

THE STANDARD BEARER

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

...What is supposed to redeem the theory (of theistic evolution) for Reformed Christians is the confession that God originally made the mass of gas that got the evolutionary process started, in the "Big Bang," and that God superintended the evolutionary process of this gas.

In the beginning, God made gas.

See "Creation and Science . . .
and Common Grace" — page 221

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In This Issue...

Have you ever wondered why the Spirit tells us, no fewer than nine times in a few short verses in Genesis 1, that, in calling into existence all the various forms of life, God formed the creatures always "after their kind"? And that the herbs and trees were so created that they yielded seed "after their kind" — that is, *only* after their kind? And that each of the creation days was marked by an "evening and a morning"?

The evolutionist insists that life sprang originally, spontaneously, from non-living material, and that there was gradual change from one "kind" to another, from the simple to the complex, till after immense periods of time, and with the accumulation of small variations, life developed from the amoeba to man.

So clearly does Genesis 1 declare the creation of *fixed species*; so emphatically and repeatedly does the creation account of Genesis 1 contradict the evolutionary hypothesis which not only allows for but also necessitates development from one kind to another; that there is no possibility, ever, of harmonizing the two ... unless one were to discover that the Spirit, after all, never intended Genesis 1-11 to be a record of historical reality.

The truth of the Word of God is that the Creator caused the earth to bring forth, in a single day, myriads of plants, a marvelous variety of plant life. Man, puny man, responds by declaring that he has examined scientifically all of the data available and has determined that it didn't happen that way. And theistic evolution adopts that monstrous lie.

How could churches which stand in the Reformed tradition ever reach such a state of affairs? Read, in this issue and next, "Creation and Science ... and Common Grace." □ — D.D.

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
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EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

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BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, MI 49516
PH: (616) 243-3712
(616) 531-1490

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Church
B. Van Herk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

Repent or Perish

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
— Luke 13:1-5

Jesus is somewhere in Judea instructing the people concerning His second coming in judgment and the need to be ready.

Afterwards a number of His audience approach Jesus with horrible news. Pilate has slain a number of their countrymen in the temple, mingling their blood with their sacrifices. These bearers of ill tidings have already drawn their own conclusions about this matter. They now await Jesus' response.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, informs them that their conclusions are erroneous.

Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the

Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.

Rather must those who bring this horrible news take pause to see their own sinfulness and to repent, lest they fall into judgment.

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!

* * * * *

The incident reported to Jesus was indeed horrible!

Pilate had mingled the blood of certain Galileans with their sacrifices.

Although there is no other record of this incident, either sacred or secular, the details are not difficult to fill in. Certain Galileans were in the Temple in Jerusalem to present their sacrifices to the Lord. Seldom was anyone but the priests allowed near the great altar before the temple. In a few instances, however, it was required of the men of Israel to bring their sacrificial animals directly to the altar, where their sacrifices were slaughtered by the priest. Evidently the Galileans in question were presenting their sacrifices to the priest at the altar, when Pilate's soldiers rushed into the temple and slaughtered these Galileans, thus mingling their blood with the blood of their sacrifices.

We are not told the reason for this action on the part of Pilate. Any suggestion would be mere speculation. However, it is not speculation to say that atrocities abounded during Pilate's tenure as governor of Judea.

And now the news of this has reached the vicinity where Jesus is laboring. A number of His audience approach Jesus with the report of this tragic event. They await Jesus' response.

It becomes apparent from Jesus' response that an opinion has al-

ready been formed by those bringing these tidings. They have concluded that these Galileans were slain because they were sinners above all the Galileans, i.e., they were greater sinners than their fellow Galileans.

It was a common notion among the Jews of Jesus' day that personal tragedy or physical handicap was God's punishment for some specific sin. This becomes evident from the question Jesus' disciples asked Him as they passed by a man born blind, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1, 2).

Those who approach Jesus with the dreadful news of the Galileans slain by Pilate are of the same mentality. They have concluded that these Galileans were slain because they were sinners above all the Galileans.

Interestingly, this same mentality is frequently found today in the church. The reasoning is simple. God punishes sin. He does so not only eternally in hell but also in this life with suffering. Hence, those upon whom great sufferings come must necessarily be great sinners. God is simply punishing them for their sin.

This is the attitude some assume when they witness the sufferings of those around them. This is even the attitude taken by some who experience great suffering. Again and again the question is raised by those under great suffering, "Why is God punishing me?"

* * * * *

Jesus responds to those bringing Him the news about the Galileans that their conclusion is incorrect.

Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.

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

Let us be sure we understand exactly what Jesus is saying.

Jesus is not denying that God punishes sin. Nor is Jesus denying that God punishes sin already in this life with terrible sufferings. Nor is Jesus denying that sometimes there is an obvious connection between someone's sin and the suffering that befalls him. Obviously one who contracts venereal disease or AIDS through immoral living is suffering the just consequence of his sin. The same is true of the habitual drunkard, who finds one day that drink has deprived him of his health and wasted away his body. Examples of this kind could be multiplied.

None of these realities is being denied by Jesus. The point of Jesus is rather that personal tragedy and suffering is not ordinarily a sign that one is a great sinner. When we see the suffering of another, we ought not quickly draw the conclusion that this suffering is the result of some sin this person has committed.

This is the first piece of instruction Jesus has for those who bring Him this news. But Jesus is not finished. He also makes it clear that the tragedy and suffering of others ought to make each of us reflect rather on his own sin.

Jesus makes this very clear by calling to repentance those who bring Him this news of the Galileans. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Those who report this tragedy to Jesus have quite self-righteously focused their attention on the "apparent" sinfulness of those who were slain. They can think only of the great sin of the Galileans. To their surprise, Jesus speaks of their own need for repentance. By doing this, Jesus is teaching them that this great tragedy that befell the Galileans ought to make each of them reflect on his own sins.

Unspoken, yet implied, is the truth that all suffering and tragedy is the result of the fall of the human race into sin, a fall which rendered all of us corrupt and depraved sinners. Before the fall there was no suffering and pain. All these things came only as the consequence of

sin. Hence, when we see the suffering and misery of others, we ought to be reminded of the sinfulness into which the whole human race has fallen, also ourselves.

* * * * *

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The meaning is that, without repentance, those who bring these evil tidings of the Galileans shall all perish in the same manner as the Galileans have. Their blood will be mingled with their sacrifices at the altar.

Jesus adds to this. He reminds His audience of the eighteen that were killed when the tower of Siloam in Jerusalem fell on them. Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay. But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

And that is exactly what happened! They all likewise perished! Israel had gone apostate as a nation, forsaking the law and the prophets. Neither did they heed the call to repentance, not even when proclaimed by the Son of God Himself. In fact, they hardened their hearts against Him and crucified Him!

Consequently the judgment of God came upon Israel as a nation. In the year 70 God sent the Roman legions upon Jerusalem to destroy it. Destroyed was the temple as well as the walls and towers of the city. During the course of this carnage the blood of many was spilled at the very altar of God. Many also lost their lives as the walls and towers of the city were razed.

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!

Bear in mind that the destruction of Jerusalem is a picture of the end of the world. As God destroyed Jerusalem in judgment, He will one day destroy a wicked world and an apostate church with fire on account of their grievous sin.

Of this impending judgment all suffering is a warning. Through the suffering of others we are reminded of our own sin. We are also reminded that we will all perish on account of our sins, except we repent.

Repentance is a change of heart and mind concerning sin. It manifests itself in a godly sorrow over sin, a forsaking of sin in the power of Jesus Christ, and a seeking of reconciliation with God in the blood of Jesus Christ.

May God grant us to repent daily of our sins, as we live in a world of suffering. □

Portion Of Christians

Rise, my soul! and stretch
thy wings,
Thy better portion trace;
Rise from transitory things
Towards heaven, thy
native place:
Sun and moon and stars decay;
Time shall soon this earth
remove;
Rise, my soul, and haste away
To seats prepared above.

Rivers to the ocean run,
Nor stay in all their course;
Fire, ascending, seeks the sun;
Both speed them to their source:
So a soul that's born of God,
Pants to view His glorious face,
Upwards tends to His abode,
To rest in His embrace.

Fly me, riches, fly me, cares,
Whilst I that coast explore;
Flattering world, with all thy snares
Solicit me no more!
Pilgrims fix not here their home;
Strangers tarry but a night;
When the last dear morn is come,
They'll rise to joyful light.

Cease, ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,
Press onward to the prize;
Soon our Saviour will return
Triumphant in the skies:
Yet a season, and you know
Happy entrance will be given
All our sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven.

— SB, October 15, 1932

Creation and Science . . . and Common Grace

The report of the study committee of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) on theistic evolution is out. This 47-page document (with a 19-page concluding scientific postscript intended to overawe the layman with the wonders of evolution's explanation of the origin of the universe) is entitled "Committee on Creation and Science." It will be treated by the CRC synod of 1991.

The report was occasioned by the teaching and public defense of theistic evolution by several Calvin College professors. Theistic evolution is the evolutionary explanation of the origin of the universe. Over billions of years, the world developed by natural processes without "interference" by God. Living things developed from non-living matter. More complex life-forms developed from simpler life-forms. Man developed from animals, probably one of the primates (apes). What is supposed to redeem the theory for Reformed Christians is the confession that God originally made the mass of gas that got the evolutionary process started, in the "Big Bang," and that God superintended the evolutionary process of this gas.

In the beginning, God made gas.

In order to harmonize this theory of origins with the Bible's account of creation, the theistic evolutionists must deny the historical reality — the truth — of Genesis 1 and 2. The world did not come into existence in the way that Genesis 1 and 2 says that it did. The first man and woman did not come into existence in the way that Genesis 2:7,

18ff. teaches that they did. It follows necessarily that the fall into sin and the entrance of death into the world did not happen as is taught in Genesis 3. In fact, theistic evolutionists deny the historicity — the historical factuality — of Genesis 1-11, including the account of the flood and the account of the confusion of language and scattering of the human race at the Tower of Babel. Genesis 1-11 is not history but religious fiction. Different names are used to describe this fiction: myth (Strauss and Bultmann); saga (Barth); legend (Gunkel); primeval history (John Bright and Howard VanTill); and "stylized, literary, or symbolic ... stories" (the CRC committee on creation and science — p. 38).

What theistic evolution is and what is involved in accepting it within the Reformed churches was very frankly pointed out by the Free University professor Jan Lever — ardent advocate of the theory — in his short, blunt book, *Where Are We Headed? A Christian Perspective on Evolution* (Eerdmans, 1970; cf. also his longer work, *Creation and Evolution*, also published by Eerdmans, in 1958).

The report of the CRC study committee approves theistic evolution in the CRC. It maintains that it is "permissible for a biblically informed Christian to accept macroevolution (here, theistic evolution — DJE) as a working hypothesis" It denies that there is anything in this theory that is necessarily "inimical to the biblical account of origins." It concludes that we do not "know directly from spe-

cial revelation that this theory is anti-scriptural and thus off limits for the scientist who is a Christian" (cf. pp. 31ff.).

The committee expressly recommends that the CRC allow for the possibility of "evolutionary forebears of the human race," i.e., that the first humans evolved from the apes. Two members of the committee pull back at the end from the full implications of their advice to the church. Agreeing that the inanimate world evolved over billions of years, they like to make an exception of living things and especially of man. Man does not have an animal-ancestry, but has as his origin a distinct creative work of God. In a minority recommendation, they ask the CRC to declare that Scripture and the confessions "rule out all theories that posit the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race" (p. 44). The majority of the committee, however, recommends that the synod of the CRC not accede to this recommendation of the minority. One reason is that "many members of the CRC are working in this area and are considering the evidence and, what is not yet clear, the impact it may have both on scientific theory and the understanding of the biblical account. The church should allow them to contribute to a resolution of the problem. Further study in this area is necessary" (pp. 45, 46).

Since approval of theistic evolution rests squarely on the denial of the historical factuality of Genesis 1 and 2, the committee advises an interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, indeed of all of Genesis 1-11, that

takes none of it literally. All of Genesis 1-11 is a "special kind of ... history writing" (p. 14). What kind of "history writing" it is, the committee illustrates with its explanation of the "Tower of Babel story" in Genesis 11 (pp. 15, 16). That which is described in Genesis 11 did not happen. There were, in fact, different languages and different nations long before the time of the Tower of Babel. By the "highly stylized" report in Genesis 11, the Bible "intends to illumine the basic nature of human history when it is divorced from the God who is Creator and Redeemer." "In general we can say that the primary intention of the historical narratives in Genesis 1-11 is to serve the understanding of the unfolding history of redemption, not to present us with a detailed history of pre-Abrahamic times." The committee sums up this approval of the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 this way:

It is consistent with sound Reformed exegesis, moreover, to acknowledge that the historical narratives of Genesis 1-11, like those of other parts of Scripture, are stylized and compressed and may not follow chronological order. It is also consistent with sound Reformed exegesis to acknowledge that the historical narratives of Genesis 1-11 may be theologically stylized, so that a historical event or entity is shaped in the narrative to carry a theological significance far beyond the historical event or entity on which the narrative is based (p. 42).

Why the report insists on referring to the content of Genesis 1-11 as "historical narratives" when it does not believe that anything in these chapters actually happened as written will be puzzling to some. Similarly puzzling will be the report's affirmation of the "event character" of the narrative in Genesis 1-11 (p. 42).

The report does not mean by this that creation, the creation of Adam, the creation of Eve, the fall, the flood, and the Tower of Babel literally happened as described in Genesis 1-11. Rather, these fictitious stories are somehow connected to history or to an event in history. Perhaps there is an event buried deep in ancient history (about

which we know nothing) to which the story of the fall is connected. Perhaps these stories are related (we know not how) to events that never did really take place in earthly history, and that do not have to take place in our history in order to be "true." The CRC committee on creation and science is redefining "event" and "historical."

But this gallant, almost desperate, attempt to rescue the biblical account of creation from the charge that it is pure fiction and fable fails. Creation is not some unknown event behind Genesis 1 and 2. It is the event described in Genesis 1 and 2. Creation is not some event that is radically different from the event described in Genesis 1 and 2. It is the event found in Genesis 1 and 2, exactly as described in these two chapters. If the explanation of the origin of the universe is not the event revealed in Genesis 1 and 2, exactly as set forth there, the biblical account of creation is not historical. It is legend, or saga, or myth. It is, in plain English, false.

This is the condemnation of theistic evolution as defended in the report of the CRC committee on creation and science. It is not my purpose here to critique theistic evolution in detail. This will be done in our special issue on the Reformed doctrine of creation scheduled for May 1. All that needs to be noted here is that the theory proposed in the report on creation and science as a permissible explanation of the origin of the world is not biblical creation. It is incontestably not biblical creation. Everyone must acknowledge that it is not biblical creation, including the committee that drew up the report on creation and science. For it is not the event taught by the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1 and 2 as the explanation of the origin of the world. It is not this event, because the explanation proposed by the report — theistic evolution — is not the event of Genesis 1 and 2 exactly as described in Genesis 1 and 2. It bears no resemblance to the event set forth in Genesis 1 and 2 whatever. This becomes glaringly evident when one compares the 19-page "Appendix" of the report, on

the current scientific view of origins, with Genesis 1.

Accordingly, the explanation of origins advocated in the report is not the content of the faith of the child of God or of the church, and cannot be. The content of the faith of the child of God and of the church is biblical creation.

Neither is this explanation of the origin of all things the foundation of the truth of the fall and of the truth of redemption. For the foundation of fall and redemption is biblical creation.

The report itself calls on the church to deny the fall. According to the report, the fall into sin and the entrance of death into the world did not actually happen, exactly as revealed in Genesis 3. Genesis 3 is unhistorical. Since the biblical fall is the fall described in Genesis 3, exactly as described there, denial of the historicity of Genesis 3 is denial of the biblical fall.

Where biblical creation and the biblical fall are denied, as they are in the theory of theistic evolution, biblical redemption must be denied also.

If the CRC gives final approval to theistic evolution, as this report recommends, the day will come (I predict, in the life of my generation) that a CRC synod will make a declaration that runs like this:

The church declares that she cannot bind her theologians and preachers to the position that the story of the conception and birth of Jesus in Luke 1 and 2 and in Matthew 1, or the obviously stylized and theologized reflection on the conception and birth of Jesus in John 1, is to be taken as literally true. The traditional view of these passages would be compelling on scriptural grounds were it not that general revelation and the overwhelming testimony of scientific scholarship seem to be authoritatively telling us something else. Without wishing to deny the event character of the story of Jesus' birth, we must allow for the possibility that Jesus of Nazareth had a human, biological father. Further study in this area by our theologians is necessary.

When this dreadful day comes for the CRC — let the conservatives give heed — the doctrine of common grace that Abraham Kuyper

and Herman Bavinck injected into the bloodstream of the Dutch Reformed churches and that the CRC fatally infected herself with in 1924 will be the cause.

The name of the report of the study committee on theistic evolu-

tion to the 1991 synod of the CRC is "Committee on Creation and Science."

The name of the report should be, "Committee on Creation and Science...and Common Grace."

This, I will demonstrate in my concluding editorial on this report in the next issue of the *Standard Bearer*, God willing. □ — DJE

Letters

Rebellious Young People and Children Dying in Infancy

I appreciated the clarity of the series of editorials on "The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers." I have given copies to others. I have two questions on the concluding installment (the *Standard Bearer*, Sept. 15, 1990). I ask that you answer them in the *SB*. The first concerns your statement that rebellious young people in the sphere of the covenant are to be disciplined by the church. At what age can a rebellious child be taken by his parents to the elders for discipline? Would not such a child have to be "of age"? Never having read or heard of this in any church, I have no idea what this means, how old the youth might be, or what constitutes behavior serious enough to warrant this.

My second question has to do with the assertion that the Protestant Reformed view of infants as members of the church and covenant of God brings comfort to parents whose children die in infancy or early childhood. They are assured that their children are saved. If people can accept the fact that some covenant children show in adulthood that they are not believers, why cannot they leave the eternal destiny of their children dying in infancy to the providence of God as well? Why do people suppose that they must be assured of the salvation of the children dying

in infancy? I have always had a hard time understanding what this theological discussion is all about.

N. P. Jefferson
Mount Vernon, NY

Response

Children are members of the instituted church by virtue of baptism. They are, therefore, subject to church discipline even before they make public confession of faith, thus becoming members in full standing. In the normal course of life, a child would be in his middle or late teens before he would manifest himself as the proper object of church discipline by ungodliness of life and rebellion against his parents. Deuteronomy 21:18ff. and Hebrews 10:25ff. indicate the behavior that requires church discipline in such a case: refusal to attend church and catechism; drunkenness (which today includes drug use), as well as general intemperance of life; and persistent, stubborn disobedience to his parents. That especially which calls for church discipline is his impenitence. Deuteronomy 21:18 teaches this: "when they (the parents) have chastened him, (he) will not hearken unto them." The parents can do nothing with him anymore. There is yet something they can and must do: call in the elders. Of course, the elders will work patiently with such a young person. But if he continues in his wicked life, refusing to repent, the church

must excommunicate him. In the case of such a young person who has not yet confessed his faith, the Protestant Reformed Churches practice "erasure," which is disciplinary in nature and takes place after repeated admonitions.

As to your second question, my assertion concerning children of believers dying in infancy was this: "(The Protestant Reformed covenant view) gives comfort to parents and children alike. To mention only one aspect of its rich comfort, only this doctrine of the covenant enables believing parents to bring the body of their infant child to the grave without doubting of the election and salvation of the child." I based this on the Canons of Dordt, I/17, to which I also referred:

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.

Herman Hoeksema minimized the importance of this article in the Reformed confession:

This article leaves much to be desired as far as clarity and sharpness of definition are concerned; and it cannot be denied that in the form in which the matter is here cast it really cannot be considered an item for a confession.... From this point of view it certainly

would not have been any great loss if Article 17 of Canons, I-A, had never been included (Believers and Their Seed, pp. 146-159).

With this implicit criticism of the article, I do not agree. The article is important both doctrinally and practically. It is important doctrinally. It contains one of the few references to the covenant in our "Three Forms of Unity." It demonstrates that it is historically, creedally, and essentially Reformed to teach that the infant children of believers are included with their parents in the covenant of grace and, therefore, to practice infant baptism. The article also makes clear that the Reformed fathers understood the holiness of the children of believers taught in I Corinthians 7:14 as actual holiness worked in the infants by the regenerating Spirit, and not as a mere formal setting apart of the children in the visible church. The article appeals to the words of Paul in I Corinthians 7:14: "... else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." The creed explains this holiness as inner, spiritual renewal by the Spirit. For it regards this holiness as proof of the salvation of the children, which, of course, it could not be if it were only the outward setting apart of the children as members of the visible church, as some hold.

Nor should the practical importance of the article be slighted. First, the Synod of Dordt was exposing the slander of the Arminian foes, that "many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers' breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that neither baptism, nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism, can at all profit them" (cf. the "Conclusion" of the Canons). The doctrine of predestination as confessed by the Reformed faith implies no such thing. Second, the article comforts grieving parents at the little coffin of their baby by reminding them that the explanation of the death of their little one, regardless of the physical cause of death, is that it pleased God to call the child out of this life. The sovereignty of God, which is the one, great theme of the

Canons (as it is of the Reformed faith in its entirety), is applied consistently also to the painful experience of the death of a little child. This too is comfort in Article 17 of the Canons. This keeps God-fearing parents in that dark hour so that they neither faint nor curse. Third, the article offers the comfort that these parents have no reason to doubt the election and salvation of the child who dies in infancy.

Debate in the Reformed churches over the exact force, and even over the truth, of this consolation often misses the point. The point is simply this: The Reformed faith, rich in comfort, has comfort for godly parents in the death of their little child that no other faith can offer. The comfort is grounded in the covenant that the God who took this child makes with believers and their children. A faith that denies the inclusion of infants in the covenant of grace, e.g., the Baptist faith, can never give this comfort to parents burying a little child. The Reformed faith also has comfort concerning the death of little children because it knows the saving work of God to be sovereign, unconditioned by the activity of the sinner. It does not require repentance and faith as a prerequisite. There is no reason, therefore, why God should not regenerate, give faith to, and sanctify infants. And in fact He does. For, as Paul proclaims in I Corinthians 7:14, the children of believers are holy. The fact that these children die before they are able to believe and to show holiness in their confession and walk does not exclude them from heaven.

The Canons are forceful in stating this comfort. J. G. Feenstra is correct when he speaks of "a very strong expression" (*"een zeer sterke uitdrukking"*—cf. his *De Dordtse Leerregelen*, p. 70). Our English translation is, "godly parents have no reason to doubt." The Latin original is, "*pii parentes ... dubitare non debent*," i.e., "godly parents ought not to doubt." The Dutch has, "*zo moeten de Godzalige ouders niet twifelen*," i.e., "therefore godly parents must not doubt." The meaning of the Canons is not that

godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children who die in infancy, but that it is understandable and permissible that they doubt anyway. They *may not* doubt. They are *obliged* not to doubt. That which obliges them is the Word of God in Scripture concerning the covenant: I will be your God and the God of your children.

Why does the Reformed faith insist on this comfort?

Because the God of all comfort affords also this comfort to His covenant people in their deep sorrow. And the Reformed faith is jealous that God's covenant people enjoy all of the comfort that God wills them to have. □ — Ed.

"Let Everything That Hath Breath Praise The Lord"

Birdie on yon hawthorn tree,
What a lesson thou teachest me,
Be the weather what it may,
Thou art singing all the day.

When the sky is pouring rain,
We can hear thy sweet refrain,
If the sun is shining clear,
Still thy dulcet notes we hear.

Oh, my God, teach me to sing,
"Giving thanks" for everything,
When the sun is bright and high,
Or when raindrops cloud my sky.

Why should I have cause for fear,
When my Father is so near;
Dearest Lord let me be still,
Doing always Thy sweet will.

Casting all my cares on Thee,
For Thou carest, Lord, for me,
Make my life one praising song,
All the night and all day long.

So, like birdie on the tree,
Full of praise my God to Thee,
Letting those around me know,
All my joy from Thee doth flow.

— SB, November 15, 1932

The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

The End Times (9) The Millennium

We have tried to answer the question, so far, that the disciples asked the Lord in the beginning of Matthew 24: "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In other words, when will the end come? The Lord answered their question in a way that startles: "Take heed that no man deceive you...." He says, and then He went on to list a host of signs that would precede His coming and the destruction of Jerusalem. These signs we have looked at carefully already.

Another way to ask the question, "Lord, when will these things be, and when will be the sign of thy coming?" is to ask, "At what point in the millennium will Jesus return to establish His kingdom and make all things new?" or, "What does the millennium have to do with the timing of the Lord's return?"

This is a good way for us to ask the question, because in our day there are such radically different views about the millennium. And most who are not Reformed as we are have such different views of the end that their *behavior* before the end is radically different from ours. In fact, most of the church-world today believes something far different from what we have been taught. Will we be involved in the great tribulation? Most today say, "The church will not be involved." Will there even be a tribulation in

our future? Many today say, "The great tribulation has already taken place." For that reason alone, we must know what the Bible teaches about the millennium.

The word *millennium* means "one thousand years." You find this word in Revelation 20 and nowhere else (in each of verses 2-7).

There are two main groups whose position differs from ours, both of them believing that there will be a long period of peace and prosperity on earth, sometime in the future.

Pre-millennialists believe that Jesus will come back *before* (pre) the millennium and reign for 1,000 years on earth. His coming *precedes* the millennium. *Post-millennialists* believe that Jesus will come back *after* the millennium. His coming *postdates* the millennium. These views of Revelation 20 are, we believe, not the teaching of Scripture. (Remember this: the words describe *when Jesus comes* in relation to the millennium.)

The *post-millennialists* believe that the preaching of the gospel will be successful in converting the majority of the world to Christ. This will bring 1,000 years of true *Christian* peace and prosperity. (Some post-millennialists, not all, believe that peace and prosperity will come by natural means, by evolution, by social change, or by forceful means.) Because the majority of mankind is saved, the world will be Christianized. All this takes place *before* the coming again of Jesus.

Wars will cease because Christian kings and presidents will not be greedy for land and power. Crime will diminish. Science will advance to eliminate most diseases.

Some even think that dying at 100 years of age will be young. The prophecies of Isaiah where the lion dwells with the lamb, the children play on the serpent's hole, the swords are beaten into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks, will be fulfilled on this side of eternity. Jesus will return to a converted world that has already experienced the millennium of peace.

For them, the prophecies of the Antichrist and the great tribulation have already been fulfilled when Rome opposed Israel and persecuted the church around A.D. 70. There will be no personal Antichrist, no great tribulation; the world will not be getting worse and worse, but better and better.

This is the view of those who talk about "conquering the world for Jesus," and "asserting the crown rights of Jesus." Post-millennialism becomes the teaching of the churches who find it their calling to renew society, to solve the problem of world hunger, to cure the woes of the Latin Americans and South Africans. And I would certainly hope that those interested in the education of our children (parents, prospective teachers, school board members, those who buy textbooks) will have their eyes wide open for this teaching, so that it will not become part of the thinking of our covenant children.

For the young people, my purpose is not to give a detailed analysis of this view. (Those who are interested in this, as I indicated recently in a response to a letter, may write the *Standard Bearer* for a paper that discusses this view in detail.) But we do not adopt this post-millennial view for these reasons: First, the millennium of Rev-

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

elation 20 does not end with a converted world and Christianized society, but with Satan raging and the hoards of the devil assaulting God's people. Second, Matthew 24 certainly speaks of "the end of the world" (vs. 3) and not *just* the destruction of Jerusalem (read carefully also verses 14, 27, 29-31). The destruction of Jerusalem is a type of the very end. Third, Scripture teaches that the church will always be a "little flock" in the world. "When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth?" Just as the time before the flood, the church will be a little band before Jesus returns. Fourth, the Bible teaches that the church, especially at the very end, must endure suffering and persecution; there will be a falling away from the faith until Antichrist arises. Finally, the Old Testament prophecies must be taken as pictures of spiritual blessings given in the gospel and enjoyed by faith, not as earthly peace and prosperity and glory.

The *pre-millennial* view is far different. By the time of the millennium of Revelation 20, Jesus has already come (according to them, the events of Revelation 20 take place after the events in Revelation 19). Seven years before this coming, Jesus has raptured the *church*, so that no church member will be around to experience the great tribulation. While the church spends seven years in the air with Jesus, Antichrist will persecute the Jews in Israel. Then Jesus returns from heaven, defeats Antichrist, and begins the 1,000-year reign on earth from Jerusalem. The Christians who have died are raised from the dead to reign with Jesus on earth. The Jewish kingdom that had rejected Him now accepts Him. For a thousand years the world exists like this.

But there is still sin in the world, the devil has not been destroyed. At the end of the millennium, Satan is loosed from prison, gathers the nations for the battle of Armageddon. With guns and bombs, the war rages until Christ defeats Satan decisively when the world ends with another resurrection and judgment.

If you listen to Christian radio, you know that this is the view of many, many pastors and churches.

One main error of this view is that it involves outlandish, absurd ideas: Jesus returns to the earth, but sin and death exist with Him; resurrected saints and earthly saints exist side by side; Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies are restored; Satan and his hosts come up with guns and bombs against Jesus! Second, pre-millennialism interprets, in the literal manner, passages that are obviously symbolic. Third, it teaches that the church is a "parenthesis" between the Jews' rejection at Jesus' first coming and their acceptance of Him at His second coming. (Parentheses are not really important, are not essential.) Fourth, the Bible teaches that this is the last hour, not to be followed by a thousand years of earthly history, but by the new heavens and the new earth. But most importantly, pre-millennialism (post-millennialism, too) makes the kingdom of Jesus an earthly kingdom, contrary to all of Jesus' teaching. We look for a kingdom set up in the heart of the believer, coming through the preaching, to be established in all creation only at the end of time when the present world has been destroyed. Not before.

The Protestant Reformed Churches are neither post-millennial nor pre-millennial. Our view is what is called *A-millennialism* ("A" means "no"). This does not mean that we believe there will be no millennium, but that there will be no literal one thousand-year reign of peace on earth.

The millennium of Revelation must be interpreted *figuratively*, or symbolically. The 1,000 years is a description of the entire new dispensation, from Jesus' ascension to the second coming. The millennium is the present time, during which Satan is bound, and some live and reign with Jesus.

One thousand years is ten times ten times ten. In Scripture, ten is a symbolic number, representing completeness as far as God is concerned. Think only of the ten plagues, or the ten commandments. So the new dispensation is repre-

sented as a fullness of time, from God's point of view. This is complete as far as God's *purposes* are concerned — the filling of the cup of iniquity and the saving of God's elect.

Satan is bound during this "millennium" (vs. 2, 3). This binding limits what Satan does. The binding does not stop him absolutely, so that he can do nothing, but that he "should deceive the nations no more" (vs. 3). The devil's purpose of uniting all nations under Antichrist, and establishing his kingdom through this, is thwarted throughout the New Testament times. He cannot even build his kingdom as he did in the Old Testament times with Babylon and Rome. "Something" restrains the coming of this man of sin (II Thess. 2). Satan can do many things, but he cannot bring the man of sin yet.

At the end of this "millennium" there will be a short time of Satan's loosing (II Thess. 2:7). Antichrist's "church" will attack Christ's church in a great persecution. Even the heathen nations will be deceived into coming up against the "holy city" in battle. But Jesus Christ will return to destroy them all.

This view fits with the rest of Revelation 20. Verses 4 and 6 speak of certain saints living and reigning with Christ in the millennium reign. This refers to the life of the elect in heaven after death, not a reign on earth. John sees "souls" of them that were beheaded (vs. 4), the souls of martyrs for Jesus.

This view fits with the two resurrections referred to. The first resurrection is the entering of believers into glory in the soul. The second resurrection is the raising of *bodies* of believers to be united to their souls (see John 5:25-29).

Then the two "deaths" make sense. The first death is physical death. The second death has no power over those who have a part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6). The second death is everlasting death in hell (vs. 14). Of course, the second death has no power over us who have a part in the first resurrection!

* * * * *

God reigns! Through Jesus, God governs everything in this world!

God's people need to know this. This is comforting for God's children!

We need this comfort. This new dispensation is more than a thousand years, when there is much trouble and sorrow for God's little church. The devil is furiously raging during this time — as much as he is able to do — devouring whom he will. In the very last days, he will be loosed to rage for a short season, in a manner worse than ever before.

But our God reigns!! Jesus Christ sits on the throne, governing all! Although the time is long, it is limited by the counsel of God, complete for His saving purposes of His elect, no longer than necessary for the filling of the cup of sin. Although Satan is loosed for a season, it will be a short season; the days even will "be shortened" for the elect's sakes. And when there is sorrow and darkness here, fire and smoke and blood and tears, we have the comfort that this tribulation is the path to life and glory, life

with Jesus, sharing in the reign of the Lord over all.

Should we fear? Naturally, yes. Knowing God's promises, no! Do not fear the wicked world, the devil, even the Antichrist whose behavior sounds terrifying. God is for us. God is for us. God is for us. Let that ring in your ears. Let that be your confession in the midst of your tears. Let that be your comfort in all your sorrow.

God reigns!

God be glorified! □

Into All the World

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Mission Principles (III) The Motives

It has been established in previous articles in this rubric that missions, as well as local evangelism and the witnessing of the individual Christian, is not a matter of choice, but of obedience to King Jesus. This is not to say that the work of missions is the exclusive, nor even the chief, purpose of the church. The true church has a genuine, Scripturally directed concern to proclaim the gospel to the fullest of its ability.

We have also established that the objects of mission work are "all nations," "all the world," and "every creature" (cf. the Great Commission). The local church is not limited by Christ's command, just by His providence. While struggling with her providentially set

limitations (finances, manpower, etc.), she zealously seeks to be obedient to her God-given responsibilities. 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. We must do the best we can possibly do with the neighbors whom God places in the path of our life.

In this regard it is worthy of note that often the largeness of God's heart is larger than ours. Jonah learned forcibly that God's heart certainly was larger than the borders of Israel. To put it another way, Jonah believed that because God dealt with Israel in a special way, His heart was no larger than Israel. Are there Ninevehs today toward which there exists the attitude that they are good for nothing but judgment? Jonah deemed every enemy of Israel as being God's enemy, as worthy of destruction and unworthy of the gospel. Therefore, when it meant leaving Israel's borders and going to Gentile "dogs," then his racial pride was

more important than God's Word. Jesus said to go into all the world, to take your sons out of the womb of warm churches, and to go through every door He opens, near and far.

Laboring with this perspective the church serves as God's servant in the accomplishment of His eternal purposes of election and reproduction. The church seeks especially the positive fruit of the gathering of the elect from all nations, gathering them into the universal church of God on earth. Thus God is glorified.

* * * * *

In this article we will consider the motives for the performance of mission work. Is it necessary to deal with motives? What should motivate us in the performance of this work? Are there improper motives for doing mission work?

The necessity of dealing with motives arises because of the need for constant motivation to do the work. The earth-dwelling church and believer are not tire-less and depression-less. Indeed, they are

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.

prone to weariness even in well-doing. Hence there arises a constant need for stimulation.

For example, some churches do missions only because they see the great need of hell-bound souls, and the miseries which accompany the sinner in every phase of his life. However, the mere knowledge of this need will not keep one in the mission field, because the people will soon rebuke and repel you. Once it is apparent that the people, who are in the greatest need, blindly and stubbornly decline the missionary's every effort, then what is left to motivate him to stay and labor?

There are others who do missions being motivated solely by God's command to "Go." After some experiences of rejection and other difficulties, they continue because they are under orders. You might hear them say, "If not for the command, I would not be here." They may have lost some or all of their idealism, but they have not lost the ideal.

But a command by itself is not enough. Not only are commands frequently and easily disobeyed but, also, true obedience involves much more than mere external compliance. It is sad but very true that we are capable of rendering outward obedience without willing inward compliance. Our feet can be right, but our heart so wrong. How stubborn is remaining sin!

Think of the example of Jonah. Whereas at first he was unwilling to give even outward obedience, later he went to Nineveh in obedience to God's commission; but his heart was not right. By the stormy sea and by the great fish God had brought Jonah's feet to obedience; and by the dead gourd God sought to bring his heart to the same point. Even after the chastening storm and life-saving fish, Jonah only went to Nineveh with reluctance. He would go, but it would be to damn them. He would gladly preach judgment and hell-fire. He anticipated a mighty manifestation of God's wrath, and he stayed near Nineveh just to watch the great spectacle of God's quick and sure judgment. Jonah obeyed God's

command, but his motive was far from being right.

By means of the gourd, God used a strange and much milder means than the storm and great fish to set Jonah's heart right. Jonah had pity for the plant. God asks of Jonah whether He, God, may have the same for Nineveh. Jonah did not labor for the gourd; he did not make it; it was so transient, yet Jonah wanted it and loved it. The Almighty God made Nineveh, and He sustained it, filling it with souls. One gourd over against a great city with its multitudes! Is the value of Nineveh less than that of the gourd?

Jonah is an example of complying outwardly with God's command, but being improperly motivated. Nineveh's conversion is a testimony, not of God's blessing on the obedience of His servant, but of the great grace of God that He would use Jonah even when he was of an improper frame of mind and heart. (Every child of God, and especially every officebearer, thanks God daily that man's usefulness in preaching has little or no relationship to his heart's condition.)

* * * * *

We learn to be aware of improper motives!

Many there are who are busy in missions and evangelism for the sake of pride and prestige. This pride is a danger for any Christian not yet in heaven. The power of the old man is very great. It is so easy when speaking of God's blessings to refer only to that which is nice from the perspective of our flesh.

"Church growth" is the "in thing." In fact, there is a "church growth movement." If you were to walk into your local Christian bookstore with the intention of buying something on the subject of church growth, I would dare say that you would need to use both of your arms to carry the books when walking out. You will find books extolling the virtues of the megachurches already in existence. There will be other books describing how you can get your church to grow. Many seminaries now include this subject in their curriculum, describing how churches can

have "dynamic ministries," jazz up their services, and have friendly members.

It is truth that the growth of the church is a matter of concern to the Reformed believer. But we react against a carnal fascination with size and success. Size is not one of the marks of the true church. In fact, Scripture and history show that usually, though not necessarily, the true church is small. In addition, the Bible warns against this fascination with large numbers when it details for us the history of David's sin of numbering the people.

Having said this, the Reformed believer must not dismiss or despise the growth of the church altogether, mystically believing that the church will grow of its own accord. Rather, the Scriptures advocate the attitude of looking for and working towards a healthy church growth. Acts 2:42-47 teaches that the growth of the church is not something carnal, but highly spiritual. If I love the Lord and the salvation of His people, then I value church growth, then I pray for it, delight in it, and look forward to it.

The proper balance is achieved when we realize that the Scriptures show that the growth of the church is not an end in itself. If it is made to be of such exclusive or primary importance, then it will be a cancer which will ultimately destroy that congregation.

* * * * *

What are legitimate incentives or motivations in the performance of the work of missions? What motivations does the Bible give?

The supreme motive is to glorify God (Matt. 5:16; I Cor. 10:31). First, this is the impelling conviction that God is worthy to be known and praised for who and what He is. Notice that the motive for the performance of missions is the same as that for worship. The need to proclaim God's glory is met through increasing our knowledge of God. If we have discovered the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, then we cannot hold back. And it can be said that to the degree that we have learned God, to that extent we are responsible and best equipped to

make Him known. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among the nations." The result of this knowledge is: "Let all the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee" (Ps. 67:1-3).

With the motivation to glorify God, we renounce the "God-who-serves-me," and seek to increase the knowledge of how God is worthy to be known. Much evangelism in today's church-world is zeal for men, not for the privilege of making God known. The Bible does know man's needs, but the Great Commission says nothing of what men need. Not that man's needs are unimportant. But they are not number one. (It is important to remember that it is impossible to be God-centered, and at the same time to ignore the needs of men.) God's glory is to be revealed. Hearers are not to be trained to ask, "What is in this for me?" But they have to know that Jesus is Lord, and that they must act accordingly.

This motivation saves us from peevishness toward God when we face disappointments in our mission work. Then we do our work prayerfully, because we know that the outcome is solely up to our sovereign God. Find your inspiration, not in successes, but in God's character!

The absence of the motivation to glorify God by making Him known as the driving force behind our work of missions puts us out of harmony with God's plan of salvation. Fill your mind and heart with thoughts of God. The love of God constraineth us!

A second motivation, which is closely related to the former, is gratitude for so great a Savior and for the salvation of so worthless a person and people. This gratitude is exhibited in an enthusiastic joy for one's salvation. It is total commitment to Christ, "for me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). It is a genuine enthusiasm about one's relationship to God in Christ. This gratitude is a constant impetus to be obedient to all of God's commands,

including that of missions. Then my gratitude for all that God has done for me gives me the desire to tell others of my Savior and salvation.

Another motivation is the conviction of and zeal for the truth. The truth of the sovereignty of God, the truth of the vicarious atonement of Christ, the truth of God's covenant, the truth of God's love and grace, the truth of Calvinism all are stimuli. The truths themselves, as truths about God, are worthy to be proclaimed far and wide. We are to be motivated by the desire to see the truth published as well and as broadly as possible.

When sowing precious seed with tears (Ps. 126), and filled with the consciousness of one's own weakness and sinfulness, then we must of absolute necessity be consumed with the motive of confidence and trust in the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the preaching. This confidence deliv-

ers from the fear of failing if there is little or no response. It saves us from begging and demeaning the Gospel and its Christ. It delivers us from the fear of speaking or of not being sufficiently eloquent (I Cor. 2:1). It assures us that no one is beyond God's power to save. It saves us from pride, for no credit goes to man if there is fruit.

A final motive for the performance of missions is love for the neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). The second, great commandment is chiefly manifested in a concern for the eternal state and spiritual well-being of my neighbor. This responsibility toward the neighbor is determined, not by God's decrees and providence, but by His commands.

There is God's command. And there is also God's glory and His truth.

Remember Jonah! May our heart and our feet be together. May God grant us to be well motivated in the performance of our every work. □

Because He Is My Savior

When clouds of despair hide the glory of the day,
And weary my feet plod along my pilgrim way,
Come joy or sorrow, good or ill,
I yield myself unto His will
Whose mercy guides and keeps me still,
Because He is my Savior!

He will not forsake me in seasons of distress;
My weakness He knows, and He's always near to bless;
His mercy, boundless as the sea,
His grace, so rich, so full, so free,
In floods of glory cover me,
Because He is my Savior.

The poorest and lowest are not beneath His care;
No burden, no sorrow too great for Him to share.
His ear can hear the faintest call;
He sees and marks the sparrow's fall;
In life, in death, He is my all,
Because He is my Savior.

So patiently He walks and talks with me along the way,
My soul is sweetly satisfied
To trust His love, whate'er betide;
He leads me, cheers me, helps me, keeps me ev'ry passing day,
In life, in death, He is my Guide,
Because He is my Savior.

— SB, February 15, 1933

News From the Foreign Mission Committee

Contribution
Rev. Michael DeVries

The Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches continues to labor in the consciousness and conviction that "... it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father..." (Canons of Dordt II, Art. 8). Thus, our work is directed toward those who in their generations have not belonged to the covenant. The constituency of the FMC is located in the NW Iowa/SW Minnesota area of our churches and consists of three ministers and five elders.

We continue to have considerable opportunity to distribute pamphlets, books, tapes, and Bibles to individuals in various foreign

countries. In recent months we have sent books and materials from our Seminary to a pastor in the Philippines. We have sent doctrinal tapes to a Bible teacher in India. We have sent letters of inquiry to many others who have contacted us. (We continue to appreciate it when Evangelism Committees of many of our PR Churches forward to us letters they receive from foreign lands.) We are currently seeking and evaluating response from our regular doctrinal tape recipients in West Malaysia, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Over the years we have received many letters from individuals in Ghana, Africa. We have had long-standing contact and correspondence with a Bible teacher in that country. We have been busy with investigation of Ghana as a potential field of labor. The FMC has developed a mandate for sending an investigatory delegation to Ghana, but we have not been able to implement our plans as yet.

As we reported to Synod 1990, we continue to view Singapore/the Far East as a prime field for foreign missions. The Synod of 1990 authorized the sending of a delegate from our Committee and a delegate from the Contact Committee to Singapore to discuss with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore various matters including missions. From our Committee, Rev. Russell Dykstra was chosen to serve on this delegation to Singapore. The FMC drew up a mandate for discussions with the Mission Committee of the ERCS.

Rev. Dykstra and Prof. H. Hanko departed on December 18, 1990 and returned home on January 14, 1991. This delegation had an extremely busy schedule, with a host of matters to discuss with our sister churches in Singapore; and we rejoice to report that they were able to have very fruitful discussions regarding possible joint mission work. There was discussion regarding the potential of India as a field for joint mission work. Rev. Dykstra has reported that the discussions also dealt with practical aspects of mission work, as well as having closer contact and cooperation between our Committees.

May we be fervent in prayer that Christ, the King of the Church, will open doors to us to preach the Gospel even to the ends of the earth, and that He will provide servants to go forth laboring in this difficult work. For we are assured that,

Heathen lands and hostile
peoples
Soon shall come the Lord to
know;
Nations born again in Zion
Shall the Lord's salvation show;
God Almighty shall on Zion
strength bestow,
God Almighty shall on Zion
strength bestow.

Psalter # 237, stanza 2 □

Rev. DeVries is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Final Farewell

Read and study Philippians 4:10-23

We turn to the final verses of the letter to the Philippians. Paul tenderly recalls the kindness of that church and expresses to them his greetings and farewell.

In verses 10 and 14-15 the apostle recalls the gifts which the church of Philippi had repeatedly sent to him. Paul was still in prison. But even here, the church of Philippi had provided for his care. Their care had "flourished again." There was, evidently, a time in which that church was unable to assist the apostle. The reasons are not mentioned. It was not that these had for a period forgotten the apostle. Rather, they "lacked opportunity." Perhaps there were no means to bring the gifts to the apostle. Now Paul had received of their generosity once again.

For this kindness, Paul rejoices greatly "in the Lord." He saw this both as God's grace to him while in prison, and also as the fruit of God's work in the Philippians. The glory for it all is ascribed to God.

In verse 14 the apostle commends the Philippians for doing this in his affliction. To receive of them this thoughtful assistance while he remains in bonds was of great encouragement.

But Philippi had always been known for this sort of generosity.

From the very beginning, probably about ten years before, this church had assisted the apostle financially and, doubtless, prayerfully as well. It was "from the beginning of the gospel," that is, from the time that the gospel first was brought to them. Other churches had failed in this regard. Only Philippi freely gave to assist the apostle.

Still, Paul does not state all of this in order to flatter the Philippians. Nor does he seek to induce them to provide still more for him. Though he rejoices in their gifts, it is not first because of the gifts, but because of God's work which became evident in their giving.

Verses 11-13 point out the blessed truth that Paul was content in whatsoever state he was. It was a confession of faith, a confession of absolute trust in God who provides according to every need.

Paul did not have to speak with respect to "want." He had enough — for God surely always provided enough. He was content with what he received as well. This is not to say that the apostle was always filled. He had learned to endure hunger. He knew how to be "abased" (humbled). Some of the afflictions which the apostle faced he records in II Corinthians 6:4, 5 and 11:23-28. Read these passages and consider the great adversities this saint of Christ willingly bore.

There were those times too when Paul had enough (he "abounded") and was full. He did not reject that plenty as something which no Christian ought to enjoy. On the contrary, whatever he received, for this he gave God thanks.

He learned his lesson well: "In whatsoever state I am, I have

learned therewith to be content." Much has been written on Christian contentment. Contentment is the conviction that God knows what one needs, and that He gives in His mercy and grace. Therefore, whatever that might be, one acknowledges that God in His wisdom knows what is best for us. Paul did not complain. Paul was not envious of others who might have more than did he. Paul did not grieve that often he had to suffer. Because God directs this all, he was satisfied. That was true in "whatever state he was." I wonder how hard it was for Paul to learn such a lesson. How long did it take to impress this truth on the apostle? Now he knew and confessed: I am content.

The heart of that contentment is presented in verse 13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Christ gave him the power to do that which was required. Christ had bestowed His Spirit and directed through His Word so that Paul could carry out his missionary labors. There was no task impossible for the apostle with that kind of "backing." What confidence, what assurance, this man of God has, though even now he is imprisoned! Christ sustains him. Christ directs him. What more could he ask?

Nevertheless, in speaking thus, Paul does not want to minimize the gift he had received of the Philippians. They had freely given again and again, years before, while Paul was in Thessalonica (vs. 16). And Paul rejoices in the willingness of the church to provide for his need.

Paul sees in the gift the fruit of the work of God in the Philippians.

He was not concerned first about receiving gifts, but in beholding fruits of righteousness. That is what he now saw in the Philippians. There was fruit which abounded "to their account." Paul presents the picture of a bank account. The gift from Philippi "added up" in their ledger. But that was "fruit" — it surely was not a work which merited salvation or reward. One could see the evidence of the Spirit's presence there in Philippi. That warmed the heart of the apostle.

The gift was as an odor with its sweet smell that served as sacrifice which was acceptable to God. The gift was as the incense which was burned in the temple before the veil which hid the holiest place. The smell ascended to God and was pleasing to Him. And, after all, that is the only thing which counts. God "smells" the fruit of His own grace in His people. This is what He desires and what satisfies Him.

Now the apostle in verse 19 expresses assurance that God will also provide for His church at Philippi. "My God," he says, "shall provide all your need." God provides for the *need*, not what one might *want*. Philippi will be cared for by God Almighty. This will be "according to His riches...." One notes that God does not merely provide "out of" His riches — which is true, of course. Rather, He provides "according to" His riches. His gifts are in harmony with His eternal greatness and glory. A man who owns but \$10 would not be able to provide another with very much. A millionaire, who provided according to his riches, would give abundantly. So God, who is infinite and who possesses all things, can provide according to those riches so that His church will not lack anything.

But these provisions are always and only "in Jesus Christ." Within the sphere of His work and His love, God provides for His church. No wonder the church glories in Christ's cross!

What a blessing for the church at Philippi! They freely gave — but also abundantly they receive from God's hands.

Verse 20 presents the common doxology. To God our Father must be glory for ever and ever. That glory is God's because of all His work in the church — work of which the apostle has spoken throughout the epistle. He could not but acknowledge that God must be glorified for all things and forevermore. And the "Amen" resounds the assurance, the positive assertion: it surely is so.

Verses 21 and 22 present the final salutations from the apostle and those who are with him to the saints at Philippi. He remembers each "saint in Christ Jesus." The brethren with him join in this salutation. Some of these were of "Caesar's household." There were converts, perhaps not a few, who were workers, possibly slaves, within the very house of Caesar. The gospel had gone far and wide. It had penetrated even the house of the ruler of this world. Those saints also would express greetings through the apostle.

Then Paul expresses the beautiful benediction: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. This is not simply his wish, but it is a statement of fact. God's grace revealed through Jesus Christ is on His people. These must hear that also. Where that grace of God is, there is a people fashioned unto Himself.

That benediction is ours also as we conclude our study of this short book. If it has been a study which merely involved intellectual activity without heartfelt conviction, it would be to our condemnation. But this Word, applied to our hearts as well, must cause us to experience anew the riches of the grace of our God to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Questions:

1. What was particularly noteworthy concerning the attitude of the church at Philippi towards Paul?
2. Explain the reasons why Paul was grateful for the gift received.
3. What can we learn about our own giving from this account?
4. What is Christian contentment? How does this differ from a form of contentment sometimes seen in the unbeliever?

5. What is the basis for Christian contentment?
6. Are we content also in adversity? What would be your reaction to deprivation?
7. Is the gift of the Philippians a "good work"? Explain. Does it merit anything of the Lord?
8. Why ought we to do good works?
9. How would we evaluate "need"? Does it in any way differ from God's evaluation? Why or why not?
10. What need would God supply for the Philippians? What does He provide for us?
11. Why is it appropriate to conclude the letter with a doxology (vs. 20)?
12. The various "salutations" at the end indicate the deep interest of the saints in the affairs of fellow saints. How do we show this?
13. What is "grace" and why is it identified with Christ (vs. 23)? □

Profession of Faith

Not words alone it cost the Lord
To purchase pardon for His own;
Nor will a soul by grace restored
Return the Saviour words alone.

With golden bells, the priestly vest,
And rich pomegranates border'd
round,
The need of holiness express'd,
And called for fruit as well as
sound.

Easy, indeed, it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and
love.

But none shall gain the blissful
place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign
grace,
Unless that grace has made him
free!

— SB, January 1, 1933

*Church
and State*
Mr. James Lanting

Recent Developments in Church/State Law

■ Operation Rescue and Leader Randall Terry Under Siege

Operation Rescue, the activist anti-abortion organization founded by Randall Terry, has fallen on hard times. Numerous federal courts across the country have imposed injunctions, imprisonment, and fines on the organization and its leaders.

Operation Rescue's tactics of using human blockades to deny access to abortion clinics or doctor's offices is under heavy legal scrutiny nationwide. The courts are seemingly unimpressed by Terry's argument that his trespass and other unlawful acts are justified to "prevent a greater harm."

Although Terry won an early trial in Los Angeles last year when the jury accepted his "necessity defense," recent trial court verdicts and appeals have seriously crippled the controversial movement. Operation Rescue recently closed its national headquarters at Binghamton, New York, because of debts in excess of \$100,000 and ever-increasing court imposed fines. Appellate courts in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and other states have upheld permanent injunctions enjoining the organiza-

tion from engaging in anti-abortion activities. A federal appellate court in Virginia, upholding a permanent injunction, ruled that OR's activities had "crossed the line from persuasion into coercion and operated to deny the exercise of the rights of others protected by law."

Besieged by numerous trials, fines, and appeals pending in many states, Terry recently announced a new strategy — publicizing the names and home telephone numbers of judges and prosecutors who allegedly treat the OR unfairly. He also plans to organize all-night prayer vigils in front of homes of such judges and prosecutors. But given the recent indictments against OR leaders for interstate conspiracy to obstruct justice, the future of the organization looks bleak indeed.

■ Private Schools Subject to More Governmental Regulation

Are private schools subject to age discrimination regulations? Yes, ruled a Wisconsin Court of Appeals recently. A private school board (Sacred Heart School) and its principal in Green Bay, Wisconsin, did not renew a fifty-six year old teacher's contract for religious reasons. She then filed an age discrimination suit. A court refused to grant the school's request for dismissal. The school argued the non-

renewal was for religious reasons and that an age-discrimination investigation by the state would compromise the school's autonomy and violate the school's right to free exercise of religion. The court disagreed and allowed the state to investigate the age discrimination claim.

This case illustrates the alarming trend to hold private schools subject to the government's social philosophy regarding sex and age discrimination (previous decisions have held private schools subject to federal minimum wage and equal pay provisions).

■ Landlord May Refuse to Rent to Unmarried Cohabiting Couples

Notwithstanding state laws prohibiting discrimination based on "sex" or "marital status," may a landlord refuse for religious reasons to rent an apartment to an unmarried couple? Yes, rules the Minnesota supreme court. A landlord refused to rent to a woman who planned to live with a man with whom she was not married. The trial court and court of appeals held for the unmarried couple and ruled that the landlord violated the Minnesota Human Rights Act which prohibits "marital status discrimination."

The Minnesota supreme court overruled, holding that the landlord's sincerely held religious belief that cohabitation outside of mar-

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

riage was against biblical principles was protected. The court stated that the state failed to demonstrate a compelling state interest that outweighed the landlord's religious belief and freedom to refuse renting to a cohabitating, unmarried couple. The Minnesota court further held the state couldn't interfere with the landlord's religious practice unless that practice is "inconsistent with the peace or safety of the state."

An Illinois court also recently ruled in favor of a landlord denying a lease to a cohabitating, unmarried couple. Said the court: "Couples who wish to live together without being married can certainly do so, but they must find a landlord who does not object to such an arrangement." The Illinois court also found this to be in harmony with the state's interest in "strengthening and preserving the integrity of marriage" and its disapproval of common law marriage.

It is encouraging to know that some states will still honor a landlord's religious belief and practice refusing to rent to homosexual or unmarried couples. Although states such as California and New York are outlawing such "discrimination," Christian landlords should oppose this trend as long as possible.

■ Christian Scientists Convicted

In two recent cases that attracted national attention, Christian Scientist parents were convicted of felonies after they failed to seek medical help for their children.

In a Boston, MA case last summer, David and Ginger Twitchell, lifelong Christian Scientists, were convicted of manslaughter after their two and a half-year old son Robyn died of a bowel obstruction. Although the child was violently sick for several days, the Twitchells refused to seek medical assistance and instead summoned a "spiritual healing" practitioner.

Although the Massachusetts child-abuse statute created an exemption for parents who believe in spiritual healing, the judge ruled that "a subjective belief in healing by prayer is no excuse for not obtaining medical help when a child is seriously ill." The Twitchells were sentenced to ten years probation and were ordered to submit their other three children for regular medical examinations. David Twitchell remarked after the trial that the case was "a prosecution against our faith." The Twitchells have appealed their conviction.

In a similar case in the South, a Florida court of appeals recently af-

firmed a conviction of the Christian Scientist parents of 7-year old Amy Hermanson, who died after a lingering illness of juvenile diabetes. Her parents had ignored medical treatment in lieu of extended "spiritual treatment" in harmony with their religious beliefs. Their treatment failed, Amy died, and the Hermansons were convicted of third degree manslaughter.

They appealed their convictions on the grounds that their religious practice of "spiritual healing" was protected by the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment. The appellate court disagreed, holding that the "state may intervene when it appears the parents' decision will jeopardize the health or safety of the child...."

Although some constitutional scholars see these Christian Scientist cases as the embodiment of the classic legal tension between church and state, it perhaps could also be said that this is only religious cultism run amok. Surely requiring parents to seek reasonable medical attention for children in peril of death can hardly be seen as a serious threat to religious liberty in this country. These cases are a terrible tragedy; the leaders and practitioners of such cults share an awesome responsibility for the death of these children. □

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Gotteschalk

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

In a series of radio sermons, broadcast in the forties, Rev. Herman Hoeksema called predestination "the heart of the gospel." This precious truth of predestination was first taught in the church in the fifth century by Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, who developed this doctrine of Scripture in his

controversy with the Semi-Pelagians. The Roman Catholic Church, while claiming Augustine as one of its saints and while professing to be faithful to Augustine's teachings, rejected Augustine's doctrine of double predestination. The Roman Catholic Church committed itself to Semi-

Pelagianism, and this became the dominant and official view of this church, a position which continues to the present.

Not only did the Roman Catholic Church reject Augustine's doctrine of double predestination, but, far worse, it persecuted and killed an ardent defender of this doctrine about three hundred years after Augustine died. This is the story of a relatively obscure monk by the name of Gottschalk, who gave his life in defense of a Scriptural truth which has been the confession of every Reformed and Presbyterian church at some time in its history. And it is a confession of those who today also are faithful to the Word of God. That one man in the dark and dreary Middle Ages was willing to give his life for that truth is inspiration to all God's people who confess that God is sovereign also in election and reprobation.

Gottschalk was born in the home of a German Count, Bruno by name, in 806. His name, appropriately, means, "Servant of God." Little did his parents, when giving him that name, realize how appropriate it was. When he was still a young child, Gottschalk's parents gave him to the Hessian monastery of Fulda as an *oblata*, i.e., as a gift to God.

When Gottschalk was about 23 years old, he rebelled against a monastic life and asked permission to be released from the monastery. His appeal was made to the Synod of Mainz which met in 829, which Synod granted his request. However, Rabanus Maurus, the abbot of the monastery, disagreed with the decision of the Synod and appealed to the emperor. He succeeded in his efforts to keep Gottschalk in the monastery, but became the life-long enemy of this faithful servant of Christ. Gottschalk was, however, transferred to the monastery in Orbais, France, in the diocese of Soissons in the province of Rheims. Here he was ordained to the priesthood.

Determined to make more of his life than remaining a mere monk, Gottschalk applied himself to the study of the writings of Augustine. During his study of Augustine,

Gottschalk was surprised to learn that the Bishop of Hippo had taught a sovereign and double predestination, a doctrine quite different from what was taught in the Romish Church. After studying the Scriptures, Gottschalk became convinced that Augustine had faithfully set forth the truth of predestination, and he became an ardent and vocal preacher of this doctrine.

In his excitement over this discovery, he discussed the issue with his fellow monks and succeeded in persuading many of them of the truth of his position.

About this time (837-847), Gottschalk began a series of lengthy travels throughout the Mediterranean world, visiting Italy, Caesarea, Constantinople, and Alexandria, along with other places. Wherever he went, he preached and taught his views on predestination. He was confident, though perhaps naively so, that the church, after hearing him out, would agree with him and alter its Semi-Pelagian position. He corresponded with scholars, debated with theologians, preached to people, and spoke of his views at every opportunity. He considered his views so essential to an understanding of Scripture and the true gospel that he could scarcely speak of anything else.

In 846 and 847 Gottschalk found a home with Bishop Noting of Verona in Italy. This was the beginning of his troubles. He discussed predestination with Bishop Noting, pointing out how Augustine had taught sovereign and double predestination and how these views obviously agreed with the Scriptures. But Bishop Noting was alarmed. He wrote a rather lengthy letter to Rabanus Maurus, Gottschalk's old enemy, to acquaint Maurus with what Gottschalk was teaching and preaching. Maurus, who by this time had become archbishop of Mainz, decided to silence his monk once and for all. He called a Synod in Mainz (or Mayence) to meet on October 1, 848, at which Synod the German emperor was also present. Maurus himself presided.

Gottschalk was asked to present his views, which he did "in the joyous conviction that it was in accordance with the one doctrine of the church."¹

It is striking that Gottschalk, in his defense of his views, not only boldly and courageously defended double predestination (election and reprobation), but also insisted that Christ died on the cross of Calvary only for the elect.

Under the heavy-handed influence of Maurus, Gottschalk was condemned and his views were branded as heresy. Maurus handed Gottschalk over to Hincmar of Rheims, the metropolitan bishop of Gottschalk. The accompanying letter read in part:

*We send to you this vagabond monk, in order that you may shut him up in his convent, and prevent him from propagating his false, heretical, and scandalous doctrine.*²

Hincmar, though a rather learned man, was also arrogant and cruel. He determined not only to keep Gottschalk confined to the monastery, but to elicit from his monk a retraction. To accomplish this, Hincmar called a Synod at Chiersy which met in 849. The results of this Synod were fatal for Gottschalk and his views. Gottschalk steadfastly and courageously refused to recant, even in the face of the cruel threats of Hincmar. The Synod condemned him. They adopted decisions which included such heretical teachings as conditional reprobation,³ a universal atonement, and a desire on God's part to save all men.⁴ The Synod deposed Gottschalk from the priesthood, ordered his books to be burned, ordered him to be shut up in a monastery, and had him publicly whipped.

But the cruel Hincmar was not yet finished with his "rebellious" monk. Evidently unable to tolerate any disagreement with his position, he was determined to force Gottschalk to recant. Within the walls of the monastery Gottschalk was whipped so severely that he nearly died. But as he lay on the floor of his torture chamber, bloody and near death, he continued to refuse to retract his position. Even

the rage of Hincmar could not elicit from this saint a denial of what he believed to be God's truth. The treatment of Gottschalk was so cruel that it was protested by some leading clerics of his day.

Utterly defeated by the courage of Gottschalk, Hincmar allowed the saint to languish in prison. While imprisoned Gottschalk, after recovering somewhat from the cruel treatment he received, composed two confessions in which he clearly stated his views. In these confessions, which have come down to us, he gave expression to his firm conviction that the truth of God would stand. He affirmed his faith in double predestination, in the particular atonement of his Savior, and in God's sovereign purpose and will to save in Christ only those who were ordained to eternal life; while at the same time he confessed his belief that the wicked are sovereignly reprobated to hell in the way of their sins against God.⁵

After twenty years of imprisonment, Gottschalk died at the age of 62 or 63 in the year 868. Hincmar forbade that he be buried in consecrated ground, and the last indignity of dying outside the church was heaped on him. He died faithful to the end, a noble martyr for the cause of the truth. He died for a faith which was not again to be heard in the church until the time of Luther and Calvin some 700 years later.

With the martyr's death of Gottschalk, events took an ominous turn in the Roman Catholic Church. The church had officially condemned the truth of Scripture and had, on its highest ecclesiastical levels, condoned heresy. The result was that from that point on the church gave official sanction to false doctrine and stretched the wings of her protection over those who opposed the truth, while destroying God's servants who defended the truth and fought for it with the courage and boldness of faith. The church set herself on a path which was to continue through the centuries until Europe ran red with the blood of countless martyrs. Crushed by the cruel and despicable Inquisition, the church of Christ could barely survive. And when God brought Reformation in the sixteenth century, the pages of the history of the Reformation were written in the blood of the saints which still cries out for vengeance.

Our Belgic Confession describes the false church as that institution which "persecutes those, who live holily according to the Word of God, and rebuke her for her errors, covetousness and idolatry" (Art. XXIX). Nor has Rome changed her position in the least. She is prevented in our day from carrying out her wishes; she hides her cruelty behind a mask of benevolence as she speaks of "erring brothers";

but given the right circumstances, and they may very well come, her fangs shall once again be bared, and those who stand for the truth shall have to endure the full fury of her hatred of God.

Gottschalk was a lonely voice in a barren wasteland. His courage was great and his death a martyrdom. Hans von Schubert is correct when he writes concerning Gottschalk: "It is not only our right but also our obligation to regard this German Calvin as one of the first heroes of the history of our faith." ⁶ □

1. See Prof. Kurtz, *Church History* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1988). Vol. I, p. 546.
2. Quoted from McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. III.
3. That is, that God reprobates only on the basis of foreseen unbelief – a doctrine later taught by the Arminians and condemned in our Canons of Dordt.
4. This doctrine, God's desire to save all men, later became an integral part of the well-meant offer of salvation. It is important to note that Gottschalk emphatically taught that Christ's atonement was only for the elect and that God's desire to save was limited to those for whom Christ died. The proponents of the well-meant offer do not have history on their side.
5. These Confessions of Gottschalk can be found in translation in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 1. They are appended to an article written by Rev. Ronald Hanko on the life and teachings of Gottschalk.
6. Quoted from Louis Praamsma, *De Kerk Van Alle Tijden* (T. Wever, Franeker, 1979). Deel I, p. 240. The translation is mine.

The Day of Shadows

Rev. John Heys

Another Encouraging Shadow

Rev. Heys is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

There are in Hebrews 11 several giants of faith presented with their works of faith. They may be called giants of faith rather than heroes of faith, because it is a greatness of faith which our covenant God eternally decided to work in them.

Our God, not men, decided and determined to realize in men the exact physical height of their bodies. Man never decides how tall he is going to get when full grown. He may want more height, but he cannot realize how tall he will be-

come. He cannot do that as far as his physical life is concerned; and that, as far as his spiritual life is concerned, is also exactly as the almighty God determined for him.

Our sovereign God also determined the works which every one of His elect children would in this life perform. Not only is it true that in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), but with a view to the place which He determined for us in the body of Christ He — not we — determined from all eternity exactly how strong and tall we would become spiritually in this life. David wrote in Psalm 137:14: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

God decided whether we would be a male or female, a human being or an angel. He not only brought us into being, but also determined what we would be physically and spiritually. Beautifully and correctly we sing from our Psalter this truth, which we find in Psalm 139:14:

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath
fashioned me;

I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul
amaze.

Nowhere in Scripture will you find the word *hero*. But we can by God's grace be made *giants* of faith, and we do find this truth so often and clearly in Hebrews 11. It would be far better to call those saints giants of faith rather than heroes of faith. The praise must be given to God, even as we correctly sing: Praise God from Whom ALL blessings flow. Our praise of men and clapping of our hands, crediting them for what they sang and did, rather than praising God for the truth which they sang, overlooks so much that God Himself has written in His word for our instruction.

A single sin calls for everlasting punishment, even as God told Adam that in the day he performed what might look to us as a mild act of disobedience — merely eating a piece of fruit and hurting no one's flesh — he would die. And he did

die that very moment. Physical death began to come upon him as the punishment of sin; but spiritual death came completely upon him. He tried to hide his sin rather than in sorrow and hatred of sin to run to God for forgiveness. He tried to run away from God after trying to hide his sin by means of fig leaves. And since Adam and Eve lost all their spiritual life that very moment of their first sin, we get no spiritual strength from our parents and grandparents. Adam and Eve could not give it to their children, and therefore their children could only give us spiritual death. Our God through Paul says to us that we are quickened, that is, made alive spiritually as those who through Adam are "dead in trespasses and sins." But go a step further in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. In verse 5 of Ephesians 2 we read, "Even when we were dead in sins, (God) hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved)." And again in Ephesians 4:18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Death means that all life is gone; and here we are taught that fulfilling conditions, accepting Christ by faith, a well-meant offer of salvation to dead people reveals that salvation is absolutely impossible. If we want Christ and salvation, it is because we already have in God's grace been given the beginning of salvation. He does not ask us to believe. He gives us the desire and power to believe and then calls us in order to have that work of salvation continued in us, strengthened, and brought to its fullness in the day when Christ returns.

Let us then look at this spiritual giant called Abraham, whose divinely bestowed gift of faith caused him to go to the land God promised him, and to offer up Isaac at God's command. Let us also look at his old man of sin which clearly revealed itself in some gigantic sins, which clearly reveal that faith and walking in love toward God is His gift to us, and not what we give to Him.

In Hebrews 11 we do read that Abraham performed these great works of faith. By faith he did go to the promised land. By faith he did offer up Isaac. But take hold of that very important truth in Ephesians 2:8-10. We are saved by grace. We do not save ourselves by believing. We are by God's grace saved from our unbelief and are given — not manufacture by ourselves — faith as a free gift. We are not saved by works, but saved in order that we may perform works that are pleasing in God's eyes. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, not because of good works. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 carefully. We are not invited to be saved, but we are saved from our lack of desire for salvation. We fulfill no conditions, we accept no invitations. God is not dependent upon us and upon our spiritually dead nature in order to get us saved. Even as no child is born because he asked his father or mother to bring him forth, so are we not born as the children of God because we, who by nature are spiritually dead, heard Him offer salvation to us and wanted it. Once again, Adam and Eve did not run unto God. They tried to run away from Him. And then He told Satan in their hearing that HE would put enmity between Satan and us. Salvation is a one hundred per cent gift to those who *could not want it!* For they were spiritually dead. And they could not give us as their descendants spiritual life and the desire for salvation.

Let us note and appreciate that sovereign grace of God. The lie brought the whole human race into total depravity. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Take hold of those three words: EVERY, ONLY, and CONTINUALLY! By nature the heart of man beats evil thoughts and desires continually. Now and then a child of God will have thoughts and desires pleasing to God; but he has all through this life the old devilish nature that has such powerful control over him. We need to pray

to our God every step of our way, not only for the forgiveness of our sins, but by all means also for strength and desire to do what is pleasing in His sight. We need to have God cause our new man in Christ to control our thinking, willing, and acting. By His grace God will give that to us, and He speaks to us through this epistle to the Hebrews and tells us He is going to make us spiritually perfect when Christ returns and our bodies are raised and united with our sinless souls.

But go back to Abraham as he is pictured in the book of Genesis, and see how evil a nature we still have in this life. Way back in Genesis 12 and in verse 7 we read that God "appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." And yet Abram left that land because of a famine in it. Even though God assured him of living and of getting a son, his flesh moved him to doubt, not to faith in God; and, fearing death, which indirectly God assured him would not come upon him until after he got that child, he went down into Egypt. He fell into the sin of lying as well. He told his wife to tell everyone that she was only his sister and not his wife. Then Pharaoh took her away from him to become his wife.

Although our God in His grace saved Abraham from losing that wife and gave him freedom to go back to the promised land, we again read in Genesis 20 of Abraham committing the same sin, and that in an even more sinful situation. In verse 10 we read concerning God, "And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." Yet into that same sin of lying Abraham again fell. Even though Sarah was the daughter of his father through a different woman than Abraham's mother, he did not tell the people that she was his half sister. It was therefore a lie. Sarah was his wife, and that truth might not be hidden and covered! And since this was after God assured him that Sarah would bring forth his covenant seed, it was a gross lie.

Here was a step back into the sin for which he was rebuked, when he had incorrectly gone to Egypt, and had not stayed in the promised land. To that act of not walking by faith in the land promised him he added that sin of lying, trusting in Sarah's words of saying she was his sister, rather than in God's word that He would, through her as Abraham's wife, give him a son who would inherit that land of Canaan through his seed.

Now that he had the promise of a son through Sarah, this sin of lying was even greater than the one he committed in Egypt. And if Adam deserved death because he ate a piece of forbidden fruit, surely Abraham did not in himself have the right to the smallest part of God's covenant promise.

Abraham did by God's grace have forgiveness because of what Christ did for all the elect by His holy walk and cross. Abraham was given faith and such great trust in God that he did, at God's command, take Isaac and offer him up with the full assurance that God would keep His promise and give him covenant seed through Isaac — which means that he believed what had never happened before. He had never seen, nor is there recorded anywhere in Scripture before this, that a child of God would be raised from the dead. Enoch was taken to heaven; but Isaac would be returned to this life and bring forth the covenant seed that would inherit this land of Canaan. What a strong faith was given Abraham to believe that although he must sacrifice Isaac, he would through Isaac bring forth that covenant seed! In Isaac would his seed be called (Gen. 21:12). What a tremendous promise! What a tremendous gift of faith implanted in Abraham!

Yes, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we have shadows of what now takes place in the New Testament dispensation. Not only do we find that the cross of Christ is foreshadowed in the shedding of the blood of the animal whose skin was used to clothe Adam and Eve; but here, too, when the promised son is by God's command placed

on that altar to be sacrificed, there is again a shadow of Christ and His cross as the only way of salvation for us.

But by all means do not overlook the fact that in God's giving Abraham that faith, we have a shadow of what He will give us in the days that lie just ahead, when the Antichrist will threaten to take away from us salvation and its promises by his devilish works. In his day it will look to unbelievers as though God forsook us. But be of good cheer. As Christ arose from the dead, because of what He did for us through His death, we will receive EVERYTHING that God has promised us in Christ.

Let this encourage you. Hate your sins and fight against your old, sinful nature. And if you find the gift of faith in you, be encouraged by the truth that our God saves His people fully through His Son and His Spirit. Hate your sins and you have a sign that God has begun salvation in you and will save you fully when He sends His Son back to raise sinless bodies for His chosen people. Be encouraged by the signs and shadows God gives us in His Word. □

The Creation

'Twas God who made this world so fair,
The shining sun, the sky, the air;
'Twas God who made the sea, the ground,
And all the things we see around.

When He began this world to make,
These are the mighty words He spake:
"Let there be light!" His voice was heard,
And then the light of day appeared.

The angels saw the light arise,
And with their praises filled the skies:
"How great our God! How wise!
How strong!"
Such is the never-ending song.

— SB, October 15, 1932

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

With this issue of the "News" we use the last of our church profiles. Out of our 27 congregations we received profiles from 16 different churches. I hope that over the past two years you have enjoyed this brief look into the makeup of our denomination.

Today we look at the profile of our smallest congregation, the Hope PRC of Isabel, SD. I thank Mr. Gus Streyle for the following information.

The Hope Reformed Church was organized in 1915 at Isabel, SD. For the first year and a half, services were held in the Congregational Church. After this a school house was moved to Isabel and it served as the church home.

In 1934 the Eureka Classis to which the Hope Reformed Church belonged suffered a split. Many congregations left to join the Evangelical Church. However, the members of Hope voted to stay with the Reformed Church.

In 1959 Hope severed itself from the Eureka Classis and became an independent church for about a year.

At about this same time, Rev. George Lubbers, then missionary in the PR Churches, began doing mission work among the members of Hope. In 1960, after two and a half years of labor, the congregation at Hope was accepted into the fellowship of the PR Churches.

In 1968, the Lord sent Rev. R. Moore to serve as Hope's first PR

pastor. Following Rev. Moore as pastor have been Revs. R. Miersma in 1971, R. Flikkema in 1978, R. Moore again in 1982, and D. Kuiper in 1985. Since 1987, Hope has been vacant.

In 1969 a Roman Catholic church building was moved to Isabel and, after some remodeling, it began serving as church home for the Hope congregation — a function it serves to this day.

Hope has a membership consisting of five families and five individuals, with a total membership of 18 souls. Of its membership, one is a farmer, one a janitor, and one a butcher. The rest are retired. Three of its families are older, and the other two are middle-aged. Three children go to school, while three others are in college. Fourteen of their members attend a Bible study group.

One virtue the members of our Hope PRC have learned in the past is patience. Having been without a pastor for the past four years has taught them that. But their prayer remains, Not our will, but Thine be done.

In other church news:

At a congregational meeting back in December, the congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC voted to replace the carpet in their sanctuary. So on Monday, January 7, a call went out for as many men as possible to work during the day to loosen pews in the church. All that was needed was a flashlight and a 7/16 wrench. The auditorium had to be completely empty on Monday so that the carpet layers could begin early Tuesday. And, since the pews had to be in by Sunday, help was also needed later in the week

to put the pews back in. You might be interested to know that 625 yards of carpet were used to complete the job.

The congregation of our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Canada gave approval to their consistory to begin searching for land suitable for a new church of their own.

In late December, Rev. and Mrs. Cammenga, of our Loveland, CO congregation were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Tracy Lynn, their 9th child.

Rev. R. Hanco declined the call he had been considering to serve as pastor of our Randolph PRC in Randolph, WI.

And, finally, for this issue, the students of the Loveland, CO PR Christian School presented their Christmas program entitled, "Christ Our Saviour," on the evening of December 20. □

NOTICE!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Randolph, WI, on Wednesday, March 6, 1991, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of Randolph's Consistory. Rev. R. Hanco, Stated Clerk

TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington is in need of a teacher/administrator for the 1991-1992 school year. For more information please contact Mr. John Meyer (Board President), 1255 VanDyke Rd., Lynden, WA 98264, (206) 354-3354 or Mr. Jack DenHartog (Secretary), 8880 North Pass Rd., Sumas, WA 98295, (206) 988-5402.

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

THE STANDARD BEARER

P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

SECOND CLASS

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!!

There will be an officebearers' conference on Tuesday, March 5, 1991, prior to the next meeting of Classis West. Since Classis will be meeting in Randolph, Wisconsin, the conference will also be held there. This will be an all-day conference beginning at 9 AM, Tuesday.

The conference will be a continuation of the one on preaching that was held a year ago in South Holland. There will be an opening sermon on the preaching of Jesus. This sermon will be followed by a series of sectionals, a few of which will be repeats from the last conference and the rest on new subjects having to do with preaching.

The schedule for the conference is given below. Since this will be an all-day conference, those coming from Classis East are invited to stay overnight, either before or after the conference or both. If you wish to stay overnight, please contact the clerk of Randolph's consistory, Mr. Gary Buteyn, N11134 Wiersma Rd., Randolph, WI 53956; phone: (414) 326-5666, so that the necessary arrangements can be made.

All those interested are invited!

SCHEDULE

- 9:00 AM — Opening Devotions
- 9:30 AM — Sermon
- 10:30 AM — Coffee Break
- 10:45 AM — Sectionals
- #1 Heidelberg Catechism Preaching, Rev. R. Cammenga
- #2 Reasons for the Present-day Decline in Preaching, Rev. R. Moore
- #3 Preaching Repentance and Conversion, Rev. R. Hanko
- 12:15 PM — Lunch
- 1:00 PM — Sectionals
- #1 The Elders' Oversight of the Preaching
- #2 Delivery, Rev. R. Dykstra
- #3 Evaluating Sermon Criticism, Rev. R. VanOverloop
- 2:30 PM — Coffee Break
- 3:00 PM — Sectionals
- #1 Applicatory Preaching, Rev. C. Haak
- #2 Missionary Preaching, Rev. A. denHartog
- #3 Preaching Christ and the Cross, Rev. S. Houck
- 4:30 PM — Closing Devotions

YOUNG ADULTS' SPRING RETREAT

When? Thursday noon, April 4 - Saturday noon, April 6

Where? Covenant Heights Conference Center, Estes Park, Colorado

Who? Seniors in high school and older

Speaker? Rev. Ron Cammenga, "The Coming Antichrist," Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, "The Final Judgment"

Cost? \$10.00 Registration Fee + \$45.00 Check-in Fee (Total of \$55.00 includes 2 nights' lodging, 5 meals)

Great Fellowship! Loads of Activities!

A Beautiful Mountain Setting!

Registration forms are due by March 15, 1991

TEACHERS NEEDED

Heritage Christian School of Hudsonville, MI will have openings in the Junior High and Intermediate grades for the 1991-1992 school year. Applicants for these positions may call the principal, Mr. Gerald Kuiper, at school (616) 669-1773 or at home (616) 669-5427. Or applications may be sent to the school, 4900 40th Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of our First Protestant Reformed Church expresses her sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Bea DeVries, in the loss of her husband GEORGE DEVRIES.

We pray that our heavenly Father may continue to bless her and keep her in the days ahead; and may she rest in the beautiful words of Isaiah 41:10, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Mrs. Sidney DeYoung, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On the occasion of the 45th wedding anniversary of our dear parents, RHINE and GERTRUDE LUBBERS, we, their children and grand children, celebrate with joy the sacred institution of marriage and the family. Through this divine ordinance we continue to learn the great lessons of the Christian life: love and laughter, perseverance and pa-

tience, forgiveness and faithfulness. As a family we claim for the future God's promises of peace and hope in Jeremiah 29:11-13.

Andy and Micki Buist

Randy, Kathy, Marci, Mendi

Judy Henson

Allen and Karen Karsten

Missy, Brad, Mike, Jonathan

Gary and Rachel Bouwkamp

Bern Lubbers

Mark and Elaine Clawson

Keven, Shannon, Jeremy

Rick and Jill Lubbers

Stephanie, Matthew Hudsonville, MI

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO WORLD CALAMITY

— Audio-cassette tape of a sermon preached by Rev. Carl Haak in Lynden, WA on January 20. It seeks to answer the question, "What should the response of the child of God be to the grave events in the Middle East?"

— May be obtained, for \$2.00, from the Lynden PR Church Extension Committee,

317 North Park
Lynden, WA 98264

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

JAMES and MINNIE KARS celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on February 14. The Lord has blessed and preserved them together these many years.

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11).

William and Barbara Kars

Eugene and Peggy Kars

7 grandchildren

3 great-grandchildren

Byron Center, Michigan

NOTICE!!

Hope Christian School of Redlands is in need of a teacher for the combined first and second grades for the 1991-1992 school year. Interested parties, please contact Mr. Ed Karsmeyer at the school (714) 793-4584 or Mr. Bill Feenstra (714) 793-3597.