Who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies." They have certainly been virtuous and diligent in raising us, and we pray that our heavenly Father will continue to bless them as they travel down the pathways of life together.

Their children:

Amy, Becky and fiancé Cornelis Kleyn, Andy, Heidi, Lindy, Rusty, Katie, Holly, Emily, Bethany

Grandville Protestant Reformed Church

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Schwarz in the death of her brother, MR. GIDEON GRIESS.

May the bereaved be comforted by the words of our Lord in John

11:25, 26, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Rev. Ron Cammenga, President  
Glen Griess, Clerk

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 9, 1991, the Lord willing, our parents MR. and MRS. HENRY HOEKSTRA will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them and are thankful to our covenant God for blessing us with God-fearing parents. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them in the years ahead.

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

James & Gladys Koole  
Brian & Pauline Kroese  
Henry & Linda Kamps  
Harlan & Lenora Hoekstra  
Vern & Kari Hoekstra  
Mark Hoekstra  
Mary Hoekstra & Jeff Kalsbeek (fiancé)  
Jeff & Rosie Andringa  
Patty Hoekstra  
15 grandchildren Hull, Iowa

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland Protestant Re-

## NOTICE!!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids, MI is offering up to \$200,000 in notes to finance the renovation of the school.

5-year notes: 8.0%;

10-year notes: 8.5%

These notes will be issued in multiples of \$1,000, payable on demand with interest paid semi-annually.

For further information, please call or write:

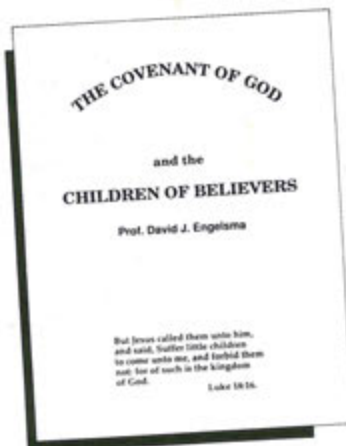
Gordon Schipper  
3007 Willow Creek Dr.  
Grandville, MI 49418  
(616) 531-2322

or the school office:  
1545 Wilson Avenue S.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
(616) 453-9717

formed Church express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Art Schwarz in the death of her sister, MRS. BETTY DAUM.

May our brother and sister be comforted in the assurance of God's Word that "... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President  
Glen Griess, Clerk



**The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers**, by Professor David J. Engelsma.

The most recent of our publications (1990), this 23-page pamphlet sets forth, briefly but comprehensively, the central biblical truth of God's covenant with His church. The author boldly contends that the explanation of the covenant given here should be recognized widely as THE Reformed doctrine of the covenant. The emphasis is on the place of children in the covenant. With this, the question about the conversion of the covenant children is addressed. In a period of renewed theological interest in the covenant and in view of the confusion and controversy among Reformed and Presbyterian churches over the covenant, as well as the Baptist attack on the covenant, this pamphlet is timely.

Limited number of copies, 2 or 3, are free. When ordered in quantity, we ask \$1.00 per copy — below our cost — or, in the case of limited finances, a contribution will be gratefully received.

The Evangelism Committee Protestant Reformed Church  
16511 South Park Avenue, South Holland, Illinois 60473