



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**Grief is
an extremely complex emotion
and state....**

**Because of this
it is easy for the counselor
to fall into being too simplistic
on the one hand,
or too probing and profound
on the other hand.**

**Counseling the grieving
requires the wisdom of Christ
and His Word.**

See "Counseling the Grieving"—page 15

**Vol. 70, No. 1
October 1, 1993**

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In This Issue ...

We've included among the articles in this issue another of the addresses which were part of the Classis West Officebearers' Conference held last March in South Holland, IL. This one, by Rev. Terpstra, emphasizes the necessity of a sensitivity, on the part of officebearers, to the hurt and the sorrow which are an inevitable part of the life experience of members of the church over which they have spiritual oversight. He points out too that, because of the complexity of the emotions involved, one must have as well some understanding of the process of grief, if he is to be an effective counselor. For practical suggestions for revealing the compassion of God and the presence of Christ to His hurting people, read "Counseling the Grieving."

And for an explanation of the SB logo which appears on the cover, read the editorial "Our New Symbol." Perhaps I could add here that the RFPA Board has been busy during the past several months with matters relating to the use of the logo in the SB. The selection process itself was no little challenge, because of the number and quality* of the entries. But, in addition to that, the board was exploring with the artist various cover-design changes to enhance the new logo. We decided at last to retain, for now, the old layout, but with the understanding that we would experiment in later issues with various modifications of color and design. So ... look for more to come.

The board thought it appropriate to introduce the logo on the first issue of the new volume year, the 70th. Sixty-nine years ago this month the first *Standard Bearer* came off the press. It contained a short article of introduction which affirmed that the RFPA "is convinced that a battle has to be fought." The armament in the logo suggests the same conviction on the part of today's board. Further, the very first article in the October 1924 issue was entitled "Jehovah's Goodness," and the third: "God is God." From the beginning, therefore, the emphasis was obvious. As is also the appropriateness of the two Greek letters incorporated into the logo today.

D.D.

* To give you some idea of how good they were: the editor wants one of the "losers" framed and hung in his study.

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The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volumes. Such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

A Prayer to Become Whiter Than Snow

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalm 51:7

It seems strange, does it not?

David, way back in the days of the Old Testament, spoke of being made whiter than snow. Could man in that period of time know anything that is whiter than snow? In fact, can we today point to anything that is whiter than snow?

We read in Isaiah 1:18 these words: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Our God does not here promise to make us whiter than snow, as David requests, but to be as white as snow.

The question also arises, because of what David wrote in that verse quoted above, what does David mean by hyssop? He prays to be purged with hyssop. He does not mention water or soap, with which a man can be washed. He pleads with God that He make him whiter than snow by means of hyssop. Although there are a few instances in Scripture where we read of hyssop, nowhere else do we find a request to be made whiter than snow.

For a proper understanding of what our God presents through David, let us first of all bear in mind the fact that this Psalm was written by David because he had committed some terrible crimes. And because

God had, by His grace, brought him to sorrow because of his sins, David now comes with the plea for purging with hyssop, and for being made whiter than snow.

Let us, first of all, take note of the fact that David begins this Psalm with these words: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." That surely reveals how sorry he was because of his sins. For he also states in verses 3 and 4 this awesome truth: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

Take note of the fact that what David had done was a devilish act of hatred toward God. Every sin is that, whether we are willing to admit it or not. And let us bear in mind what God told Adam, namely that his first sin would bring death upon him. Adam did live for 930 years after that first sin which he committed. Plainly, therefore, God did not mean, when He told Adam that "the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," that he would only die physically. God was referring to spiritual death, which would come the day that he committed his first sin. And indeed through that one sin both Adam and Eve revealed their hatred against God. They revealed that they lost all of their love toward God.

Adam and Eve did not reveal any sorrow for that sin. They did not run to God and with their hearts confess

their sorrow. They tried to hide themselves from God when they heard His voice in the cool of the day. They ran to other trees in order to try to hide from God. They wanted no fellowship with Him. They were not eager to praise God from whom all blessings flow. They wanted to turn their backs and escape any punishment for what they did. They did not run unto God and pray to Him that He would keep Satan from ever coming to them again with the lie that to break God's commandment would benefit them. They very clearly revealed their hatred against God by their breaking of His law, but also by trying to flee away from Him.

Now David wrote what he did in Psalm 51 because he had grossly sinned against God. He wrote this Psalm because he had been made conscious of an awful sin which he had committed. In two ways he had revealed his carnal flesh with its hatred against God and His holy law. He broke both tables of God's law, and he did not confess these sins, nor express his sorrow for having acted so much in hatred against God.

David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. And rather than run to God and confess his sin, David committed another sin, trying to hide that sin of adultery. He arranged to have Uriah killed in the forefront of a very hot battle (II Sam. 11:14-17). When God sent His servant Nathan to remind David of his sin, He also gave David sorrow for his sin. God in His grace caused David to see how greatly he needed to be purged from sin, and to be made whiter than snow.

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

To understand and appreciate these words which David uttered with his mouth because they throbbed in his heart, we should bear in mind that Adam and Eve had been created as white as snow. They were not created whiter than snow, as David here prays. They were created with hearts that loved God, and in that sense were as white as snow, that is, they were spotless as far as acts of sin were concerned.

But what David prays for here in Psalm 51:7 is the whiteness which we get through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Adam and Eve were created as white as snow. They had no guilt, had no sinful thoughts in their minds, no evil desires in their hearts, and had not broken God's law in any way or to any degree. In that sense they were as white as snow. Satan caused them by a deceitful temptation to become as black as coal. And the wonder of God's grace is that, through His Son, our Savior, God does make us whiter than snow.

Bear in mind, and remember, that the wind can blow dust upon the snow, so that the snowbank loses its white color. What is more, snow can melt, and in that way lose its whiteness. Such is not the case with God's elect, who are by His grace made whiter than snow. They will become whiter than Adam and Eve were when they were created. They were created without sinful thoughts, desires, or works. Understand this wonderful truth presented in David's prayer: in God's grace, through the cross of His Son, and by the power of His Spirit, we are going to become whiter than snow, in the sense that through the cross of Christ, and through His Spirit, we will be whiter than Adam and Eve ever were. That is, we will receive a new spiritual life that Satan cannot take away from us. It is a more wonderful life that God gives us through Christ. It is a life that is

whiter than snow, in the sense that it is our everlasting life that God will in His grace keep in us.

Let it not be overlooked that, in the seventh verse of this Psalm, David prays that he may be purged with hyssop in order to become clean. Hyssop is a branch of a bush that was used by the Israelites to hold a sponge, and which was used to spread blood on the lintel and side-posts of the doorway of their houses. We read of that in Exodus 12:22.

Although David and those in the old dispensation did not see that hyssop as clearly as we do today, it refers to the cross of Christ, and to the shedding of His blood for our salvation.

That cross of Christ our God used to realize our salvation. It, that cross, declares that we need to go to hell because of our guilt. And Christ's crucifixion reveals the

blessed truth that Christ came to take our punishment away completely. He even cried out on that cross, "It is finished!"

We are purged and made to be spiritually clean by Christ and His cross. In our text David presents two tremendously important truths for us. We are made to be holy, that is, made to be whiter than snow spiritually by His cross. It means also that now we have a spiritually clean life, by way of regeneration, which Satan can never take from us. Purged with the blood of Christ we become whiter than snow legally, and also have a spiritual whiteness that Satan cannot take away from us, no matter how hard he tries.

We find our Savior so beautifully promising us this purging in John 14:2,3. There we read, "In my Father's house are many mansions: ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

The awesome question is whether

God has given us the desire to be whiter than snow. We do and will, with David, perform a host of sins. If we deny that, we are adding to our sins. The question is not whether we want to be saved from the punishment for which our sins call. The most ungodly all have that desire.

To be saved from the punishment of sin is a part of our salvation; but it is not the part that reveals that Christ died for our sins. The important question is whether we want the love of God implanted in our hearts with a life that never comes to an end, and that Satan cannot cause us to throw away. To be whiter than snow means to be made everlastingly and completely filled with love toward God.

The important question also is whether we simply pray for the forgiveness of our sins to enjoy the things of this world. Much of the preaching today excites the audience. People want to sing enthusiastically about that part of salvation. The proper attitude to accompany the prayer to be made whiter than snow David presents in verse 10, where he cries out: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And in the verse preceding the text above, David says, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

Is that your prayer? Do you want more and more spiritual growth of your new man, which Christ has caused to be born in you? Sing then with your heart what we find in our *Psalter*, number 141:

Gracious God, my heart renew,
Make my spirit right and true;
Cast me not away from Thee,
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;
Thy salvation's joy impart,
Steadfast make my willing heart.

□



What's in Store for Volume 70?

This issue of the *Standard Bearer* begins the 70th volume of our magazine. The first issue appeared in October, 1924. Incidentally, the cost of a year's subscription then was \$1.50.

At our meeting this past June, the staff approved some changes in the content of the *SB* this coming year. Rev. John Heys will move from his Old Testament rubric to cooperate with Rev. Cornelius Hanko in writing the meditations. Occasionally other of the ministers will contribute a meditation.

After Rev. George Lubbers completes his introduction to the study of I Timothy, Rev. Carl Haak will provide a detailed outline of the book of Romans. This will run under the rubric, "Search the Scriptures." The purpose of these outlines is to help our readers in their study of the Bible. It is particularly our intention to give help to our societies for Bible study. The various societies and classes that meet regularly for the study of the Word of God might consider taking up Romans in their classes during the coming years.

We have asked several teachers in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools to write on Christian education. These articles will appear in the rubric, "In His Fear." If there are teachers who have something to say about our calling to provide Christian school instruction to the covenant

children, we invite their contributions. We have approached some teachers, but we are open to all of them. We desire to give more space to the important subject of Christian education. All aspects of the work are suitable — the instruction itself; the cooperation of the covenant community; the behavior of the children; and more. Teachers, let us hear from you. The main writer of this rubric on Christian living will continue to be Rev. Arie den Hartog.

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma has agreed to write seven articles for the column, "Strength of Youth." Rev. Barrett Gritters will continue his work in this column on behalf of the young people.

There will be a significant change in the rubric devoted to the Old Testament, "Day of Shadows." We plan to edit and publish the writings on the Old Testament of Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. These writings, now in syllabus form, are the fruit of Prof. Hoeksema's work in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Look for the first installment in this lengthy series a few issues hence.

Rev. Audred Spriensma, husband of Alva and father of five children, will join Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers in writing on Reformed family life in "When Thou Sittest in Thine House."

Eschatology will be featured in the rubric, "Come, Lord Jesus," written by Rev. Gise VanBaren. He will

call attention especially to the signs of the Lord's return in creation and history and among the nations.

The other rubrics and writers remain the same as last year.

In addition to the regulars, we are asking for guest articles from various quarters — synodical committees of the PRC; the PR Seminary; PR ministers who are not department editors; and churches with whom the PRC have a sister church relationship. Observant readers will have noticed that, now and then, we publish articles by authors outside the PRC.

Then there are the book reviews, letters, exchanges, and questions for "The Reader Asks" department.

We are always on the lookout for good poetry.

We intend again to publish some special issues. These will develop particular themes. The next issue, in fact, will be such a special issue. The *SB* of October 15, 1993 will commemorate the 16th century Reformation with an issue on "The Reformation and Scripture."

These are our plans, if the Lord wills.

To our writers, thanks, and God's strengthening of your minds, hands, and wills! Yours is a labor of love.

To our subscribers, enjoyable and profitable reading! Yours is a cost of only \$12 (\$15.00 foreign) a year.

— DJE

Our New Symbol

The *Standard Bearer* has a symbol.

We display it on the cover of this issue.

This was the winning entry in the recent contest.

The design is a shield, representing the shield of faith, on which there

stands at the ready a sword, symbolizing the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Two letters of the Greek alphabet are worked into the

device. The obvious letter "A" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, "alpha." The rounded letter is the last letter of the Greek alphabet, "omega." Taken together, as in Revelation 1:8, they describe the eternal God as the beginning and the ending. The ideas brought together in the symbol express what the *SB* stands for, we think. The design is well done artistically.

The artist is Mr. Thomas A. Hirschler of Mundelein, Illinois, a

member of the Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois. To Mr. Hirschler go our thanks and a 5-year, gift subscription to the *SB*.

Our obviously interested and equally obviously able readership sent in almost 50 symbols. One powerful drawing came from as far away as South Africa.

Two 12-year old youngsters submitted their own fine designs.

The decision choosing the symbol was made by the board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association on the recommendation of the staff of the *SB*.

To each who responded to our request for drawings or ideas, we express our appreciation. We are sending each of you a 1-year, gift subscription to the *SB* as a token of our thanks.

— DJE

Knowing the True God

This is the title of a recently issued, brief (11-page) pamphlet written by Rev. Steven Houck and published by the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

I have been asked to bring this pamphlet to the attention of the readership of the *Standard Bearer*, and I do so enthusiastically.

The pamphlet is unique in that it is intended to be a soundly Reformed means of witnessing to the unconverted and unchurched. The pamphlet succeeds. It is a written form of the biblical call of the gospel to those who are not converted to Christ and who may have little or no knowledge of Scripture and its doctrines. It is God-centered. It exposes sin, particularly the guilt of sin. It sets forth Christ as God's one and only way of salvation. It calls every one to believe

on this Christ. It bluntly confronts every sinner with his total inability to save himself, including his inability of himself to believe. From the very beginning, it unapologetically bases itself on Holy Scripture. It does not try to present Him who is the truth by means of the lie that God loves everyone and sincerely desires to save all.

The style is simple, clear, and pointed.

This is the pamphlet to put into the hands of an unbelieving neighbor or relative. Then discuss it with him or her.

The pamphlet can be obtained from the Peace PRC, P. O. Box 5634, Lansing, IL 60438. A single copy is free. For quantities of 12 or more, the cost is 35 cents per copy plus postage.

An excerpt from the pamphlet follows:

Man's situation seems hopeless. How can we escape the wrath of God and everlasting destruction in hell? How can sinners ever come to know God intimately and live in fellowship with Him? How can a sinner be holy? It is impossible for man. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one* (Job 14:4). But what is impossible for man is not impossible for God. The glorious Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the world is also the Savior, Who delivers from sin, death, and hell. God says, *I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour* (Isaiah 43:11). The true God is not only a holy and righteous God Who must punish sinners, but He is also a God of love and grace Who shows mercy. In His grace and love, He has sent Jesus Christ to accomplish salvation. God, in Jesus Christ, is the only Savior (p. 7). □

— DJE

Letters

■ More Books of Psalms for Singing

I was delighted to receive from my good friends in Crown and Covenant Publications a copy of Rev. Ray Lanning's "The Songs of Zion, An Appreciation of the *Psalter* of 1912," a featured article in your June 1993 *Standard Bearer*. Although it contained much information that was not new to me, I am refreshed and

encouraged by Rev. Lanning's appeal for continued singing of Psalms.

I must, however, take exception to his statement that *The Psalter* of 1912 "was the last stand for singing the Psalms in worship among Presbyterians on this continent." It is humbling to realize that, in spite of much successful effort to extend its use, some fellow Psalm-singers are not aware of *The Book of Psalms for*

Singing published in 1973 by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). It is now in its seventh printing. The Reformed Presbyterian (Covenant) Church, though part of the Joint Committee set up in 1895 to develop better Psalm versions, withdrew in 1905 because some revisions and new versions being approved were considered "free" and/or incomplete translations.

These Covenanters produced *The Book of Psalms with Music* in 1910, and in 1920, 1929, and 1950 made some tune and format changes in it. This publication made much use of word changes and new versions adopted by the Joint Committee in 1909 but attempted to make every version complete and accurate.

The 1973 *Book of Psalms for Singing* eliminated a number of little-used and/or duplicate versions and introduced about as many new complete versions which conform more closely to modern English Bibles. I hope many of your readers may also know, or will be interested to hear, about a words-only metrical translation of the Psalms prepared by a committee of the Presbyterian Church of America

this year. It is soon to be published by Crown and Covenant Publications and distributed by them and by Great Commission Publications, the publication arm of both the PCA and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This compact volume will contain one complete metrical translation of each of the 150 Psalms and the suggestion of a familiar Psalm or hymn tune for each. Though over 75 per cent of the words are taken directly from *The Book of Psalms for Singing*, the editors frequently note versions "based on" or containing "elements from" the 1912 *Psalter*, which Rev. Lanning has so justly honored in his article.

Lively interest in the promotion of Psalm-singing is by no means confined to "this continent." Rowland S.

Ward prepared in 1991 *The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing*, a compact book with singable tunes near the words on every page. As in the coming PCA words-only volume, its verses are numbered as they are in our Bibles.

Mr. Ward's volume is published by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, 358 Mountain Highway, Wantirna, Victoria 3152, Australia. The 1973 *Book of Psalms for Singing* is available from Crown and Covenant publications, 7408 Penn Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15208-2531.

Yours for more singing of more Psalms with more grace in our hearts to the Lord. □

Charles McBurney
Pittsburgh, PA

Come, Lord Jesus

Rev. Gise Van Baren

Floods and Earthquakes

We have been inundated with news of the flooding of the Mississippi River and its tributaries the past several months. We have seen the pictures, over and over again, of homes washed away, of possessions destroyed, of croplands covered with water. We are told that, as far as damage is concerned, this flood has been the most costly disaster in the history of our country. It is said that this is the kind of flood that might strike once every 500 years. Some have described it as a "flood of Biblical proportions."

Not long ago we were hearing reports of the devastation of Hurricane Andrew. Of that storm it was said that it was the most costly disaster in the history of our country. The claim was made that it was a once-in-a-century storm (and I believe there

were three such storms that struck various parts of the world in this same year).

One asks: what is going on in this creation? We are supplied answers: devastating storms happen in cycles — we expect one "bad" storm or disaster perhaps every century. We are told that the floods and terrible storms are the result of a warming of the Pacific — the El Nino current is the cause. We are reminded of terrible storms of the past centuries where literally hundreds of thousands died. So: "What's new?"

Scripture speaks of earthquakes. In Amos 1:1 and in Zechariah 14:5 we read of great earthquakes that occurred in the days of Jeroboam and later in the days of Uzziah. Time was measured in relation to the occurrence of those earthquakes.

Floods too are mentioned in Scripture. And who does not know of that great flood in the days of Noah when the whole earth was covered with

water and only eight souls survived?

One can examine history books and find that there have been many disastrous events in this earth. I point out a few. Rome was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 476. Antioch had some 250,000 people die in an earthquake in 526. In 1556 in Northern China 830,000 people died. In 1707 200,000 people were killed in an earthquake in Tokyo. Floods likewise killed many through the centuries. In 1887 at Henan, China 900,000 died. In 1889 at Johnstown, PA 2,200 died in a flood when a dam broke. Six thousand died in 1900 in a Galveston, TX flood after a hurricane. A million people died in North China in 1938 when dikes were blown up, with resulting flooding. In 1970 some 200,000 people lost their lives in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) as a result of a flood generated by a cyclone.

By comparison, the flooding of the Mississippi basin appears minor.

We can dismiss the disasters of

Rev. Van Baren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

which we hear as a "quirk of nature." We can tell ourselves that these things have always happened. We might be able to find scientific explanations for what has been taking place. But is this the answer? Christ, in Matthew 24, speaks of those signs that precede His return on the clouds of glory. In verse 7 He reminds His disciples of the coming of "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." He reminds us further, in verse 8, that these "are the beginning of sorrows (the beginning of the birth-pangs)." This tells us that such "disasters" have always been taking place. This is as the birth-pangs of a woman. But the pain becomes increasingly more intense as the time for deliverance approaches. So we can expect earthquakes, floods, winds throughout all of history. Still, as the end approaches, we will become more aware of these signs—and recognize in their intensity that Christ's coming is at hand.

That unusual things are happening, even the general population is beginning to realize. In a cartoon in the *Grand Rapids Press*, a Congressional budget committee is pictured around a conference table. Behind them is a chart listing "disaster cost\$." On the chart, with the line of costs rapidly rising, there is listed: "Hugo, earthquake, drought, tornadoes, Andrew, Hawaii, Miss. flood." One congressman intones, "Please help us not to have any more disasters ... at least not in this fiscal year!" Designed to be somewhat humorous, and certainly not pious, the cartoon nevertheless speaks to the increasing burdens upon the country because of unusual disasters.

The *U.S. News & World Report*, July 26, 1993, reports on the Mississippi flood. It contained this interesting observation: "While the floods were certainly unexpected, the United States has had unexpectedly large disasters—droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, riots—every year since 1989." This surely appears to be an acknowledgment by the news media that something unusual is taking place that will have an increasingly signifi-

cant effect upon our country and its prosperity. This throws the proverbial "monkey wrench" into the efforts of government to gain control of runaway deficit spending.

The situation within the realm of creation is recognizably changing. Though many speak of "cycles," or emphasize that these things have always been occurring throughout history, there is a difference.

The first, obvious difference is the way today's media make all peoples aware of what is taking place. Who has not seen pictures of houses floating down the Mississippi? Who has not seen the spread of flood waters over vast areas of farmland? Who has not observed the weeping people as they behold their houses inundated by water and mud? Not only have these disasters of recent years been unusually devastating, but the nation and world have been made aware of all of this by way of media reports.

We are also to regard the signs in creation in conjunction with all of the other signs about us. Each sign is as it were a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. One piece does not make the picture. But when each piece is fit together, the puzzle is complete. So we recognize that when wars and rumors of wars fit in with the whole of the puzzle, when plagues and divers diseases also can be fit in, when man's rapidly expanding knowledge and amazing inventions are placed in this puzzle—the picture is almost complete.

So what does the future hold for us? Certainly we can expect additional disasters. We are being warned repeatedly that major earthquakes can be expected in places like California—with its large population and potential for many deaths. We are told how easily a new and deadly virus could appear—destroying masses of people through disease. We read of the "greenhouse effect" that will likely cause far more turbulent weather conditions—including more hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, etc.

But we, children of God, expect many of these things to occur (probably in our lifetimes) because Scripture tells of them. Christ Himself presented them to us in Matthew 24 as signs that must precede His return. The clear testimony of all the events taking place about us and in light of Christ's instruction is this: the return of Christ is at hand.

What does all of this demand of the church and its members? Surely the basic requirement is watchfulness. The events of our age affect us, affect our thinking and actions as well. It is but a short step between observing and imitating. The world's attitudes and explanations soon are adopted also by those within the churches. If the churches refuse to heed Christ's Word, and we rely rather on man's explanations, then the events we notice about us will mean nothing to us. He who watches will also believe what Christ has said concerning the end of the age.

Watchfulness requires a thorough knowledge of the Word of God.

Watchfulness requires also a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. The world (and the devil) has made every effort to divert attention from the Word. With its many forms of entertainment, the world has sought to give even the Christian but little time to study the Word of God. He who watches does so with the Word in his hand. The Word warns of the evils that arise. The Word encourages and strengthens. We ought to remember that well when we attend church each Sabbath Day. We ought to study carefully in society in order that there too we may increase in knowledge. The Word is the Sword of the Spirit.

Watchfulness demands prayer. We know that our strength can not preserve us in the evil day. Only God's power and grace are sufficient. Therefore we come in prayer for strength. And God does provide.

Look up! The coming of the Lord is at hand. Our response must be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" □

Keys

Of the eight occurrences of the word key or keys in the Scriptures, only one has a purely literal meaning (Judges 3:25). The other Old Testament occurrence has both a literal and a symbolic idea, of which more later. All the New Testament uses are symbolic and speak of authority to open and close the kingdom of heaven. The words in the original have simple meanings: to open wide, an opener, a key; to close, shut up, a key.

In Isaiah 22 we read of Eliakim, who was appointed by God to be prefect of the palace of King Hezekiah. He is given the "key of the house of David," i.e., he would decide who would enter the king's palace and have audience with the king. By exercising this authority, this servant of God was a type of Christ who "hath the key of David, who openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7). Jesus has authority to open and close the door to the heavenly palace and presence of God. Jesus pronounced woe upon the lawyers of His day (those skilled in the law of Moses), for they took away "the key of knowledge," entering not in themselves, and hindering others from entering in. Here the key of knowledge is entrance into the kingdom of heaven through Christ, as Christ was set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures. Rather than opening the way of salvation by the right interpretation of the law, they took away the key, so that really there was no opening, no entrance. Their legalism was an illegal use of the keys!

In distinction from the sword power of the state, the financial power of the employer, and the corporal power of parents, the church has been given by Jesus Christ key power relative to the kingdom. He who has this great authority Himself (Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1) entrusts such authority for its exercise to officebearers whom He calls and qualifies. We read of this in Matthew 16:19, where Jesus speaks not only to Peter but to all the apostles, and not to the apostle alone, but to all elders until the end of time: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The keys of the kingdom are the preaching of the gospel in faithfulness to the Scriptures and the administration of Christian discipline in the punishment of sin (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29). To understand how the kingdom of heaven can be opened and shut by the use of these keys, see the Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 31. In Answer 84 we are given a definition of faithful, antithetical preaching that the church must hear, and insist on hearing, today. The basis for this description of preaching that can serve as key power is such a passage as Isaiah 3:10, 11: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

In summary, key power implies: 1) That the sovereign God of heaven and earth has bestowed all power and authority upon Christ as part of His Mediator's glory when He ascended into heaven. 2) Christ exercises this authority from heaven through pastors (the faithful preaching of the full counsel of God) and elders (the patient, careful disciplining of church members). 3) That the church of Christ must concern herself with the sins of her members which are public and unconfessed. Elders are required to form judgments regarding the doctrine and life of persons under their spiritual care. These judgments, properly made, are identical to the retaining or forgiving of sins. And, when elders do this work in harmony with the Scriptures, what is done by the church through her elders is valid before God in heaven! No little thing to be an elder! No little thing to come under Christian discipline!

And no little blessing to belong to a congregation and denomination where the keys are not rusty but used! Key power protects the preaching of the gospel from heresy and the administration of the sacraments from superstition. It protects the believer from the motions of sin in his members. It protects the entire congregation from profaning the covenant and bringing down the wrath of God upon her. A church that exercises the keys is a safe habitation for believers and their children. □

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Walking a Straight Path

OK, so I am miserable. Just plain not happy. Something is wrong, but what exactly it is I am not sure. But one thing is for certain, something is askew.

My parents are a constant bother. Everything I do or say, it seems, upsets them; and they end up either arguing with me or yelling at the top of their lungs. Then, to make matters worse, a brother or sister has to throw in a snide remark here and there. Sometimes I wonder whether it is even worth going home after school or work. What's at home anyway? I have a much better time with my friends.

But, added to all of this, I just simply have no desire to become involved in anything. Going to church on Sunday and catechism class during the week is just one big bore. Sure, I spend time learning my catechism lesson. If I did not, life would be even worse. But ask me if I really learned anything! Something is definitely wrong here!

I am just not satisfied with what is going on in my life. I feel confined. Everything is no, no, no. I think I just have to branch out in my life, find something new and exciting that will keep me happy. If I could just get away from it all. That's all I need to do. What has gone wrong?

Many a young person—yes, even a Christian young person—has suffered under such perplexity and despair. In fact, almost every young

person has that experience, to one degree or another. I guess it is a part of growing up and assuming responsibility for your own life and decisions. Adolescence is hardly the happiest time in one's life. The young person who thinks like the one we have just described is one who is far, far from being happy. Some can become downright depressed. And, although it is a sin in itself, there are even Christian young people who have thought of suicide. The only thing that has kept them from it is the preserving grace of God. Otherwise they would be like the countless other young people who in their unbelief and misery have taken their own lives.

The question is, of course, how do we overcome such unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life? How can we be happy and content with the direction of our lives?

Many a young person believes that the answer to this is to blame others. In fact, that is the psychotherapy many modern counselors practice: just blame it on your parents. You are a good individual. All your problems are rooted in the mistakes and limitations that your parents forced on you in your childhood. You will be happy as soon as you can analyze and overcome those restrictions imposed on you by parents and church. It is not your fault you are the way you are! It is someone else's fault!

How careful you must be, young people, when this is the advice given you. You, too, will be parents some day, the Lord willing. Will you be

willing then to accept this type of analysis of yourselves? Oh yes, your parents do make mistakes—sometimes big blunders. They are sinners too. Many times they err in the way they deal with you and your struggles in life. But are you going to blame them for the misery and problems that plague you in your lives? You know that you cannot! You love your parents far too much to place the blame on them.

The only way of overcoming our own unhappiness is by introspection: we must look in our own hearts for an answer. May I suggest that, when you do this, you consider what Solomon says in the first part of verse 26 of Proverbs 4, "Ponder the path of thy feet." To walk the straight way of God is more vital to our happiness than we often realize. Especially is this true when we are a child of God. God never gives any peace and happiness to His children, whom He loves, when they choose to follow their own

path to happiness rather than the one He has laid out for them in His Word.

Now, do not be so quick to stop reading at this point. "Here we go again, telling me how I have to live!" Just listen once! It's true! King David thought it was going to give him extreme joy and happiness to sleep with Bathsheba, the wife of another man. Maybe it did for a few moments. But when reality hit him, that he had greatly sinned, he was terribly miserable. The prodigal son left the home of his father taking with him his part of his inheritance. He went out and spent every penny of it because he thought this was the way to happi-

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ness. But when he ran out of money he realized that his life had really been pure misery all along. It's true! God does not give happiness to us when we walk our own path to happiness rather than God's.

The path God has laid out for us in His Word is straight and narrow. It is not always a way that is easy to walk in, because it places restrictions on our sinful flesh. God's laws require walking a straight line. There are many sins, which the people of this world close to us enjoy, that we may not enjoy. This means that the path of God can also be rather lonely, because there are not very many who are willing to walk it with us. But one thing is for certain, when we walk that path of God there will be joy and happiness. No, not the fun kind of happiness the world makes us think is true happiness, but the inner peace and satisfaction that is ours when we obey God's will. I know, the world wants us to think that there can be no real satisfaction in life unless we are out in the midst of the world living it up. But that world out there is a jungle! Say what they will, the ungodly have no security in life. And the truth is that it is security that gives happiness and real joy.

God's paths lend that security to life. God's ways are always good. When we keep them out of a deep love for God, God Himself will grant unto us the security that as long as we belong to Him nothing will hurt us. We are His and He takes care of His own! That security gives happiness.

But it comes only when we walk that straight path. Solomon, in that same passage in Proverbs 4 which we looked at earlier, continues to write in verses 25-27 with these words: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.... Turn not to the right hand nor to the left." Maybe, just maybe, we ought to consider ourselves in light of this Word of God to us. Maybe we are

miserable in life, maybe we have trouble with Mom and Dad, maybe our spiritual life lags, because we have not looked right on and turned not to the left or right. At least, we ought to give this our consideration, before dismissing it out of hand.

From this straight path of happiness in Christ there are many other little paths that lead us away. Most of those paths are labeled, "Fun and Freedom." Those paths appeal so easily to our sinful natures, and the

world is found at the opening of every one of them, beckoning us to enter. And, believe me, those paths are tempting! We see in them fun, independence, freedom from all restrictions and responsibilities. Just the opposite of the boring, straight, narrow way of God's precepts! Surely, if we follow these alluring paths we will

really be happy. Ah, there is the temptation!

Nor do we realize that when we take one little step along these paths it always leads to step number two, and step number three, until we find ourselves far off the straight path which we ought to follow for happiness. That is how it usually happens, you realize. We do not take one big lunge into these paths. We take one little step at a time. One little step of disobedience, that leads to another little step, and another, and another, until all of a sudden we are not getting along at home anymore. Spiritual things do not concern us anymore. Life is miserable, and we simply do not know why. Maybe it starts with watching a movie on a video-tape with our friends, as step one. Then it leads to going to a theatre, step two. Then it leads to trying some of the things we see people do in the movies, step three. All of a sudden we are drinking, we are committing fornication, we are partying, all in an attempt to have fun. But, after all is said and done, we are miserable people. There is no true joy and happiness found in these things. We have drifted from

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home, church, and godly friends, only to find ourselves smack-dab in the middle of the world with no security and no true joy. What happened? We placed one foot in front of the other, a step at a time, and walked in our own path rather than God's.

It is so easy to do that, because there are so many paths which lead to misery. It can start with only one false step followed by another. This happens when our hearts are not right with God. We are not examining each step we take to see if it is in harmony with that life of sanctification that Christ has worked in us. We are not determining whether we are doing something to satisfy the Spirit in us or the desires of our flesh. Maybe we are not very happy because, just maybe, we are not keeping our feet each step of our way.

That is the injunction of Hebrews 12:13: "Make straight paths for your feet."

"But it's too late! I have burned too many bridges behind me. I have taken too many steps in the wrong direction. I cannot undo what I have done. It is impossible to be happy again."

Not true! The saying, "You can never go back again," is not true. You can. It is hard at times, but it can be done. What it takes is true sorrow and repentance. Jesus says in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." With that reassurance we turn around and retrace our steps, stopping at each one and acknowledging before God that these were wrong steps. Then, returning to the straight path of happiness in Christ, we walk straight and sure.

It can be done. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. But we have to understand one thing: happiness is not found in our own way. It is found in the way of redemption in the cross of Jesus Christ! Follow this way, and the heartache of this present life of sin will be taken away! □

The Shameful Sin of Homosexuality (IV)

Against the position that condemns homosexuality and that calls for the government to forbid the practice of this evil, several objections are brought. The following are some of the objections most often raised and a brief response to each.

Opposition to Homosexuals Is Intolerance and Discrimination

This is the most recent, and to date the most successful, ploy of the gay rights movement. By charging discrimination, not only have the homosexuals been successful in gaining protection for their perverted lifestyle, but protection against discrimination on the basis of any sexual preference or orientation. This would include, it would seem, pedophiles and those who practice bestiality.

This is not tolerance and non-discrimination! This is lawlessness!

Neither is it the case that the homosexuals are a disadvantaged minority in need of special protection by the state. The fact is that the gay rights movement is dedicated to giving one of America's most affluent, best educated, and most advantaged special interest groups the right to practice its deviant sexual behavior uninhibited by the laws of the land. This is reality!

Of course opposition to homo-

sexuals is intolerance and discrimination! That is always the nature of law. Law, just because it is law, is intolerant and discriminatory. Suppose that you are stopped by a police officer for driving 40 mph in a 25 mph residential zone. The police officer discriminates against you, picking you out of all the other drivers. Neither does he tolerate your driving over the speed limit. He issues you a speeding ticket. The law must be intolerant and discriminatory, if it is to be law.

Jesus Never Condemned Homosexuality

It may be true that Jesus never explicitly condemned homosexuality, even though in more than one place He referred to the awful judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it could just as well be argued that Jesus never explicitly condemned kidnapping, incest, or bestiality. Does the fact that Jesus never explicitly condemned a certain behavior justify that behavior? Does Jesus' silence indicate approval? Who would dare to carry out the implications of such a position?

The fact of the matter is that Jesus fully endorsed the law of God, including its prohibition and condemnation of homosexuality. In Matthew 5:17 He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." And in verse 19, He went on to say, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." In Matthew 15:6 Jesus condemned the scribes and

Pharisees who "... made the commandment of God of none effect...."

Besides, it can be argued that the condemnation of homosexuality in the law of the Old Testament is Jesus' condemnation of this evil. For, as the apostle Peter says in I Peter 1:11, it was the Spirit of Christ who moved the writers of the Old Testament.

We Are Supposed to Love and Not Hate

"Hate is not a family value" is the slogan of the gay rights activists. This slogan is aimed at those who oppose homosexuality in the name of biblical family values. Those who oppose homosexuality are made out to be unloving and hateful.

But the Scriptures teach that love begins with love for God, and one who does not love God cannot love his neighbor. The first and greatest commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37). And what is love for God? "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:3).

Neither is it the case that our opposition to homosexuality is motivated by personal hatred of the homosexual. Not at all. In love, we pray for him, seek his repentance, and are concerned for his salvation. Is it love to allow the homosexual to go on in his sin, to experience God's judgment on his sin in this life, and to perish in eternity hereafter? Is it love to condone his evil and give him the false hope that even God approves of his wickedness? On the contrary, love

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warns the sinner of his sinful way and calls him to repentance.

We Are Not to Judge

Whenever someone speaks out against homosexuality, inevitably the response is heard that we are not to judge. Did not our Lord say, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1)?

Now, certainly, our Lord said this. But it ought to be apparent to anyone that to interpret Jesus' prohibition of judging as an absolute forbidding of all and any kind of judging goes too far. Then, in the end, nothing is to be condemned, no matter how grievous the evil. Murder is not to be condemned; incest is not to be condemned; rape is not to be condemned, because we are not to judge.

The Scriptures elsewhere call us to judge. In John 7:24 Jesus commands His disciples to "...judge righteous judgment." In I John 4:1, believers are exhorted: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (judge) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Suffice it to say that in Matthew 7:1 Jesus is condemning a certain kind of judging. He is certainly warning against rash judgment, against judging a person's hidden motives, and judging absolutely an individual's eternal destiny. That kind of judging is forbidden to the child of God.

But the child of God is called to make the judgment that homosexuality is evil and that the impenitent homosexual is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. He is called to make this judgment, because this is God's judgment of homosexuality.

What People Do in the Privacy of Their Own Homes Is Their Business

Often it is asked, "Shouldn't people be allowed to do what they want to do in the privacy of their own home?" And, "Shouldn't we protect a person's right to privacy?"

If this were true, we would have no laws against incest, child abuse, or

wife-beating. The right to privacy is not the right to break the law of God in privacy. We are not permitted to behave as we please in the privacy of our own home. Both the state and the church have a vested interest in proper behavior in one's home and family.

The reality is that much homosexual behavior does not occur in the privacy of homes, but more often in public places like parks, bath houses, rest stops, and bars. The homosexuals flaunt their evil today in much the same way as the citizens of Sodom did in Lot's day.

You Can't Legislate Morality

Legislation cannot instill morality. But we ought to legislate morality. All legislation is of a moral character. Law by its very nature pertains to morality, upholding moral (righteous) behavior and condemning immoral (unrighteous) behavior.

The question is not, "Should we legislate morality?" But the question is, "Whose morality are we going to legislate? God's or man's?"

Both the church and the state are called to uphold the law of God. To fail to do this is to fail in the essential calling that these institutions have from God. To fail to uphold God's law is to endorse immorality and lawlessness. This is exactly what is happening in our country today.

Opposition to Homosexuals Is Homophobia

More and more anyone who is opposed to homosexuality is labeled a "homophobe." This is the charge leveled by the liberal news media and by the gay rights activists. A "phobia" is an irrational and unfounded fear. Opposition to homosexuality is supposed to be due to an irrational and unfounded fear of the homosexuals.

It is to be admitted that we are afraid of the homosexuals. We are afraid for our country. We are afraid for the church. We are afraid for our children. But our fear is not unfounded or irrational. How can anyone charge that our fear is unfounded

in light of the statistics relating to the homosexual lifestyle? Why should we not be afraid of the devastating diseases associated with this evil? Why should we not be afraid of the judgment of God over our nation because of the approval of this evil? It is as ridiculous to accuse those who are opposed to homosexuality of being homophobes as it is to accuse the person with a high fever and who has been vomiting with being a hypochondriac.

Christians Must Be Forgiving

But are not Christians supposed to be forgiving? Of course they are. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." The Lord Jesus has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

But forgiveness is not overlooking and tolerating sin. God forgives our sins. But does this mean that He overlooks our sins? Of course not! Rather than overlook our sins, He sent His Son to die for our sins. And how does God give us the forgiveness of our sins? Only in the way of our repenting of them, forsaking them, and fighting against them. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8, 9).

This is also how God forgives the homosexual. His homosexuality is sin. He knows it is sin, sin that must be repented of and confessed before God. In the way of repentance the homosexual will enjoy the forgiveness of his sin. Before God and in his own conscience he will have the sense of God's forgiveness. And out of thankfulness for that forgiveness, empowered by the grace and Spirit of God, he will also be resolved to fight against his sin and live in newness of life. □

Our Graciously and Freely Given Salvation

It is God's sovereign grace that brings blessings upon the human race.

Let it fill us with awe and thankfulness that salvation does not depend on what we did or are doing. That which we do, and which delights our God, is a fruit of what He does in and through us; it is not our work of giving Him what He asks us to give. God never asks. He always commands and makes possible what pleases Him.

Take hold of and cling tightly to the truth which He presents in Ephesians 2:8. There He tells us through Paul, "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And faith is part of our salvation, not that whereby we earn and deserve salvation. In Psalm 139:14 we read, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." We are not saved because we fulfill a condition, but because our God performs such a wonderful work of His grace. We do not make ourselves believers. We are fearfully and wonderfully made by God. Assuredly as our physical life came by His will and work, so our spiritual life is also His gift to us.

All this we must bear in mind and maintain when we consider what happened in the day of shadows. We certainly must bear in mind that truth when we consider further that which we find in the life of Jacob, the son of

Isaac, and grandson of Abraham. It is true that God commanded Jacob to go back to the land of Canaan, and that Jacob did as God commanded him. It is also true, and must be maintained and emphasized as well, that Jacob had only a small beginning of obedience, and that this was so because God gave Jacob a new spiritual life, and faith in Him as God. We read of that in Lord's Day 44, question and answer 114 of the Heidelberg Catechism. What is more, we also see in Jacob's life how carnal his nature was, when his brother, Esau, came to meet him with four hundred men.

Jacob was heeding God's command when he took his wives and children away from Laban. But he did this not simply because God ordered him to do so. He did it because of the fury of Laban's wrath, as we find in Genesis 31:1-3. And when his brother Esau met him with those four hundred men, Jacob revealed that he had only a small beginning of obedience to God's command.

In Genesis 33:5-15 we have presented the fact that Jacob had only a small beginning of obedience, and that he did not constantly walk in faith and trust in God. He not only called himself Esau's servant, but at one time even addressed Esau as his lord, that is, his master. In verse 5, he said to Esau, "The children which God hath graciously given *thy servant*"; in verse 13, "*My lord* knoweth that the children are tender"; and in verse 15, "Let me find grace in the sight of *my lord*." He was not referring to the Lord God who commanded him to go back to Canaan, but to his brother Esau.

How true it is then what we read in the Heidelberg Catechism, namely, that we in this life have only a small beginning of obedience. Truly, we have in ourselves no right to the smallest blessing of salvation. Go back to what Adam and Eve did. For *one* sin, not a host of evil deeds, they died, as God had said they would. The one sin of eating of the forbidden fruit called for everlasting punishment in hell. Our God said to Adam that sin brings death; and death brings one to hell with its everlasting torment.

But in His grace our God sent His own Son to suffer the punishment we deserve. And by His grace He enables us to begin walking in His holy law. We owe Him thanks for the keeping of His law, and that He makes us all able to begin to walk in love to Him, as His elect children.

Think of the apostle Peter. He made a beautiful confession when he said to Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And yet, when Jesus was being tried by the godless Jews and before Pilate, Peter denied Jesus, not simply once, but three times, declaring, "I know not this man of whom ye speak" (Mark 14:71). Truly he had a small beginning of faith and obedience. Further, the apostle Paul, who labored so hard in Christ's service, cried out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). This was in the context of what he said in verse 21, namely, that "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me," and, in verse 23, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bring-

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ing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

When Jacob called himself a servant of Esau, and called him his lord, that is, his master, his father Isaac was still alive. Esau had not therefore displaced his father and become lord and ruler over Jacob. Besides, had God not told Jacob that his name was Israel, which means Prince of God? And God had also told Jacob, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28). Should Jacob then call Esau his lord? Was he walking by faith when he did that?

What is more, Isaac and his descendants did not yet own any land in Canaan, except where they buried their dead loved ones. Esau was no lord and ruler of Jacob. It is true that when Jacob was born, he followed Esau and held on to his heel. He was in fact given the name Supplanter. It is also striking that the very first child to be born, namely Cain, was an unbeliever and murderer, while Abel, the second child to be born, was a believer who was the first man to enter into heavenly glory. What counts is not what man is physically, and what he does physically, but what God does to man from a spiritual point of view.

Note further that Esau asked Jacob who these women and children were. It is amazing that Esau, who threatened that he would kill his twin brother, here embraced Jacob and kissed him. Also, what we find here is the amazement of Esau when he

saw those wives and children of Jacob. Still more, when Esau asked what Jacob meant by the drove of cattle which he met, Jacob said, "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." Jacob clearly revealed fear and concern as to what Esau would do to him and his family and cattle. In fact, in Genesis 32:11 we read of Jacob's prayer to God. In his prayer he states, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

God had given Esau plenty of earthly riches. When therefore Jacob declared that the drove of cattle which he presented were in order to find grace in Esau's sight, Esau said to Jacob, "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself." Keeping His word of promise to Jacob, the Almighty God had protected Jacob by giving Esau what he considered enough, so that he did not care to take Jacob's cattle as a gift.

Truly, behind all this we must see the Almighty God in His grace upon His elect children. We should see, in this Day of Shadows, what our God declared through the apostle Paul in the New Testament. He correctly stated this truth: "And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Likewise here we have that comforting truth which our God gave to Jacob, in Genesis 31:13, namely, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou vowest a

vow unto me; now arise, get thee out of this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

In Genesis 32:28 we read, "Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." Jacob, by calling Esau his lord, and by confessing himself to be his servant, did not deserve peaceful entrance into that promised land. And we, by our sins, deserve not one blessing, but instead everlasting torment in hell. As pointed out in Ephesians 2:8 we are saved by grace. And that means that all of our salvation is a free gift of God's grace. In the life of Jacob we do indeed have a shadow of God's grace. What is presented here by our God is a wonderful gift of His grace.

Jacob's safe return to the promised land of Canaan is indeed a comforting shadow of what lies ahead for us. Because God's grace rests also on us, we will enter the Kingdom of Heaven with our bodies as well as with our souls. It will be a free gift of God's grace upon the elect; and it will move us to everlasting praise to God for what He has done.

Let us then sing that which we find in *Psalter* number 397:2, and which is based on Psalm 145:3, 4, namely:

The Lord is greatly to be praised,
His greatness is beyond our
thought;

From age to age the sons of men
Shall tell the wonders God has
wrought. □

Contribution

Rev. Charles Terpstra

Counseling the Grieving

Introduction

The pastoral ministry of officebearers to the grieving is a vitally important work in the church of Jesus Christ. It is so, first of all,

because in ministering to the grieving we are to represent and be the instruments of the God whose work it is to heal the broken in heart and bind up their wounds (literally "griefs," Ps.

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147:3). Specifically, as it is the ministry of Christ "to bind up the broken-hearted" and "to comfort all that mourn" (Is. 61:1-3; Luke 4:18, 19), so it is our ministry to do the same.

Secondly, this work is important because God's people *need* us in the hour of grief. The time of sorrow is one of the most troubling and trying periods in believers' lives. It is also a time when Satan can buffet them with the greatest temptations. We who fill the offices of Christ must be there to help the saints in this time of great need.

Thirdly, this work is so important because of its implications for us who minister to the grieving. In their book *Comforting the Bereaved*, Warren and David Wiersbe address this in these words:

If his ministry of the Word is to be effective week after week, he must know what it means to minister to broken hearts. The pastor who is isolated and insulated, locked up in his study, is robbing himself and his people of some of the most enriching experiences of ministerial life.... Phillips Brooks said that the growing pastor must experience higher heights of joy and deeper depths of sorrow; and this is true.... Our church members quickly forget our sermons, but they remember our kindnesses, especially those dark hours when we were walking with them through the valley. Many pastors confess that they have learned more about the grace of God at an open casket than they ever learned from a profound theology book (p. 6).

In the light of these things it is evident that we *must* be involved in counseling God's grieving people.

The Reality and Process of Grief

Grief is a very real and painful experience in the lives of God's people. All of God's children feel the hurt of sorrow at one time or another in their lives. The Word of God teaches us that, since the fall of man into sin, sorrow is an integral part of our lives (cf. Gen. 3:16, 17; Ps. 90:10). And the

Bible does not hide this reality from us, but, throughout, records the examples and experiences of grief in the lives of God's children. Who can forget the sorrows of Jacob and of Job and of David? Also our Lord walked the path of grief; He was in fact *the* Man of sorrows, acquainted with all our grief (Is. 53:3). If God can be grieved (Gen. 6:6; Eph. 4:30), and His people are in His image, they will feel grief as well. If the children of God live in this vale of tears and shadow of suffering and death (and they do), they will taste the agonies of mourning.

Grief is also an extremely complex emotion and state. It consists of a combination of sadness, anguish, anxiety, fear, doubt, distress, loneliness, helplessness, and even despair. It may be deep and prolonged, or relatively shallow and brief. It may be a heavy burden, or a relatively light load. It may be attended by a host of other difficulties, or be a singularly focused struggle. Because of this it is easy for the counselor to fall into being too simplistic on the one hand, or too probing and profound on the other hand. Counseling the grieving requires the wisdom of Christ and His Word.

It is also important to realize that the causes of grief are manifold according to Scripture and our experience. No doubt the greatest and most common cause of grief is death. The loss of a loved one, whether a wife (Gen. 23:2), or a husband, or a child (Gen. 37:35; Job 1:19, 20; II Sam. 18:33; 19:1, 2; Matt. 2:17, 18), or a father (Gen. 50:10), or a mother (Gen. 24:67), or a close friend (II Sam. 1:11, 12, 17ff.), whether expected or unexpected, brings on a time of intense pain and sadness.

But death is by no means the only cause of grief. Sorrow is also brought on by sickness and its results (II Kings 20:3; Ps. 38:6; 42:3); childlessness (I Sam. 1:7, 8, 15, 16); wayward children (Gen. 26:35; Prov. 17:25); the hurt of

friends and relatives (ps. 31, 69); persecution (Ps. 38, 69); loss of property (Job 1:13ff.) or work; divorce or separation; sin (II Cor. 7:10); the unconverted state of family or friends (Rom. 9:2), etc. It is good to know these various causes and examples, so that we may watch for them among God's people and be ready to bring help and comfort to them.

It is frequently stressed in connection with this subject that grief is a process which is made up of several stages. I am not going to emphasize this, since others have dealt with this

before (cf. the articles "God's Work in Our Grief," by Pastor W. Bekkering, Dec. 1, 1990; and "Ministering to the terminally ill," by Pastor M. DeVries, Mar. 1, 1993 in the *Standard Bearer*).

There are two things I would like to stress in this connection how-

ever. First, it is important to remember that the saints' times of grieving are also part of God's sovereign plan and purposes, just as the causes of this grieving are. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 reminds us of this: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ... A time to weep, and at time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." The grieving must know that their process of grief, including its length and depth and details, is all in the Father's hands, appointed by Him and carried out by Him. And second, because of this, the saints' time of grieving is meant to be a process of *growth*. Mildred Tengbom, in her book *Grief for a Season*, writes of this, while also cautioning us about thinking too strictly of the period of grief:

In grieving, we just don't pass from one clearly defined stage to another: grieving isn't that orderly. Some mornings we may feel able to accept what has happened, but before noon we're plunged into despair again. Some have described grieving as going down a road that twists and turns,

*Counseling
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and His Word.*

climbs hills, descends to valleys, and crosses rivers and plains. Others have compared bereavement to going through a long, dark tunnel. Whatever metaphor we use, let's remember it's important not to get stuck along the way. Grieving is meant to be a *growing* process (p. 35).

Another Christian author described this growth in these terms: "Things happen *to* me in order that things should happen *in* me ... so that things could happen *through* me" (quoted in *Yet Will I Trust Him*, by P. Rankin). Job's words in Job 23:10 bring these two ideas together, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." That is what we have to assure God's grieving people.

Special Problems in Grieving

There are often special problems (sins, weaknesses, struggles) associated with the time of grieving, and it is important that we who counsel the grieving know these problems. The emotion and state of grief is seldom found alone; it is almost always attended by other struggles and difficulties. The Scriptures openly speak of these things as well.

Those who grieve are often filled with questions and fears and regrets. They wonder why God has brought this suffering and loss into their lives, why it came at that particular time, and what God's purpose is in it. They can worry about the destiny and state of their departed one and fear their own readiness for the end of their lives. They are afraid of going on in life and of how they will make it. They can have endless questions about what heaven is like and what their loved one is doing. They can be filled with worry and regret for not having spent more time with their loved one or for not having done enough for them.

Closely related to these experiences is the fact that the grieving often become filled with anger, bitterness, and complaining. It is striking that one of the Old Testament words for grief also has the element of anger

associated with it (cf. *kass* in I Sam. 1:16 and Job 6:2). Those who are plunged into sorrow can lash out at friends and family and church—and at God. They can be severely critical of His people and of His circumstances, and fill their days with complaints (cf. Job 3; 7:11; 10:1; 16:1ff.; Ps. 55:2; 77:3).

Further, those who grieve, especially following the loss of a loved one, are often overcome by severe loneliness. They miss deeply their departed one and long for him/her to return. This loneliness is often provoked by the fact that shortly after the busyness of the funeral and the return to normalcy for everyone else, they are forgotten in their grief (Ps. 31:12; 38:11; 88:4, 5). The visits, cards, meals, and other special favors and attention come to an end, and they feel all alone in the community of the saints. What is more, the pain of this loneliness can also be increased by the fact that God seems to be absent. Not only do they feel deeply the absence of their loved one, but they also feel that God is not there (Job 23:2, 8, 9; Ps. 77, 88).

What is more, and often due to the above-mentioned experiences, those who are cast into a season of grief frequently become depressed and can even reach the point of despair. Of this too the Scriptures testify, as in I Kings 19:4; Job 3:1ff.; Psalm 77, 88.

In addition to these things, the time of grieving may also be attended by extreme physical weariness and exhaustion and by sleeplessness and lack of appetite (cf. Ps. 6:6; 31:10; 38:8; 102:4).

Comforting the Grieving

As was pointed out at the beginning, ours is the ministry of being Christ's representatives and instruments to bind up broken hearts and to comfort those who mourn. The question we now face is, How is this to be done?

The first thing to be stressed in answer to this question is that we must truly show ourselves to be Christ's representatives to His sorrowing and hurting people. By that I mean that we must be present with God's people in their grief, that we must truly sympathize with them in their grief, and that we must reveal the compassion of God to them in their sorrow. More important, first of all, than anything we may say to the grieving is the fact that we convey genuine care for them. That implies that we must be there with them in their sorrow. We must go to be with them and stand with them in their dark hour of grief. Christ did that when He went to Bethany to be with Mary and Martha (John 11). The grieving today can no longer see and touch Christ, but us they can and must. The basic idea of the word for "comfort" in the New Testament is that of calling someone to your side. That is what we must do for the bereaved—call them to our side and reveal the presence of Christ to them. And let that presence be the presence of love and compassion. Further, we

must sincerely share with them in their sorrow and suffering (sympathize). This will mean weeping with them that weep (Rom. 12:15; John 11:35). This certainly means letting them tell us their grief, exactly how they feel, what they are experiencing. We must *listen*, as well as speak. A. Kuyper has some excellent thoughts on this essential aspect of comfort in his book

In the Shadow of Death. In a chapter in which he criticizes the miserable comfort of Job's three friends, he writes:

Words too can comfort. But one must go differently about it. First the eye must have spoken, and the expression of the face and the warm hand-clasp. And when thus the soul disclosed herself and drew breath again, then first a gentle, whispering

*The grieving
today
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and must.*

word; and when thus the sorrowing soul herself begins to speak, then, yea, further conversation can follow; not with a little lesson learned by rote; not with reasoning ready-made for all who are in sorrow; but with the *language of the heart*.

...To comfort is no hushing with soft talk, but suffering oneself with the sufferer; sharing distress with him who is distressed. With the troubled of soul feeling pain in your own heart. There is no comforting, where there is no fellowship of heart with heart.... Love is the soul of all real comforting. Forgetting yourself. Thinking of the aggrieved one alone. Entering into the life of anguish. *Living along with it* (pp. 141-142).

The second thing which needs to be stressed in comforting the grieving is that the counselor must direct and lead them to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. He is after all their Comforter (II Cor. 1:3, 4) and Healer (Ps. 147:3), and the sovereign God of their salvation who works all things for their good (Rom. 8:28). We must show them and assure them from the Word of the *presence* of God with them in their sorrow (Ps. 23:4; 34:18; Is. 43:2; Micah 7:8). We must show them and assure them from the Word of the *power* (sufficiency) of God to help them in their grief (Job 5:18; Ps. 23:1-3; 27:1, 10, 14; Jer. 8:21, 22; 31:25). We must show them and assure them of the *sovereignty* of God in their affliction (Job 1:21; 13:15; Ps. 31:15; 37:5; 39:9; Rom. 8:28). We must direct them to the suffering and sorrow of Jesus Christ the Savior, showing them the *example* of this suffering and sorrow (Is. 53; Lam. 1:12; Matt. 26:37-42; John 11:35; Heb. 5:7, 8), the *saving power* of this suffering and sorrow (Is. 53; Heb. 10; I Pet. 2:24, 25), and the *victory and fruit* of this suffering and sorrow (Rom. 8:17, 18; I Cor. 15; II Cor. 4, 5; I Thess. 4:13ff.; I Pet. 4:13; Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

Thirdly, we who minister to the grieving can counsel and comfort them by directing them to the *saints of the past* who received God's help and strength in their time of sorrow. We may point them to examples in the Bible (e.g., II Sam. 12:15ff.; Ps. 30:5, 11;

116:8; Luke 7:12ff.; I Kings 17:9ff.) and to examples in the church. It is of great comfort to the sorrowing to know that others have walked the path of grief, and to see how they were helped and strengthened.

Finally, in counseling and comforting the grieving a few practical points are in order. First, let the grieving know that it is spiritually normal and even healthy for them to continue to have times of weeping over their loss and to have strong feelings of missing their departed one. Too often we can become impatient with the bereaved and leave the impression with them that they ought to be long over their grief. We must remember that grieving is a process and that it takes time for healing to take place. Second, we ought to continue to make regular visits to the grieving during their season of sorrow. It is easy to forget about them and their continued needs after the first few months, just as church members and relatives often do. But we must watch for their souls during the whole period and stay with them through the entire process. In these visits we ought to continue to listen to them, to bring the Word of God to bear upon their needs, and to talk with them openly of their loss, sharing our own memories and stories of their departed one with them. Third, we ought to give the grieving things to read. There are many excellent resources from which they may gain additional comfort and strength. A few examples are "God is Our Refuge and Strength" (South Holland PRC Evangelism booklet); "Our Only Comfort" (Southeast PRC Evangelism booklet); "Is There an Answer," "Christians Grieve Too," "Behind a Frowning Providence" (Banner of Truth booklets); *Comfort for Christians*, by A. Pink (Baker); *Trusting God*, by J. Bridges (NavPress); *Yet Will I Trust Him*, by P. Rankin (Regal); *Grief for a Season*, by M. Tengbom (Bethany); *In the Shadow of Death*, by A. Kuyper (Eerdmans, 1929). Fourth, we ought to ensure that the church family continues to offer help to the grieving. That would

include practical help such as meals, house-cleaning, shopping, etc. But also, that the sorrowing are included in Sunday night visits, church outings, Bible studies, etc. This is especially important for the widows, who feel keenly their loneliness and helplessness. In some churches there is an organization of women who can see to this (e.g., "Helping Hands"); in other cases the deacons may take care of this.

Finally, and by way of summary, allow me to reproduce for you the "Ten Commandments for Comforters," provided by Warren and David Wiersbe in their book *Comforting the Bereaved*:

1. Go to those who are bereaved as soon as possible, even if it is inconvenient for you.
2. Be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to react to words and feelings that may appear "un-Christian."
3. Do not try to explain everything.
4. Share the promises of God.
5. Avoid saying, "I know just how you feel." Nobody will believe you, and the statement accomplishes nothing.
6. Words often fail, so express yourself through a loving hug, a handshake, even a simple touch. Just being there is a ministry.
7. Do not be afraid to "weep with those who weep."
8. Remember that grieving is a difficult process that takes time. Be patient with those who mourn and try not to say, "Aren't you over it yet?"
9. Visit regularly during the weeks after the funeral.
10. Keep confidence. Don't turn the experience into a sermon illustration, unless the family gives you permission (p. 44). □

NOTICE!

The issue of September 15 was the last in Volume 69. Bound volumes will be made available for \$16.00 (+ postage) each. Or, if you bring or send to the SB editorial office soon your own loose issues for binding, you can obtain the bound volume for just \$9.00. (The latter service can be provided if we have your copies by October 22.)

Martin Bucer: Ecumenist of the Reformation

Introduction

One of the charges which Rome leveled against the Reformers was the serious accusation that the Reformation tore the fabric of the church and destroyed the unity of the body of Christ. Very shortly after the Reformation began, it split into various branches, chiefly the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and Anabaptistic groups. While there were good reasons for this, and while God in His inscrutable wisdom had His own purpose in this, it remained a serious problem with which the Reformers had to deal.

While all fervently sought the unity of the churches of the Reformation, no one pursued this goal with as much vigor and effort as Martin Bucer, the Reformer of Strassburg. His entire ministry can be characterized as a pursuit of unity.

Yet, in his zeal to bring unity to the church of Christ, he often sought unacceptable compromises which made true unity impossible. Not only did he wish to bring Lutherans and Calvinists together; he did not even rest in his efforts to unite Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In his burning zeal for unity, he forgot that unity is essentially a unity of the truth as it is in Christ and revealed in the Holy Gospel.

Yet, in spite of this, he was a Reformer of no little importance whose work had its own value for the church of Christ.

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Bucer's Early Life and Conversion

Martin Bucer was born in 1491 in Selestat, South Germany, not far from Strassburg, where he was to spend 25 years in the pastoral ministry. He was, therefore, eight years younger than Luther and 18 years older than Calvin. Although his father was a poor cobbler, Bucer received a good education from his youth, and, at the age of 15, entered the Dominican monastery. He did this not so much because he was enamored with a monastic life, but rather because he desired a thorough education, for which the Dominican Order was famous. For further studies he was sent to Heidelberg, where perhaps the most important event of his life took place. Martin Luther had come there, very shortly after the Reformation began, to discuss theological matters with members of the Augustinian Order to which Luther belonged. Bucer heard Luther speak and was fully persuaded of the truth of Luther's reformation doctrines. In private, over supper, he discussed these questions with Luther and became fully committed to the Reformation.

Bucer's Pastorate in Strassburg

An interesting story has come out of this period. When Luther was summoned to appear before the Diet of Worms for trial by the Emperor, Charles V, he knew at the time of his going that he might never leave that city alive. Many tried to dissuade him from going, for the memories of the burning of John Huss by the Council of Constance lingered in the minds

of Luther's associates. Among those who attempted to dissuade Luther was Martin Bucer, who warned him of the terrible dangers that awaited him. But when Luther insisted on going even "if all the tiles on the houses in Worms were devils," Bucer accompanied him and heard Luther's stirring appeal to Scripture: "Here I stand. I can do naught else. So help me God."

In 1522, at the age of 31, Bucer began his work in earnest. He labored in the city of Wissembourg and tried to make it a Protestant city. But the Roman Catholics were successful in keeping the city faithful to Rome, and Bucer was forced to flee for his life. He went to the nearby city of Strassburg, where his parents were citizens.

While in Wissembourg Bucer married Elizabeth Silbereisen, sometimes known as Elizabeth Palast. She was a former nun and bore 13 children. Bucer was one of the first Reformers to marry, and he prompted Erasmus to remark that the Reformation was not so much a tragedy as a comedy because it always ended in a wedding.

The busy household of Bucer was a godly one, an example to all of what a covenant home is, although the spiritual character of the home was in large measure due to Elizabeth, for Martin traveled extensively in the cause of the Reformation.

We may note here that Elizabeth died before Martin, who married again, this time to a woman by the name of Wilibrandis Rosenblatt. She had previously been married to no

fewer than three other Reformers: Ludwig Cellarius, Oecolampadius, and Wolfgang Capito. She went with Bucer to England and outlived him. A woman married to four such great men must have had a singular attraction to Reformers.

Strassburg was blessed with great preachers. Although Bucer himself labored there for 25 years, Zell, Capito, Hedio, Johann Sturm, and even Calvin during the years of his banishment from Geneva were preachers in that same city. Seldom has one city been blessed with such a gallery of gifted and able preachers.

In Strassburg Bucer gave himself over to the work of the ministry. He preached faithfully, labored mightily in pastoral work, established Christian schools and a seminary, lodged refugees from persecution, wrote extensively (including correspondence with all Europe's Reformers), traveled throughout Germany and Switzerland, and attended conferences.

When Calvin, after his brief stay in Strassburg, was called back to Geneva, Bucer, though loathe to see Calvin go, wrote a letter to the Syndic and Council of Geneva in which he said: "Now he comes at last, Calvin, that elect and incomparable instrument of God, to whom no other in our age may be compared, if at all there can be the question of another alongside of him." This letter is a fine illustration of the relationships which existed between the Reformers. They were never hesitant to recognize the good gifts God had given to others, to praise their colleagues for the work, to encourage one another in their calling. Would to God that this were also true in the difficult days in which the church today is called to live.

In 1549 the Interim of the Diet of Augsburg was imposed on Germany, and the Protestants were given almost no rights, only that the cup of the Lord's Supper could be given to the laity and ministers were

allowed to marry. The seeming victory of the Romish Church threatened Strassburg; and Bucer, refusing to his everlasting credit to accept the Interim, was forced to flee his beloved city and congregation.

Although he had an invitation from Calvin to come to Geneva, he decided instead to accept the invitation of Thomas Cranmer and go to England. In England his enormous gifts were recognized. He was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, met personally King Edward VI, received an honorary doctorate from Cambridge, and made a lasting impact on the English Reformation.

Martin Bucer died in England on March 1, 1551, not even attaining his threescore and ten years. His body was followed by 3,000 people on the way to the grave, and he was buried with honors. But Rome would not let him rest in peace. When Queen Mary Tudor, better known as Bloody Mary, came to the throne, she not only burned Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer at the stake, but would not rest until Bucer's body had been exhumed, tied with chains to a post, and burned. God in grace towards England made Mary's reign brief. When Elizabeth (Good Queen Bess) came to the throne, she took what was left of his ashes and gave them a decent burial.

Bucer's Work

Bucer fought long and hard for the cause of the Reformation. When that miserable humanist Erasmus came out with his defense of free will, Bucer broke with Erasmus, even though Erasmus was a close friend, and asked Luther to answer that "pestiferous pamphlet" of an "unhappy slave of glory, who

pushes forward to prefer the spit of his own opinion to Scripture." When Anabaptists streamed into Strassburg, Bucer condemned them as opponents

of the pure gospel. While Calvin labored in Strassburg as a colleague of Bucer, Bucer had considerable influence on Calvin and the development of his views.

Bucer wrote extensively. His works number about 150 volumes. But, as is the case with many theologians, he was extremely long-winded. Luther called him a chatterbox; Charles V said he was a windbag; and Calvin, more charitably, said: "Bucer is too verbose to be read quickly by those who have other matters to deal with.... He does not know how to stop writing." His writing was so illegible that the English Bishop Edmund Grindal said that a conjurer was needed to decipher it.

Yet in all his striving for the cause of the Reformation, Bucer was moved by too great a zeal for union, not only between the various branches of Protestantism, but also between Protestantism and Rome if possible. He labored long and hard to these ends. And, while indeed such labor is commendable, his desire for union made him make unacceptable compromises of the truth.

Although Bucer attended many conferences in his pursuit of ecclesiastical unity, two illustrations will suffice to demonstrate his tendency to compromise.

Bucer was the chief author of *The Tetrapolitan Confession*, a document drawn up to achieve unity on the burning issue of the presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Without spelling out in detail the contents of this confession (it is worth reading), we may note that Bucer made major concessions to the truth of Scripture in the hopes that especially Lutheranism and Calvinism would be brought together on this one issue which divided them.

This willingness to compromise on the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the sacraments became especially evident in the Colloquy of Marburg. This was a conference called by Philip of Hesse to discuss union between the Lutherans and the Reformed. It was attended by the leading theologians of Germany and Swit-

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zerland — although Calvin was not present.

Bucer was also there. As we noticed earlier, Bucer was an ardent follower of Luther. However, in his lifetime, he gradually drifted into the Calvinistic camp, most probably under the influence of Calvin while the two were in Strassburg. It was for this reason that when Luther and Bucer met at Marburg, Luther said to Bucer, though with a smile on his face: "You are a good-for-nothing knave."

The conference was opened by a beautiful prayer by Zwingli: "Fill us, O Lord and Father of us all, we beseech Thee, with Thy gentle Spirit, and dispel on both sides all the clouds of misunderstanding and passion. Make an end to the strife of blind fury.

Arise, O Christ, Thou Sun of righteousness, and shine upon us. Alas! while we contend, we only too often forget to strive after holiness which Thou requirest from us all. Guard us against abusing our powers, and enable us to employ them with all earnestness for the promotion of holiness."

It soon became evident at the Conference that the Reformers could reach agreement on all matters of the faith, with the exception of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Though the Swiss pleaded with Luther for understanding and compassion, Luther remained adamant. He would not even shake hands with the Swiss at the end of the Conference when agreement proved impossible, say-

ing to the Swiss: "You are of a different spirit."

Here too Bucer was willing to compromise for the sake of unity. We may be thankful that his pleas for compromise went unheard and that the Reformed position was maintained within the Calvinistic churches.

Unity of the church is an eminently desirable thing. To compromise for the sake of unity leads not to unity, but to further trouble. Bucer made important contributions to the Reformation; but his zeal for unity remains an abiding warning against compromise of the truth of the gospel for purposes of attaining mere outward unity. □

Report of Classis West

Classis West met in regular session on Wednesday, September 1, 1993, in Lynden, WA. On the day preceding classis an Officebearers' Conference was held, on the different aspects of the subject of "Reformed Missions and Evangelism." Several members of the congregation of Lynden joined those delegated to classis at the conference, which was enjoyed by all who attended. This was the first time in 40 years that Lynden was privileged to host a meeting of classis. Several members of the congregation spoke of the fact that the conference and the meeting of classis gave them a real taste of the denomination, something which does not happen very often because of their location in the very northwest corner of the most northwestern state. Besides meeting the men of Classis West at the meetings, the members of Lynden were able to hear four other ministers preach, since some of the ministers stayed over the weekends before and after classis in order to reduce the cost of airfare.

Rev. W. Bekkering served as President of the meeting, and after welcoming the delegates he welcomed also Rev. Robert Hargrove and Elder

Dana Rykken of Sovereign Grace Reformed Church of Spokane, WA.

Classis sent on to Synod 1994 with its approval an overture from Doon to amend one of the Rules of Order for the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The amendment would create the possibility of elders or ex-elders serving as Synodical Stated Clerk in addition to ministers. The grounds given by Doon were 1) the duties of the stated clerk are mostly clerical in nature, and do not require the labors of a minister; and 2) a minister's calling is to give himself to the study of the Word of God and to prayer, and the work of stated clerk of Synod is far removed from that central calling of the minister and may well detract from the proper labors of a minister.

There were two protests from four saints in Isabel. These were protests of decisions taken at the March, 1993 meeting of Classis West. One concerned the manner in which classis said the congregation in Isabel was dissolved, and one concerned the decision to give them only six months of pulpit supply. Classis concurred with the first protest and rescinded a portion of its previous decision. There

were two grounds given for these actions, namely, 1) The right to disband properly belongs to the members of a congregation, and 2) This right has been acknowledged and exercised in past cases.

Then classis took a decision to advise the members of Hope PR Church in Isabel, SD to vote to disband as a congregation. The grounds for this decision were the following. 1) The impossibility of selecting a diversified consistory. 2) Isabel last had their own pastor in October of 1987 and there exists little realistic possibility of their obtaining another pastor because of the circumstances of the congregation. 3) Isabel's total membership is ten souls comprising three families (all closely related), which means there is very little organic life among them and little prospect of internal growth. 4) The failure of Isabel's church extension work to produce any growth in the congregation. 5) Classis is sympathetic to the difficulties of a move, but is positively convinced that it is for the spiritual good of the saints in Isabel that they do so. Classis asked Doon's consistory to continue the care and supervision of the Isabel saints in or-

der to help them implement the advice of classis to vote to disband.

The consistory of the church in Loveland forwarded to Classis the "Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial" for Rev. Ron Cammenga who has accepted the call to Southwest in Classis East, after laboring for fourteen years in Classis West. This Certificate was signed by the officers of classis and sent on to the Classical Committee of Classis

East. In response to a request from Loveland's consistory for a moderator while they are without a pastor of their own, classis appointed Rev. R. Moore of the Hull, IA congregation to serve in this capacity.

In other business classis, after hearing the details of the labors of a consistory in two discipline cases, approved of the decisions taken by that consistory to proceed with the discipline. Also classis adopted a Classi-

cal Diploma to be used for ministers who come from other denominations under Articles 5 and 9 of the Church Order. Classis sent a copy of this diploma to Classis East, so there might be uniformity within the denomination.

The next meeting of Classis West will be in Redlands, CA on March 3, 1994, the Lord willing.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop
Stated Clerk

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 1993 at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. The churches were all represented by two delegates. The business of this classis was routine; adjournment was at 10:30 a.m. Rev. A. Spriensma was the chairman for this session.

Classis heard the reports of the Stated Clerk and the Classical Com-

mittee. Classis also approved the report of the committee of classis appointed to visit Norristown.

Southwest requested classical supply only for the Sunday evening service of September 19. Rev. A. Spriensma was appointed to preach during this service. Southwest also expressed its gratitude to classis for the supply they have received from

classis during the past months and reported that they are grateful to God for the support of the churches and for His supplying them with a new pastor, Rev. R. Cammenga.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,095.05. Classis will meet next on January 12, 1994 at the Southeast PRC.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

Book Review

The Incarnation of the Antithesis, by Dr. R.E.L. Rodgers; (Edinburgh: Pentland Press Ltd.) xvi + 87pp., £7.50 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Taking the title of this book from Frank Vandenberg's definitive biography of Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Dr. Rodgers discusses the role that Kuyper's view of the antithesis took in Kuyper's educational philosophy and work.

After a short biography of Kuyper, Rodgers informs his readers that Kuyper saw Calvinism as a world-and-life view and not only a theology. That is, Kuyper was concerned about man's relation to his fellow man and to the world as well as his relation to God.

In the development of his views, Kuyper's *principium* was the sacred Scripture, and the heart of his theol-

ogy was the truth of the sovereignty of God.

From his theology, Kuyper developed the antithesis as between Calvinism and Modernism as the latter was embodied in the French Revolution and the absolutism of the State.

This view of Calvinism became the first stone in the foundation of Kuyper's educational philosophy.

The second stone in that foundation was Kuyper's doctrine of common grace. Rodgers treats Kuyper's common grace from the viewpoint of the good which the wicked are capable of doing. He claims that Kuyper held consistently to the truth of total depravity even though Kuyper held to a restraint of sin which is exercised not only outwardly by God's providence, but also inwardly by making man less than depraved. Rodgers claims that common grace was Kuyper's basis for the antithetical and Calvinistic education — although

exactly how this is true is not made clear in the book.

The third stone in the foundation is Kuyper's view of sphere sovereignty which came to expression particularly in the establishment of the Free University.

In chapter III, Rodgers deals with Kuyper's educational philosophy itself. His intent is to show how Kuyper's foundation developed into a complete educational philosophy. It is this chapter which is the weak link in the argument, in my judgment.

Rodgers correctly points out that after Kuyper had abandoned the ministry of the gospel and entered Parliament he fought long and successfully for two goals: one, to establish free Christian schools, i.e., schools free from government control; the other, to obtain government financing for these Christian schools so that Christian parents would not have to pay taxes to support public education and

tuition to support Christian schools. While it is true that Kuyper was successful in both these endeavors, the book does not make clear how these endeavors followed from Kuyper's theoretical foundation.

In chapter IV Rodgers deals with the establishment of the Free University. It was to be a university truly "free" from church and state. It was a university which in a particular way was the expression of Kuyper's theology of common grace and the antithesis. It is in demonstrating this that the author points out especially the relation between common grace and the Free University by reminding us that: 1) music, art, etc., are, in Kuyper's view, the products of common grace; and, 2) that the study of all branches of knowledge in a university is due to common grace.

In a concluding chapter, Rodgers discusses briefly the influence of Kuyper's educational philosophy in

the Netherlands, America, and South Africa.

While Rodgers' general thesis is undoubtedly true, it is not always quite as clear as Rodgers would have it what role common grace played in Kuyper's educational philosophy. What is true is that in the years of Kuyper's pastoral ministry he said nothing of common grace, and the doctrine played no role in his thinking. Kuyper did not really begin to pay close attention to common grace until he was elected to Parliament and saw the possibility of breaking the liberal hold on the Dutch government by means of an alliance with the Roman Catholics. At least in part, Kuyper's development of common grace was intended to be a justification of this alliance — something which Rodgers also admits (see page 50). But all this means that common grace played no role at all in the early formulations of Kuyper's theology

and philosophy of education, and that his philosophy of education was considerably altered as he began his development of common grace.

What is true is that a genuinely Reformed philosophy of education must be developed apart from common grace if it is to be truly Reformed; and that a genuinely Reformed college or university can surely be established only when common grace is repudiated. Kuyper, with his remarkable invention of common grace, sowed the seeds of the death of truly Reformed education, even when he attempted to establish Reformed educational institutions.

Rodgers' book is an interesting, though somewhat brief, treatment of an aspect of Kuyper's thought which has been somewhat neglected.

The address from which the book can be ordered is: Pentland Distribution, 3 Regal Lane, Soham, Ely, Cambs. CB7 5BA, England. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

The Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Ballymena, Northern Ireland has taken upon itself to republish a book long out of print entitled "The Revival of 1859." This book was first written, by Rev. William Hamilton, about six years after that revival took place in Northern Ireland.

In the book the author evaluates that "revival" in the light both of Scripture and of the Westminster Confessions, and he finds the event seriously wanting.

The reprinting of this book became possible when the Reformed Book Outlet of Hudsonville, MI, together with its sponsoring societies in the Hudsonville PRC, agreed to underwrite the cost of the republication.

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

In the introduction to this book, Rev. Ron Hanko, missionary to the CRF of Ballymena, writes an answer to the question of why to publish another book on the revival of 1859. He writes in part: "It is the fashion among modern evangelicals to pray for revival. It seems at times that they have pinned all their hopes for the future of the church on the prospect of another revival like that of 1859 in Northern Ireland or like the Great Awakening in America. Hamilton's book, therefore, is not just a scathing critique of a specific revival, what happened in Northern Ireland in 1859, but of all revivalism. It says things that need to be heard by those who think or act as if revival is the sum and substance of true religion."

In addition to the work of reprinting this book, the CRF also planned a series of Gospel meetings for the first full week of September. These meetings were to be held every night of the week in the Ballymena Town Hall.

Their purpose was to bring the gospel to those who had never heard it before, and to unbelievers as well.

Rev. J. Kortering and his wife arrived back in the United States in early August to enjoy a furlough with their family. Plans called for the Korterings to remain here for about a month before returning to Singapore and the Evangelical Reformed Church.

We do know that while here Rev. Kortering was able to preach for the Grandville, MI PRC, his former church before becoming minister-on-loan to our sister church in Singapore, as well as the congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, his current calling church. Rev. Kortering was also able to present a program on August 31 at Hope Church concerning the work of the PRC with their sister churches in Singapore. The program included a slide presentation by Rev. Kortering and a short talk by Seminarian Fook Meng, a member

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of the ERC of Singapore and presently attending our churches' seminary.

Rev. R. Dykstra, in the Lynden, WA PRC for a session of Classis West in early September, was able to give a brief speech and show slides on the mission work in Ghana, Africa on the behalf of our churches.

We could also add here that Rev. B. Woudenberg, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, left August 25 to work for two weeks with the Reformed churches in Transylvania.

Denominational Activities

On the 26th of August, the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI was host to our annual Seminary Convocation. Prof. R. Decker spoke on the theme, "Lest We Drift."

And we couldn't help but be reminded recently, by an announcement in the bulletin of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, of just how fast time goes. In their bulletin of August 29 there was an announcement that that Sunday was the last week of Sunday School. That same week, teachers were sending home with the Sunday School students Christmas songs for Hope's annual Sunday School Christmas program. I guess when you see that, you know summer is over and soon winter will be here.

And, finally, we end this issue of the "News" by reporting to our readers that Rev. R. Cammenga has accepted the call to serve as pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. I have heard that the Cammengas were making plans to be at Southwest by the end of September. So quite possi-

bly by the time you read this he could be installed as pastor at Southwest. But those details will have to wait until next time.

And due to Rev. Cammenga's leaving the Loveland, CO PRC to serve in our Southwest PRC, the Council of Loveland formed a trio from which to call a new pastor. That trio consisted of the Revs. W. Bruinsma, B. Gritters, and R. VanOverloop.

Food for Thought

"As well might a poor man expect to be rich in this world without industry, or a weak man to become strong and healthy without food and exercise, as a Christian to be rich in faith and strong in the Lord without earnest and diligent effort."

C.H. Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 27, 1993 our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. PETER
POORTENGA, JR.,**

celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant Father for the gift of such loving parents who have guided and taught us how to follow His ways. May they continue to be blessed in the years to come. "He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

- ◆ Todd and Val Terpstra
- Gordon and Jillian
- ◆ Jerry and Judy Fynaardt
- Mitchell and Alex
- ◆ George and Ranae Vroom
- Danielle and Nickolas
- ◆ Joanne and fiancé Steve McNary
- ◆ Deanna

Lynwood, Illinois

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 25, 1993,
**REV. and MRS. ROBERT C.
HARBACH,**

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them, thanking and praising God for the love and instruction which they have given us. We pray that God will keep them in His tender care and richly bless them.

"Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress" (Psalm 71:3).

The Harbach family
Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 25, 1993, our parents,

MR. and MRS. JOHN KUIPER,
celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our covenant God for giving us parents who have taught us and have instructed us in his ways. It is our prayer that God will continue to keep and bless them in the years ahead.

"Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth and it abideth" (Psalm 119:90).

- ◆ Scott and Joyce Boverhof
- ◆ Ron Kuiper
- ◆ John Kuiper
- ◆ Pam Kuiper

Jenison, Michigan