

# Walking by Faith and Not by Sight

*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

II Corinthians 5:7

**T**he subject of the apostle Paul in this section of his letter to the Corinthian church is death and the resurrection of the body. Paul speaks of this in very picturesque language. He speaks of the physical body in terms of an earthly tabernacle or tent. He describes the resurrection body as a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. At death the earthly tabernacle of this body is dissolved. At the resurrection we are clothed with the house made without hands. It is Paul's desire and hope to be clothed with that eternal house made without hands.

In that connection Paul speaks of the earnest of the Spirit. An earnest is a down payment that serves as a pledge of full payment at a future date. The Holy Spirit is an earnest of sorts. Through the Holy Spirit we have the beginnings of our salvation in Jesus Christ. The

Holy Spirit and His blessings are God's down payment and pledge of greater blessings to come, blessings we will receive through the resurrection of the body.

On the basis of this earnest, Paul expresses confidence for the future. For the time being we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord. But one day we will be absent from the body and be at home with the Lord.

This is not only our confidence but also our desire.

And the reason is that we walk by faith and not by sight.



A sharp contrast!

Sight over against faith.

By sight is meant, first, those things that we can see with our physical eyes or that are within the scope of our five physical senses. There are many things that we cannot see. We cannot see God. We cannot see heaven and hell. Neither can we see angels and devils. These all belong to a realm that is beyond our sight. But all that is earthly and physical we can and do see.

By sight is also meant that which to our observation and sense

of reason seems to contradict that which God has revealed in His Word. God has revealed many things in His Word that seemingly contradict the realities that we see daily. For example, God promises that all things work together for good to them that love Him (Rom. 8:28). Yet many things in our lives seem to work for our ruin. This includes the loss of loved ones, sickness, poverty, and war. Then again God speaks of the resurrection of the body. This seems to contradict all that we see about death and the grave. God promises blessings upon the way of righteousness. But repeatedly the way of obedience to God seems to be the way of disaster, or at best a way void of joy. In that context, sight refers to the way we experience and see reality, often in contradiction to God's Word.

And then there is faith.

Paul is talking about true, saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is by faith that we are saved in Jesus Christ. This is because faith joins us to Christ, in whom is all our salvation. This faith is not something we have naturally. It is sovereignly worked in us by the power of the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ. God works this faith in the hearts

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*The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.*

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

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\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

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and lives of all whom He has ordained to eternal life.

One of the elements of this faith is knowledge. The Heidelberg Catechism describes this knowledge in Lord's Day 7 as a *certain* knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word. As we have already mentioned, there is much that God has revealed in His Word that we cannot see. And much that He says in His Word seems to contradict what we do see. Faith is the gift of God to believe what God says to be true, even though we cannot see it and even though it seems to contradict observable reality.

This aspect of faith is emphasized in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This passage speaks of the things for which we hope and indicates that they belong to the things not seen. This is our future, heavenly glory. Faith is the substance and evidence of these things. Perhaps we could say that faith is the assurance and certainty of these things.

Such is the nature of faith.

It is necessary for faith to be this in order to lead us to Jesus Christ, the fountain of all our salvation.



An important walk!

One will either walk by faith or by sight.

Your walk is your whole life. To your walk belongs your inner thoughts and desires, as well as how these express themselves in your outward actions. To your walk belongs also your goals and aspirations in life. Your walk also includes the spiritual direction your life takes. There are only two possibilities. Your life is either headed towards God or away from God.

Your walk will be guided and determined either by faith or by sight. Those whose lives are guided by faith are walking by faith. Those whose lives are

guided by sight will walk by sight.

Let's be more specific.

And let's begin with those that walk by sight.

They believe and hold for truth only that which they can see, and they refuse to believe that which they cannot see. For example, they cannot see the God of the Scriptures, and so they refuse to believe in Him — although some, wanting to have a god of some kind, make gods that they can see and handle. Those that live by sight often refuse to accept the existence of heaven or hell. Nor do they accept the fact of the resurrection of the body. They consider death to be the end of a person's existence, because that is all that they can see.

In keeping with all this, those who walk by sight seek and strive for the things that they can see. Heaven and the resurrection of the body into glory hold no attraction for them. Neither does life with God. They cannot see these things. Neither do they desire them in Jesus Christ. Their hearts are set rather on earthly riches, earthly fame, earthly power, earthly comforts and joys. These things they can see. These things they pursue.

In keeping with all this, those who walk by sight have little concern to walk according to the law and Word of God. Yes, they do understand that to attain their earthly goals they must outwardly abide by some of God's laws. Due to the remnants of natural light left in them, they understand that no one can possess and enjoy the bounties of this life should moral chaos prevail. And so there is a certain regard for outward morality. Nevertheless, they are much inclined to cast aside the good laws of God when, according to their judgment, the law of God stands in the way of their having and enjoying the things they can see.

Much different is it to walk by faith, so that one's life is guided by faith.

Those who walk by faith believe and hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word, whether they can see it or not. They believe that the God of the Bible is real, even though He cannot be seen. They believe that there is life after death and that there is final resurrection to glory. They believe in the existence of angels and devils. They also believe the promises of God, even when they seem contrary to all observable reality. When disaster strikes and hard times come, they believe the testimony of God that affliction is for their profit, even though they cannot possibly see what profit may come from

their affliction. As they struggle with sin, they believe the Word of God that the way of righteousness is always the way of blessing, and the way of sin is always the way of misery. Never mind that God's Word often seems to contradict observable reality. God says it, and therefore they believe it!

In keeping with this, those who walk by faith desire and seek to attain the great treasures that God sets before them in His Word. They desire, above all, life with God in Jesus Christ. They want that life now, but their ultimate hope is in the final resurrection into glory. To that end they cling to Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ they seek reconciliation with God. In Jesus Christ they strive to live a godly life, which is the only way to have and enjoy God. All things earthly and visible are important to them only inasmuch as it serves their hope and aspirations with regard to eternal life with God.



An important calling!

The apostle Paul makes a state-

ment of fact: we walk by faith, not by sight.

What the apostle says is true. The saints of God walk by faith and not by sight. This is due to the fact God has given them the gift of faith.

However, this is not true of them at all times and in all circumstances. Often in the weakness of faith the saints walk by sight and not by faith.

Consider, for example, Abraham. How often he walked by faith and not by sight. By faith he left Ur of the Chaldees to go to a land that the Lord would show him (Heb. 11:8). In the strength of faith Abraham believed God's promise to make of him a great nation and give him the land of Canaan, even though God gave him no seed until the end of his life and not so

much as one square inch of Canaan. In the strength of faith Abraham also looked beyond the earthly Canaan to the heavenly Canaan (Heb. 11:9, 10). Yes, Abraham walked by faith. But then we see Abraham also walking by sight and not by faith. Even though God promised to keep him in safety, twice Abraham forced Sarah to lie about her identity because he was afraid for his life.


Consider Jacob, whose great weakness was to run ahead of the Lord instead of waiting for the Lord to keep His promise. This is because he lived too much by sight.

Consider Thomas, who had to see the wounds of Jesus to believe that Jesus was risen, even though Jesus had told the disciples repeatedly about His impending death and resurrection.

And we are no different. In time of affliction we tend to live by sight and not by faith, so that we despair of God's mercy. In time of temptation we tend to live by sight and not by faith, so that we are much inclined to yield to sin. And there is always the tendency among us to seek the things that are here below, rather than the things that are above. We live by faith, but not perfectly. All too often faith is pushed into the background of life by our sight.

Live by faith and not by sight.

This requires a strong, vibrant faith.

This is possible only by diligent use of God's Word, through much prayer, and by seeking the company and help of those who walk by faith. 

## Movies — Not a Question (3)

**W**e have maintained the position that drama per se is wrong. Since God abhors all worship that is not from the heart, He can only abominate the acting out of a Christian life, including, as it must, prayer and worship. Moreover, the holy God can only be filled with wrath against those who take His law so lightly that they deliberately mime sin, or are entertained by such acting.

### Drama and Literature

The viewing of drama is not the same as reading a fictional story, or even a play. Some have argued that if it is wrong to act, or to watch drama, then it must be wrong to

read a work of fiction. For, it is pointed out, literary works describe sinful thoughts, words, and deeds.

However, that comparison between books and drama is invalid. The principal reason is that books contain writing, not acting. No one is acting out sins of stealing, lying, or idolatry. Even when holy activity such as prayer is included in the narrative, no one bows in pretended prayer to God. That makes all the difference in the world. It means that book readers are not participating in sinful activities, as the audience in a theater definitely is. Reading good literature is certainly a valid activity for the Christian.

It should be noted that another difference between a novel and drama is that drama has far greater power to glorify sin. Now it is obvious that not every piece of lit-

erature is proper reading material for the Christian. Western society is awash in vile writings. Some stories do indeed glorify sin. All too many authors today write with the intent of eliciting sinful thoughts and desires in the readers.

However, the thinking Christian recognizes that such books are trash. His righteous soul is vexed as he reads, and he soon closes the book. Who has not pushed a partially read book away, because it contained more cursing than the sanctified mind could abide? When every irreverent use of God's name requires the God-fearing response of condemning the sin and of hallowing God's name in his heart, the believer soon concludes that the book is not only unprofitable, it is abominable to him.

Notice, though, that when a novel does include sinful acts or

words, the reader can pause and ponder the dreadfulness of sin. The regenerated heart recognizes the deceitfulness of sin and the destructive power of sin as it unfolds in the story. Proper, sanctified reading demands this. Clearly, it is sin to the reader if he approves the vengeance, or the stealing, or the rebellion of the characters in the book. Yet, sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, books written by the ungodly can be received with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:4, 5).

On the other hand, with a drama, the viewer is not able to pause and contemplate the right response to the actions and words displayed — not at least until it is over. Consider how impossible is a proper response, merely with regard to the sin of an actor taking God's name in vain. One who views the drama becomes guilty of violating the third commandment. It is not sufficient after the movie is over to try

to recall all the incidents of this sin in the movie and condemn it. That would be not unlike a woman sitting in a restaurant who hears a man behind her curse, but she says nothing to the blasphemer. However, after the man leaves, she concludes that the man sinned, and she should have rebuked him. Too late by far.

Likewise, the moviegoer has become guilty of violating the third commandment by his silence, by his failure to rebuke the actor. Yet, violation of the third commandment is but one sin among the hundreds that will be acted out. The drama carries the audience along to the end, stamping the images and sounds upon the soul of each viewer, even as it entertains through the sins portrayed. Along the way, the moviegoer becomes guilty of the sins that he witnesses and — by his continued viewing — approves.

*...the moviegoer becomes guilty of the sins that he witnesses and — by his continued viewing — approves.*

## The Power of Drama

The power of drama far exceeds the power of a book. Much of drama's force arises out of the fact that it appeals to both sight and hearing, two vital senses. Virtually everything we learn or experience comes through our eyes or ears.

Consider the importance of sight. We *believe* what we have seen with our own eyes. Movies make the actions, the lifestyle, and the message portrayed real, and thus believable.

Additionally, we enjoy what is appealing to the eye. Movies showcase attractive, well-dressed, well-coiffured men and women, and the pictures taken present them at their best. Movies display for the eyes the glitter, the material wealth, and the ease of life of the rich and famous. Countless hours go into creating the right background, and the special effects — from the gigantic fireball to the fantastic physical feats of the characters. All to please the eye.

Add to that the dialogue. Although, from what I have read, much of today's drama has degenerated to the level of the crude and the juvenile, yet the dramas of the Greeks and of such playwrights as Shakespeare contained much striking, even stirring speech. Still today, the dialogue of drama is at least entertaining, and surely appeals to something in the viewers' souls.

Yet there is another element in movies often overlooked, namely, its music. Music itself has a powerful effect on the soul. In movies, music sets the mood for the action. When anger is displayed on the screen, the music is violent. When the chase is on, the music is swift. When the script calls for romance, the quiet music sets the mood.

The masterfully produced movie is arresting. Watching the action, following the dialogue, and stirred by

mood-setting music, the viewer, to a large extent, *experiences* the thrills, the terrors, the lust, etc. portrayed so realistically on the screen.

The powerful effects of drama are well documented. Numerous studies, for instance, have connected violent behavior in people of all ages, with frequent exposure to violence on television and on the silver screen. Child psychology associations warn parents of the dangers involved in allowing their children to watch violent programs. Music videos are particularly powerful, and vile. The same associations caution that the common themes of such videos — violence, suicide, drug use, and perverted sex — have profound influence on the youths who watch them. Other studies conclude that if you are after "romance," you had best see a romantic movie on your date.

One of the most frightening effects on people, especially children, is that after less than a minute of watching television, they progress into a state akin to one hypnotized. They focus exclusively on the television, and readily accept the content into their souls. Any parent who has tried to get the attention of his children who are watching television knows the truth of this.

Does this drama affect behavior and set attitudes? If it did not, companies would not spend untold billions annually on televised advertisements. In addition, the government would not have banned television advertisements for cigarettes and liquor. They know that it can create powerful desires, mold opinion, and change lifestyles.

Let us face reality, fellow believers. Drama is an extraordinarily powerful tool of Satan. By it he is developing and promoting a culture that is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-church. He shows the world what is important in life — fun and money — and entices all to follow it. He powerfully demonstrates "the good life" that all should be seeking for "true happiness." He makes the harlot



to appear gorgeous and homosexuals normal. Rebellion of children is entertaining, even funny. The workplace is for eight hours of perverted and crude talk, and the pursuit of sex (i.e., fornication). The television is one huge propaganda machine, and astoundingly effective.

Newscaster Ted Koppel once said that the modern day tower of Babel is the television antenna.

He is correct. Television is uniting the human race by molding the thinking, the morals, and the opinions of men, women, and children all over the globe. And the final product is vile indeed.

### The Effect on the Christian

But our primary concern is with the Christian. What is the effect of the world's drama on the soul of the believer? Consider that the believer has a huge spiritual battle on his hands already. Not only does he have a host of enemies in the ungodly world and the fallen angels. Every believer is also locked in a mortal combat inside his own soul — the spiritual battle between the old man and the new. Paul captures this battle within the regenerated man in Romans 7:19 — “The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.”

This spiritual warfare is due to the two powers, two principles, within the believer. He has the life of Christ planted in him. Nonetheless, he is still prone by nature to hate God and his neighbor (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 5). He confesses that he is “so corrupt that [he is] wholly incapable of doing any good and *inclined to all wickedness*” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 8, emphasis added).

Do you, Christian reader, recognize the Heidelberg Catechism's picture of yourself? And do you experience that violent battle within between the power of sin and the

power of holiness? And do you not also cry out with the apostle, in Romans 7:25, “O wretched man that I am: who shall be able to deliver me from the body of this death?”

Having done that, do you then willfully place yourself before the television set and drink deeply of the sinful poison of drama? Will you sit and enjoy sins acted out, where the wages of sin is cleverly

blocked out, or at least put in the shadows? Where fornication is glorified, and has virtually no negative consequences? Where God's name is profaned repeatedly? Where everything that is holy is held up for public ridicule, and all that is corrupt is approved?

Worse still, fathers and mothers, will you rent the videos for the covenant youths — those even less experienced in spiritual warfare and thus more vulnerable? And will you use the television to “baby sit” the little ones, God's children, who sit mesmerized by the flickering images as the music carries the anti-Christian messages into their tender souls? God forbid!

What devastation this works in the soul of a believer! A man who indulges in viewing drama aids and abets the enemy within, his own evil nature. He foolishly permits the devil and the world to flood his soul with all the wickedness to which he is already prone by nature. The distressed cry of Romans 7:19, if it is heard at all, is but a faint echo in his soul. He willingly surrenders to the enemy, to God's enemy.

You can be sure that this affects a man's life. Continued exposure to sin for the sake of entertainment wears a man down spiri-

tually. Initially he and his family are shocked or at least uncomfortable when the children in the sitcom openly mock their “parents.” However, the discomfort wears off, and the disrespectful attitude rubs off. If this sin is not checked, similar insolent behavior will appear in his own home. By then, perhaps, he will shrug it off — all families are like that, the television reassures him, and the children will turn out fine. He takes sin lightly. Eventually he is unmoved by the blasphemy of his fellow workers — he hears the same on television frequently, perhaps nightly. And how long will it be ere he is tempted by an attractive woman at work, and the way is open to adultery — but everyone does this, and, the television whispers, it is consequence free. This is not to say that every man who watches movies regularly will yield to this temptation by committing adultery physically. (Though we had better recognize that the just God can and does give over into this sin a man who seeks such sensual entertainment.) However,

even if a man does not physically commit the sin, on the one hand he has been polluted by watching the sins, and on the other he has made his own battle against temptation

much, much harder. The world's drama cripples the new man within, hardens the heart, destroys covenant family life, and corrupts holy living.

There is no question about drama — it is sin. Sin incurs God's righteous judgment. Watching it makes one a partaker of the sins, gives strength to the enemy, and, but for the grace of God, results in spiritual ruin.

...to be concluded 

*Drama is an extraordinarily powerful tool of Satan. By it he is developing and promoting a culture that is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-church.*

*...will you use the television to “baby sit” the little ones, God's children, who sit mesmerized by the flickering images as the music carries the anti-Christian messages into their tender souls?*

# Charles Darwin and Evolutionism

## Introduction

One of the great battles in which the church is engaged today is the battle to defend the doctrine of creation against evolutionism. If it were only secular and unbelieving science that promoted evolutionism as an explanation of the origin of the creation, the church would not be unduly threatened; nothing of any value for the church comes from unbelief. But the church itself has sold out to this destructive heresy. One cannot find a major denomination that has not made its peace with evolutionistic theory. This is disturbing and unsettling, for it is hard to imagine how a church that confesses that its faith is found in Scripture can so cavalierly and wickedly sell its birthright for a mess of distasteful and inedible pottage. But the fact remains true, and it brings the church that is faithful to Scripture into conflict with secular humanism, ungodly scientism, and apostate Christianity. It is well, therefore, that we give some consideration to this subject of evolutionism and its evils.

## Charles Darwin, Evolutionism's Founder

It is actually not correct to call Charles Darwin the "founder" of evolutionism. Some thinkers prior

to Darwin had already suggested that life developed here on earth through slow processes over long periods of time. But their views were never widely accepted, partly because they were abstruse and difficult to understand, and partly because such thinkers had never given any good explanation of how such processes took place.

Furthermore, Darwin's theory did not spring from his head without other previously developed ideas by earlier scientists who profoundly influenced him. An example of this, and probably a most important example, is Charles Lyell, who developed the theory of uniformitarianism. I will discuss this idea a bit more later, for it enters into our discussion at critical points.

Yet, Darwin popularized the theory, made it widely known, and gave the first explanation of how evolutionary processes take place. He is, therefore, rightly given the credit for discovering evolution.

Darwinian evolution, as it is sometimes called, has been modified a great deal since Darwin published his famous work *On the Origin of Species*. To describe Darwin's theory, therefore, is to open oneself to the criticism that Darwin's views are outdated, that what he said is no longer applicable to evolutionistic thought, and that one who criticizes his ideas is purposelessly waving arms in the air. Nevertheless, the fundamentals of all evolutionary thought are to be found in Darwin's books, and we are interested in these articles in

the fundamentals, not the details. We deal, therefore, with Charles Darwin.

## Charles Darwin's Life

Charles Darwin was born of Robert and Susannah Darwin on February 12, 1809 in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. His mother died when Charles was eight years old, and he was raised by his sister Caroline.

Although he developed early an interest in collecting all sorts of things, pebbles, pieces of string, odds and ends found here and there, he was a very poor student in the local school in Shrewsbury. His father sharply reprimanded him for his disinterest in his studies: "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs, and rat-catching, and you will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family."

The reprimand seemed to fall on deaf ears, even when Charles was sent to school in Edinburgh, Scotland to study medicine. He failed his courses, far preferring to collect marine animals, go trawling with fishermen for oysters, and skin and stuff birds.

In desperation, Charles' father did what so many parents in similar circumstances did: he sent Charles to Cambridge to study for Orders in the Church of England. He was destined to become a prelate in the Established Church. Even here his professors left little mark on him, for Charles never did much studying, preferring rather to spend his time with his cronies riding and hunting.

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There was, however, one exception: one professor of botany sparked in Charles an interest in natural history. This was to be a turning point in his life. While continuing his careless or care-free ways, he did give himself to a diligent study of natural history, although much of his study was done on his own initiative.

Charles succeeded in making himself so well acquainted with this subject that when a call went out for a naturalist to sail on a government-sponsored expedition to collect scientific data, Charles applied, and, with the help of others, managed to get the appointment. In 1831, at the age of twenty-two, he sailed on the HMS Beagle to the coasts of Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Chile, Peru, and some Pacific Islands. The five-year long journey of the Beagle brought him also to Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, and Brazil.

It was while the ship was at the Cape Verde Islands that Darwin read Lyell's writings and learned of the principle of uniformitarianism, a principle that was to form the foundation for all his theories.

Darwin was extremely busy on the entire trip. He collected specimens of species of all kinds: sea creatures, land animals, beetles, birds, vegetation, flowers, etc. He also went on many long expeditions into the interior of the countries visited by the Beagle. These expeditions were frequently dangerous, but, riding on horseback with others, he collected specimens of all kinds and indulged in his lifelong love, shooting. Yet, when he discovered a poor bird wounded because his shot had not been fatal, he vowed never to shoot anything again, a vow which he kept. During this long expedition Darwin wrote a number of books. Most of his books have been forgotten.

Returning from the expedition, Darwin worked for twenty years until, in 1856, encouraged by oth-

ers, he began work on his *On the Origin of Species*. He finished it in 1859 and it was an immediate success. The first edition was sold out in a few months, and by 1872 six editions had been published.

Darwin married and had ten children, two of whom died in infancy and one at the age of ten.

Darwin died of an undiagnosed disease. By a study of the symptoms that his doctors recorded, physicians today are sure that he died of Chagas Disease, an infection that involved extreme fatigue, heart blockage, and intestinal discomfort. The infection was most likely brought on by a bug he caught while in South America. He died on April 19, 1882 at the age of seventy-three. The esteem in which he was held can be measured by the fact that he was buried in Westminster Abbey in London.

### **Darwin's Views**

It is beyond the scope of these articles to explain and discuss the whole theory of evolution. I am, in any case, unable to do that, for I have never had the opportunity to take the courses in science that one must take to learn the intricacies of this theory. Nor is such a study necessary for our purposes.

Darwin's evolutionary theories were much more limited than today's elaborate defenses and descriptions of evolution. Darwin knew nothing of the so-called Big Bang theory, and was not, in fact, concerned with the universe prior to the appearance of life. His work was limited to the development of life on our planet, from early and simple forms of life to later and more complex forms of life.

Darwin was interested in explaining *natural history*, that is, the history of living creatures. He was convinced that this history could be explained only in terms of natural development of lower and simpler forms of life into higher and more complex forms of life. The question was: How did this take place?

Darwin's answer was basically twofold. The first principle he described was the principle of natural selection or, as it is sometimes called, "the survival of the fittest." By this principle, Darwin meant that creatures that possessed certain characteristics were best able to survive in a hostile environment, while creatures without those characteristics were less able to survive and quickly perished. Those who survived were thus able to pass on to their posterity those characteristics that enabled them to survive the longest. The result was a strengthening of these characteristics and a kind of improvement of the species, at least insofar as their ability to adapt to their environment is concerned.

The second principle of Darwin's theory was that new species could be produced by earlier species. This, claimed Darwin, was possible partly because the stronger a species became through their ability to adapt to their environment, the greater was the likelihood that these stronger species would become new species. But new species also developed because, over long periods of time, genetic mutations took place, which produced new characteristics in certain individuals in the species. Mostly these changes were for the worse, and those who carried such changes soon perished. But if these mutations or changes increased a creature's ability to survive, they were passed on to the descendants, and gradually new species emerged. Hence all living creatures developed from lower forms of life and, very far in the distant past, from one common ancestor.

These ideas, found in his *On the Origin of Species*, are the basic building blocks of all evolutionary theory.


### **Darwin's Atheism**

Such theory quite naturally led Darwin to abandon the Christian faith. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*

best describes Darwin's spiritual decline.

The former candidate for Holy Orders had come to see that the Old Testament, "from manifestly false history of the earth, ... and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos, or the beliefs of any barbarian." The New Testament did not fare any better, and he could "indeed

hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine." The key to understanding Darwin's thinking is his horror of the imposition of suffering — on slaves by their masters, on animals by men, and by "the clumsy, wasteful, blunder-

ing, low and horribly cruel works of nature," as seen in the suffering caused by parasites and in the delight in cruelty shown by some predators when catching and playing with their prey. If God is as almighty, omniscient, and possessed of inexhaustible compassion as He is painted, "it revolts our understanding to suppose that his benevolence is not unbounded." So Darwin became a reverent agnostic. 

*In His Fear*

*Rev. Richard Smit*

## Daily Concern for the Churches

**D**oes a daily concern for the churches press upon your soul?

In II Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul mentions many things that illustrated his faithfulness as an apostle. Outstanding among them is the mark mentioned in II Corinthians 11:28. In addition to those things that he mentioned in the preceding verses about his persecutions, perils, and painfulness (a long list to which he could have added much more), there was one mark of importance that proved his faithfulness as an apostle and a believer. That mark, which weighed heavily on his heart and mind, was this: "the care of all the churches."

Among all the things that mark you as a faithful officebearer or faithful believer, things which you have suffered for the sake of Christ, does this care of all the churches also weigh on your soul?

The apostle Paul had a deep concern for the churches in which

he had personally labored. Because of his apostleship, he was concerned also for all of the churches established in the early New Testament. He was concerned for the church of Jesus Christ as she was locally manifested in many different places and regions, each with its own unique set of circumstances and tribulations. Ultimately, he had deep, spiritual concern for the church of Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament age until the final appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the churches, Paul was full of godly concern. His concern was not whether the churches were prospering in the world and whether they were making a name for themselves among men. Earthly prestige and earthly fame was of no concern to the apostle. His concern was for the spiritual prosperity of the churches in the apostolic truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. His concern was that they resist the false teachers and heretics that beset the church with sly and crafty attacks. His concern was also that the churches, and particularly the Corinthians, not backslide into the

sins from which they had been delivered. His concern was that they remain faithful, and that in their faithfulness they continue to prosper spiritually.

This concern arose out of a true love for the churches. Primarily, it was a love for Christ the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who with His own precious blood has bought us to be His sheep and who dwells in us by His Spirit. The love wherewith Paul loved Christ was also the love wherewith he learned to love all the different and unique sheep that the Lord graciously gathers into His flock.

Out of that same love, pastors, elders, deacons, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, teachers, young people, aged saints, and even covenant children are filled with a godly concern for all the churches. That concern is for the catholic church of Jesus Christ wherever she is manifest in the offices of the church under the preaching of the Word. We are concerned for our sister churches in Singapore. We are concerned also for those churches with whom we have contact in other countries. And, of

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course, we have a great concern for our own local congregations and for our denomination, the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Essentially, that concern is no less than or any different from the apostle's concern. Our concern is that our congregations grow spiritually in the knowledge of the Reformed faith and in a godly life to adorn that faithful confession. Our concern is that they maintain and rejoice in the preaching of Christ crucified and risen again as it reveals the wonder of God's sovereign, particular grace. We desire that our covenant children may prosper and grow up in the fear of the Lord. Our concern is that the wayward be rescued by our great Shepherd and be returned to the path of life. We desire that our churches be preserved from apostasy and remain steadfast against temptations — temptations, on the one hand, to become radical or, on the other hand, to modernize and liberalize. Our concern is that our churches may remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ through troubles, tribulations, and trials of whatever sort the Lord sovereignly brings upon us. Our concern is whether we will have sufficient preachers for our churches and future generations. Our concern is that we not only remain faithful to the Lord in our duty in our local congregations and on the mission fields, but also that we remain consciously aware of our total dependence upon Christ and our total unworthiness to be used by Christ as instruments for His cause and glory.

As with the apostle Paul, according to II Corinthians 11:28, this concern for God's church militant becomes for us a *daily* concern.

The apostle compares this spiritual concern to a mob of people who surround a man on every side and begin to close in on him. The result is that the man cannot escape the tightening press of the people.

Similarly, the concern of all the

churches pressed upon the apostle's soul from all sides. The concern wrapped around his soul and held him in an inescapable grip.

This was quite different from the other things he suffered according to II Corinthians 11. Being stoned, beaten, shipwrecked, hungry, robbed, imprisoned, and slandered were very difficult to endure, but they did not last. However, his concern for all the churches was with him daily and affected him constantly.

Does not that care of all the churches affect you daily to one degree or another?

After the officebearer makes his vows and takes up the work of the office, very soon there envelops his soul a heavier concern for the churches. The care of the saints in the congregation and the concern for the churches become for the pastors, elders, and deacons, a unique and weighty burden. Such a weight on the soul often causes sleepless nights and other physical effects. Pastors carry that weight on their soul to the pulpit. Saints in a congregation, deeply shaken by tribulation, bear the heavy weight of spiritual concern for the cause of Christ and His church in their midst. Believing parents bear that weighty concern upon their souls when they think of their children after them and the increasingly wicked world in which their children must live. As the day of Christ swiftly approaches, more and more acute becomes the concern for the gathering and preservation of that eternally chosen church of Jesus Christ here below.

That concern motivated the apostle Paul to do two things.

First, it motivated the apostle to instruct and admonish the churches. For example, motivated by his deep concern for the

churches, Paul admonished the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:28 to take heed to the flock of God and to guard it against spiritual wolves. Again, the apostle in II Corinthians 11:20-21 sharply exhorted the Corinthians not to turn again to their former sins of strife, tumults, fornication, and other sins, but to keep themselves in godliness and peace.

Similarly, the concern for the churches ought to motivate us to instruct and admonish. Officebearers must lead and instruct the congregations in all the truth and the way of godliness. Parents must act out of that desire for the future church's spiritual prosperity by instructing their covenant youth to the best of their ability in the truth of the Reformed faith. The wayward brother must be sought out and called to repentance. This godly concern for the churches ought to motivate young men to seek the ministry of the gospel for a lifetime of faithful service to Christ and His church. This deep concern is used by the Lord to impel His faithful servants to the pulpits each week to proclaim clearly, faithfully, boldly, and antithetically the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a sermon on II Corinthians 11:28, Martin Luther similarly explained that Paul's concern motivated him unto faithful admonition and instruction. Luther said,

Paul would say: "I exert myself, I have a continual care, I urge and admonish constantly, that offenses and false doctrine may not invade and destroy my planting; may not violate and ruin weak consciences.... such is his vigilant anxiety to guard them from the tempter..." (p. 115, volume 4.1, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000).

*As the day of Christ swiftly approaches, more and more acute becomes the concern for the gathering and preservation of that eternally chosen church of Jesus Christ here below.*

Secondly, this deep, daily concern for all the churches motivated the apostle unto fervent prayer. He took that godly care and cast it into the Lord's hands daily (I Pet. 4:7). For example, we find in I Thessalonians 3:10 that Paul prayed night and day exceedingly to see the Thessalonians in order to "perfect that which is lacking in your faith." At the end of that chapter, he offered up the petition for the spiritual prosperity of the Thessalonians. This example illustrates Paul's concern and prayers for all the churches.

Likewise, we must bring our deep, daily concerns for the welfare of the churches before the Lord in prayer daily. Only He has the strength to carry that burden and to carry us with that burden through our tribulations. He has the mercy and grace to cause us to labor with that burden on our hearts. He knows what we need to bear up under that weight because He puts that spiritual concern upon us. He does that in order to make us more fervent in prayer to Him and more conscious of our total dependence upon Him to save His church by His grace alone.

In prayer, cast also this spiritual concern for all the churches upon the Lord because He cares for you.

Will that concern be met by the Lord? Will the Lord grant prosper-

ity to His church? Will the Lord answer our prayer and bless our labors that are motivated by this deep concern?

The answer is rather urgent, especially so when often the Lord sovereignly leads His church through controversy, strife, hard battles against false teachings and sin, persecution, perplexing tribulations, shortages of pastors, or through the sharp consequences of our sins.

Our hope that the Lord will answer our prayers and bless our faithful labors is expressed in Hebrews 13:20-21.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

That prayer expresses both our concern for the churches, and also the foundation of our hope and of our prayer offered in light of that deep concern.

Our concern is that the people of God will do God's will and keep His Word faithfully.


Our hope is that the blood of the everlasting covenant was not shed in vain. The sheep of Christ

have been purchased by His blood for His everlasting inheritance. That shed blood of Christ guarantees that by His Spirit He will gather, feed, and protect His flock unto the end. It assures us that Christ will in His mercy be pleased to gather and feed His flock, even by the faithful labors of His servants who labor in and out of this godly concern for His sheep.

Because of Christ there is hope that God will bless and preserve His people through trial and tribulation, which is the humanly impossible way of this life. In His sovereign way and time, He will cause His people to experience the peace established by our Savior's precious blood, the blood of the everlasting covenant of peace.

This truth is reflected in Psalter 273, stanzas 2 and 5, where we sing in the fear of Jehovah:

O Lord, regard the prayer of those  
Who love the walls of Zion well,  
Whose hearts are heavy for her woes,  
Who sad amid her ruins dwell.

The Lord has heard and answered prayer  
And saved His people in distress;  
This to the coming age declare,  
That they His holy Name may bless. 

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ The Sin of Gambling

The evils of this present world abound and continually increase. Wickedness has been present since the fall of Adam. Perhaps there are truly no sins present today that have not been present since Adam's time. We see forms

of these sins today as never before—but the sin is essentially that of pride. It was so in Adam. Man today, as Adam originally, will determine for himself what is good and what is evil. The corrupted nature of fallen mankind is such that man chooses the evil—unless he sees that it might be harmful to him in his present situation.

It is difficult to point to one or another of the evils about us and

claim it is the worst of all. There is the sin (and addiction) of drunkenness. There is the sin of lust, together with the enjoyment of that through the drama of this world. There is the sin of violence and the enjoyment of that vicariously through television and movie presentations as well as by video games and over the Internet. There are other sins of addiction to which often even children of God succumb.

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Then too there is the terrible sin of jealousy, envy, and the love of money. This explains the rapidly growing evil, in our own day, of gambling. Once, not so very long ago, public gambling was possible only in Las Vegas, Nevada. Today there are gambling casinos in virtually every state. Not only that, some of the states themselves have adopted games of gambling—supposedly to help pay for the cost of education of the children or to lessen the burden of regular taxation.

And, more recently, “Indian” tribes operate many casinos. These have sought to build ever more and larger casinos. A new “Indian” casino is planned for the area of Dorr, Michigan—just south of Grand Rapids. Many of the citizens in the area oppose this. Rev. Doug Kuiper, when still minister in the Byron Center (MI) Protestant Reformed Church, gave a public speech in opposition to gambling. He emphasized the sin of this activity.

What about “Indian” casinos? An article by Rich Lawry that appeared in the *National Review*, August 25, 2004, states:

American Indians have always occupied an outsized place in our imagination, usually as a noble people at one with a pristine North American continent. It's time to upgrade the image. Forget buffalo, eagle feathers, and tribal dances. Think slots, Harrah's and dirty politics.

The California recall is providing the nation an intense education in contemporary American Politics, and high on the list of lessons is that Indian tribes have, lucratively, sold their souls to gambling and can buy off or defeat anyone who might want to stand in their way. California tribes make some \$5 billion a year in gambling revenue, and have poured more than \$120 million into state political campaigns since 1998. It's much the same story across the country.

It's time to ditch the fiction of tribal sovereignty, and recognize the tribes for what they are: good, old-fashioned, all-American sleaze merchants and scam artists. They should be fully welcomed into the American family like used-car salesmen, Hollywood, and telephone marketers.

A 25-member California tribe, the Cabazons, kicked off the explosion of Indian gambling by winning a 1987 Supreme Court decision letting tribes run gambling operations that otherwise would violate state law. Congress soon passed legislation saying that gambling must be allowed on reservations, and states should reach “compacts” with tribes over the details.

In California, then-Gov. Pete Wilson was a tough bargainer with the tribes, so they took matters into their own hands: They spent tens of millions to pass two propositions opening the state to more Indian gambling, and they bought new Gov. Gray Davis (\$1.8 million in tribal cash for his reelection last year), who cut a generous compact with them in 1999. California is now on the way to becoming the West Coast's Las Vegas.

Indian gambling is an ill-disguised scam. Some so-called tribes have 30 people or less. They basically rent their names to Las Vegas casinos that run their gambling operations for as much as a 40 percent cut of the take....

The article concludes:

The ultimate answer to the Indian scam is to end the fiction of tribal sovereignty. If tribes are sovereign nations, why are they allowed to interfere in U.S. elections by contributing huge amounts of money?

When another sovereign nation, like China, pours money into U.S. politics, as it did in 1996, it's a national scandal and cause for an FBI investigation.

Sovereignty has not only allowed tribes to make an end-run around laws against gambling, but has perpetuated arbitrary third world-style government on reservations that makes it impos-

sible for businesses to operate there....

There appears to be some progress made against the growing evil of gambling. In Michigan there was a voter-initiated law passed that limits this state's right to introduce additional gambling games or casinos. There must be a statewide voter approval as well as approval of the locality where such gambling would be introduced before the state can expand on its gambling plans. The “Indian” casinos in Michigan supported this law—for it limits competition for them. But—no matter. The state has no right to be in the gambling business. Worse: it seeks to induce its citizens to participate increasingly in the sin of gambling by means of intense advertising campaigns.

In Lynwood, IL there also is an attempt to build a large Indian casino. Area residents have sought to prevent this coming into their neighborhood. It appears that they are having a degree of success. In their local paper, the *Northwest Indiana Times*, November 23, 2004, David Mitchell writes:

Anti-casino activists are lauding a new law which could kill the plans for a proposed Ho-Chunk casino in Lynwood — or anywhere else in the state.

The Native American Gaming Act made it through both houses of the Illinois General Assembly last week to override a late July veto by Gov. Rod Blagojevich. The new act requires the governor to submit a request and receive legislative approval before entering into a gaming compact with an American Indian tribe.

The law — which specifically targets American Indian gaming — could most immediately affect the Ho-Chunk nation, which has been working on plans for the state's first land-based, American Indian casino on 432 acres in Lynwood.

“It makes it almost impossible to have Indian gaming in Illinois

— ever,” said Carl Smits, president of the group Citizens For Our Community, Inc., which has been strenuously opposing the Ho-Chunk nation’s efforts.

The law essentially takes the power to negotiate a gaming compact out of the governor’s hands and puts it under the authority of the entire General Assembly.

“If you do the simple math on the effort it would take to lobby every legislator ... it’s next to impossible,” Smits said.

Still, Smits said his group will continue to petition area municipal officials in the ongoing effort to get local resolutions passed in opposition to the casino.

While the group is opposed to gaming in general, Smits said members specifically dislike the sovereign status given tribal governments and do not believe any ethnicity should receive such benefits.

While the act passed through the state’s General Assembly, the indication is its constitutionality may be challenged on the federal level.

Blagojevich explained his decision to veto the bill in writing on July 30.

“By changing the procedural means by which the state may enter a gaming compact with a Native American tribe, this bill alters the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government,” he wrote to state senators.

According to Rick Bryant, a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., who has been among those pushing hardest for the casino, the legality of the measure certainly is an issue.

“We understand the General Assembly’s interest in having a voice in the tribal state compact,” Bryant said. “However, we believe the federal law gives the power to the governor and we are confident that the governor will negotiate a deal that is fair to all parties.”

A strong case could be made that gambling quickly becomes addictive, destroys families through the loss of financial resources, and

undermines and destroys the very fabric of society.

But there is the more fundamental question of sin. If one opposes the evil of gambling on the basis that God’s law and Word are violated, then the “radical, religious right” will be accused of confusing politics and religion. Yet surely that must be done—as Rev. Doug Kuiper points out in the pamphlet referred to above. (To see this on-line, go to: [www.prca.org/pamphlets/gambling.htm](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/gambling.htm)) However, if one manages to defeat this sin by means of the majority vote of the legislature or the vote of the people, it stands to reason that this “majority vote” can quickly be used to allow for this and other sins later as well. In the final analysis, a changed, regenerated heart is required. Our calling, then, is to testify that there must be repentance and confession of this sin so that these evils are rooted out of one’s life.

## ■ A Fatherland to be Ashamed of

One could have expected it. The Netherlands, homeland of many of our forbears, has allowed for euthanasia of the terminally ill for some time. There were, presumably, safeguards so that no one could be killed “mercifully” against his will. The *Grand Rapids Press*, December 1, 2004, shows how this inevitably leads to something even worse and more evil:

Amsterdam, Netherlands — A hospital in the Netherlands — the first nation to permit euthanasia — recently proposed guidelines for mercy killings of terminally ill newborns, and then made a startling revelation: It has already begun carrying out such procedures, which include administering a lethal dose of sedatives.

The announcement by the Groningen Academic Hospital came amid a growing discussion in Holland on whether to legalize euthanasia on people inca-

pable of deciding for themselves whether they want to end their lives — a prospect viewed with horror by euthanasia opponents and as a natural evolution by advocates.

In August, the main Dutch doctors’ association KNMG urged the Health Ministry to create an independent board to review euthanasia cases for terminally ill people “with no free will,” including children, the severely mentally retarded and people left in an irreversible coma after an accident.


The Health Ministry is preparing its response, which could come as soon as December, a spokesman said.

Three years ago, the Dutch parliament made it legal for doctors to inject a sedative and a lethal dose of muscle relaxant at the request of adult patients suffering great pain with no hope of relief.

The Groningen Protocol, as the hospital’s guidelines have come to be known, would create a legal framework for permitting doctors to actively end the life of newborns deemed to be in pain from incurable disease or extreme deformities....

...Roman Catholic organizations and the Vatican reacted with outrage, and U.S. euthanasia opponents say the proposal shows the Dutch have lost their moral compass.

“The slippery slope in the Netherlands has descended already into a vertical cliff,” said Wesley J. Smith, a prominent California-based critic, in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

It was, of course, inevitable. When abortion and euthanasia are permitted as a matter of “choice,” the outcome must be that at some point others will have to decide who lives and who dies—and how. It is particularly sad when the very land where the Reformation light once shown so brightly, now appears to be in the forefront of those who would deliberately forsake the law and Word of God. 



# Haggai: Rebuilding the Church (13)

## The Third Prophecy (cont.)

*2:14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.*

**G**od now comes to the point of this lesson from the law. The people, in spite of the fact that they often thought otherwise, were not holy by virtue of their contact with the ordinances and types in which the holy things of God were wrapped up, the sacrifices, the priesthood, the worship of God in the temple, even the temple itself.

God is especially concerned, however, with the “work of their hands.” That work includes their agricultural labors. It also includes their religious labors, especially the work they were doing in the temple. Unholy themselves, they would certainly pollute everything they touched. The people had to learn that they were not acceptable to God by virtue of anything in them or by their own works.

There is an important principle here. Without holiness of heart and life, even our ordinary labors are polluted and defiled and unacceptable to God. That is the other side of the biblical principle that all things must be done for His glory.

How much more, then, the efforts we put forth in religious and spiritual matters. Holiness is not optional. It is essential, and a lack of holiness among Christians is without doubt the reason why the work of the church so often does not prosper, but fails.

That leaves the question, however, how they could be holy. That question is not directly answered by Haggai, but only implied. Holiness was necessary, for unless they were made holy, their polluted and unclean hands would defile and make unholy everything they touched, including the house of God they were building and the sacrifices that would be offered in that house.

How might they be holy? The answer is implied in what God says about their sacrifices. Those sacrifices had no value in themselves and could not make the worshipers holy (Heb. 10:1, 2). Nevertheless, God had commanded them and required them because they pointed to the one sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, a sacrifice that not only justifies (provides forgiveness), but also sanctifies (Heb. 10:10). Only by that sacrifice is the work of our hands holy and acceptable to God, and that includes the work we do in His house as builders.

The answer is further implied in the last verse of this prophecy, to which we will come in due course. There God promises His blessing, and it is by that blessing alone that we have anything at all, including holiness. That blessing comes, though, through the sacri-

fice of Christ, offered once for all. It is the payment for sin and the purchase price of every blessing of salvation, including holiness. That we need that holiness is evident, for without it no man can even see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

*15. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord:*

God tells the Jews to look back to the time four months before when they were still neglecting the house of God and the work of building the house, to the time before one stone had been laid on another in the temple, when only the foundations had been laid and nothing more done. He is telling them not only to think back but literally to “lay it to heart.” He is going to remind them once more of the judgments they had experienced and suffered through drought and crop failure, and He is going to give them material things once again as signs of His blessing.

He wants them to know that disobedience brings wrath and that His favor and blessing come only in the way of obedience. That is a perennial problem with God’s people who think they can have it both ways. They think they can enjoy the blessing and favor of God while continuing in ways that are displeasing to God. They think that their salvation and status as people of God guarantee them uninterrupted enjoyment of God’s goodness.

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*Previous article in this series: December 15, 2004, p. 131.*

It is not so. Salvation itself cannot be lost, but the enjoyment of it can be and is lost when we disobediently and hard-heartedly go our own way and refuse to hear the warnings of God's Word. The lack of true happiness and peace that are the lot of so many Christians today, the terrors of conscience they suffer, their troubled lives, mental anguish and coldness are more often than not the result of the fact that they do not lay to heart what God says here.

That He says it again is due to our forgetfulness and constant inclination to backslide and to return to our old ways. Never does it happen that God's people are without the need for the admonitions and warnings of God's Word. By those admonitions He draws them on in the way of obedience and does not let them fall back into neglect, carelessness and sin.

*16. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.*

*17. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord.*

God speaks here more fully of the judgments that He had sent Judah, making it clear that they had not only suffered drought, but inclement weather and various diseases of their crops that had left them unable to maintain themselves in the land. Harvests that were half or less than half of the expected amounts would have made it nearly impossible for them to live. God speaks especially of the grain and the wine, the two

staples on which they subsisted, and of the fact that even these harvests had failed.

He speaks in more detail because the Jews now recognized that the drought, the mildew, and the hail had all come from Him as judgments. He reminds them of those judgments, first of all to warn them against backsliding, but also by way of contrast to the blessing that would follow. He would give them an abundance, that in contrast to their previous poverty and struggle would very obviously and clearly represent His blessing and

prove to them beyond doubt that their obedience was the way of blessing.

God reminds them, too, of their former blindness and insensibility under His judgments, not because they were again guilty of these sins, but because there was always the

danger that they lapse again into them. That this is always the tendency of God's people the long and sad history of the Old Testament church abundantly proves. Yet, by the grace of God they had learned their lessons, and God, who is merciful, does not hold their former sins against them, but promises those things that they needed.

We learn these same lessons, not so much when God sends drought and crop failure as when He sends spiritual drought and a dwindling harvest of souls, and storms of trouble in the church and in our own lives. The nation here is the church, and the blessings of God are no longer represented by national prosperity, but by spiritual prosperity and wealth.

*18. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of*

*the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.*

*19. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.*

The twenty-fourth day of the ninth month was the date of this prophecy, at the beginning of the work that was being done on the temple. The day that the foundation of the temple was laid was the time, many years previous, when the work on the temple had first begun. God mentions these dates through Haggai to remind the people that the building of His house was the most important work they had to do, work that had been long neglected.

He reminds them of this also to show that the sufferings they had endured in the land were all due to their failure to build the temple — that He could not bless them as long as they did not finish that work. The temple, after all, was His house, the place where He revealed Himself among them as their covenant God and Savior. And, though God does not dwell in temples made with hands, yet in the Old Testament, because the true temple had not yet been built in Christ and in His death and resurrection, this earthly house was the symbol of His presence so much so that without it He would not and could not dwell with them.

He speaks to them at a time when the harvest had not yet been gathered. The question about seed is a rhetorical one, through which God reminds them that the seed was not yet gathered in. Nor was the produce of the vines and the fig trees gathered. Yet God promises to bless them, and to bless them from the day that they had begun to work in His house. This prophecy would have been delivered in December, just after the early rains and the sowing had taken place, so there would have been no evidence as yet of God's

*Salvation itself cannot be lost, but the enjoyment of it can be and is lost when we disobediently and hard-heartedly go our own way and refuse to hear the warnings of God's Word.*

blessing on the fields, and, in the light of previous year's experience, little hope for a good crop.

He would not let them forget the close relationship between His house and their blessedness. Nor may we. Though the church of God is nothing like she was in former days, and is often despised and forsaken by her own members, she is still the place of God's covenant, the place where our great God reveals Himself as the God and Savior of His people. No more, then, than the Jews can we be blessed when the house of God lies in ruins. Then we do not have the preaching of the gospel as the food of our souls, nor the shelter of His gracious presence from the storms that threaten to destroy our spiritual prosperity, or the spiritual diseases that corrupt the means that God has provided to care for our needs.


We need not expect that the church will ever again be as glori-

ous as she was in the days of the Reformation or in the days of the apostles, though we may certainly pray that she will be. The book of Haggai emphasizes the lesser glory of God's house in the latter days, as does the prophecy of Zechariah (4:10). Yet our calling to labor in building and rebuilding does not cease until Christ comes and builds His everlasting and glorious kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. To neglect that calling is to neglect the command of God, and to show that we care little for His gracious presence among us.

Let us, then, labor faithfully and diligently, each in the place God has given, in prayer, in the preaching of the gospel, in the reading and studying of God's Word, in the instruction of our children, in missions, and in all the others ways in which God's spiritual house is built, its stones gathered and shaped and fitted into place, and it built up as an habita-

tion of God through the Spirit. We have the promise of God's blessing to encourage us and to show that He is pleased with the labors of our hands. We have that blessing in the outpouring of the Spirit, who comes as rain upon dry ground to refresh our souls. We have it in the great harvest of the blessings of salvation, in the fields white for harvest, in shelter from the winds of change that blow in church and state, and in protection from the enemies of the church.

What an encouragement! Well may we sing the words of Psalm 126 as we wait for the harvest God has promised us:

Although with bitter tears the  
sower bears his seed,  
When harvest time appears he  
shall be glad indeed;  
For they that in the sowing  
weep  
Shall yet in joy and gladness  
reap. 

Day of Shadows

George M. Ophoff

## The Types of Scripture The Garden of Eden (1)

### Facts of history

**W**e now enter upon the practical branch of our subject. It is the old dispensation, inaugurated by the fall of man, that furnishes us with the materials to be considered. This period, however, was pre-

ceded by an epoch sometimes referred to as the golden age in the history of the human race. The first few chapters of the book of Genesis record the events of this period and describe the ideal state peculiar to it. It is related how, in the beginning, God created heaven and earth. In the six days that followed, the Almighty was engaged in realizing His designs, and the result was a cosmos declaring the wisdom and the power of its Maker.

Of all God's creatures, none was as lovely as man. Him God

created in His own image. True, God formed him from the dust of the ground, but He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And unto him God said, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

It is recorded that God prepared for man a garden eastward in Eden where He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;

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*George Ophoff was Professor of Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in its early days. Reprinted here, in edited form, are articles which Ophoff wrote at that time for the Standard Bearer.*

and the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Out of Eden went a river to water the garden. The Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The above events we regard as facts in history. We oppose the view that all or some of the things of Paradise were not events in history but merely images of higher truths. This view must be denounced because Scripture nowhere teaches that some or all parts of this record are allegories *instead of* events in history. That view is without an exegetical basis. And the practice to which it points is a pernicious one. Historical facts are transported from the province of the real to the realm of the fanciful. This is done without the permission of Scripture. The practices of this school are fraught with danger. Let us bear in mind that the very cornerstone of the temple of God is a historical fact, an event in history. Consign this stone to the unreal realms of the fanciful, and the entire superstructure is bound to collapse.

### Figures of things to come

Scripture does not leave us in doubt as to whether the matters

related are facts in history, or merely images of higher truths, or both facts in history and at the same time images of truths of a higher realm. With respect to the things of Paradise, according to the testimony of Scripture, the latter is the case. Paradise, to begin with, is a figure of heaven. This is evident from a comparison of the written record of John's vision of the celestial city with the description of paradise. "And I saw," says John,

...a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.... And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.... And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;.... And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.... And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.... And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.... And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of

the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 21, 22).

Let us now return to Genesis.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden.... And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone.... And he (Adam) said, I heard thy voice in the garden (Gen. 2:8-12; 3:10).

One cannot help being impressed by the likeness between the holy city and paradise. Common to both is the absence of the curse and the moral purity of the inhabitants. Further, the tree of life is there in the garden as well as in the holy city. It is plain from the record in the book of Revelation that this tree is only one of its kind. In the holy city there were several such trees. For we read there that the tree of life was on either side of the river. At least in the book of Revelation, the term "tree" is a common noun, implying the presence of a group of trees of the same kind. There is no objection to regarding the "tree" of the book of Genesis as a term with a similar implication. In paradise, then, as well as in the celestial city, we find a grove of trees of the same kind. The tree of life of the holy city



yields her fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations. Likewise the tree of life of the garden of Eden was for food. It kept alive man's frame, since it nourished that frame of his at the very fountainhead of its existence. The tree of life of the holy city was located near the center of Jerusalem, close to the throne of God. Likewise the tree of life of the garden. It was situated in Eden, a place centrally located. It is stated that the tree was situated in the very midst of the garden. This tree corresponds to the throne of God of the holy city.

Both the holy city and the garden had its river. The one proceeded out of the throne of God; the other out of Eden to water the garden. Further, both places had their sanctuary. The temple of Jerusalem is God and the Lamb. Approaching this throne, the inhabitants come into the very presence of God. The sanctuary of Paradise was the garden of Eden. The inner sanctuary, the holy of holies, was the grove — the tree of life. It was the meeting-place between God and man. Here man stood in the very presence of God.

It is worthy of note that both paradise and the holy city exhibit the design of the tabernacle. Also this structure was divided into three compartments: the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. In the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle dwelt God. Only the high priest was permitted to meet Him there, and that but once a year.

There are still other indications in Scripture that the events and institutions of Paradise are at once figures of the realities of heaven. We turn to Romans 5:14: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, *who is the figure of him that was to come.*" To the murderer upon the cross, Christ said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

### **Denial of the historicity of some aspects of Paradise**

But paradise is not only an image of heaven. The incidents and events of this epoch are also facts in history. All of them are. This is something that is being contested today by Dr. Geelkerken\* and those of like mind. They maintain that some of the details — such as the speech of the serpent and the tree of life — are events and acts that did not happen as described in the sacred record. They admit that such terms as animal, bird, river, gold, man, woman, creation, and fall refer to realities that were like unto the realities known by these names today. But they draw the line when they come to such written statements as "the serpent said," and such terms as "the tree of life." The statement "and the serpent said," they say, does not signify real speech, but speech as an idea or concept. This idea is then regarded as an image of some other reality. In other words, the expression "and the serpent said" does not signify real speech but something else — who knows what.

There are serious objections to this manner of dealing with Scripture. To begin with, it does not have the sanction of Scripture. Scripture nowhere indicates that this record is intended, in part, to convey something other than what is ordinarily meant by such language. Hence, the record of Genesis must be regarded as a continuous narrative of events and facts on the same plane.

It may be objected that our conclusion has for its premise silence. Let us therefore grant, for the sake of argument, that some of the language of the record signifies things other than those ordinarily designated by the terms and phrases in question. The problem now is to know where to draw the line. If Scripture is silent on the matter, nobody under the sun can know where to do it. The fact that the line has nevertheless been drawn goes to show that the expositors re-

ferred to above have taken a leap in the dark. What reason can be given for not denying the historicity of the entire record? None whatsoever. In view of these matters it is well to abide by the rule that the terms and phrases of Holy Writ are to be understood literally unless otherwise indicated by Scripture.

In fine, the thing to do with respect to the record in question is to pass from the word to the reality signified, and from there to the realities of heaven. Geelkerken, on the other hand, passes from the word to the things of heaven and denies the realities that lie between. We believe that the things of Paradise were, indeed, events in history and, as such, images of the realities of heaven.

### **The things of Paradise**

Let us now attend to the things of Paradise. One of its institutions was the tree of life. We read concerning it: "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden." And again: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever...."


Let it be repeated that Paradise exhibits the design of the tabernacle. The grove in the midst of the garden corresponds to the most holy place, the garden itself to the holy place, and the surrounding territory to the outer court of the tabernacle. The grove, then, being the inner sanctuary of Paradise, was the meeting place between God and man. There man stood in the very presence of his Maker.

When man ate of the forbidden tree he was expelled from the garden and was deprived of the privilege of nourishing his frame with the fruit of the tree of life. To eat from this tree is the prerogative of the righteous only. "To him that

overcometh,” says Jesus, “will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). And again, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). Physical death is the result of a disobedient and unrighteous life, in that fallen man no longer has access to the tree of life.

The fact that the way to the tree of life is kept by the cherubim with the flaming sword, which turned

every way, indicates that this tree was not made to disappear with the fall of man. It remained standing in the midst of the garden very likely until the time of the Flood. However, its way was kept. But there was also the promise of a seed who should gain the ascendancy over the malice of the devil. Man knew, then, that immortality and righteousness were again to be his portion. But he was taught to look away from the tree, for the way of the tree was kept. He was made to look for the promised good from different quarters. Thus

the tree of life became the symbol of grace and a schoolmaster, training the believers to Christ. The fruits of immortality, of which the tree was a symbol, man will again eat. These fruits will be withheld from him but for a season. 

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\* Dr. J.G. Geelkerken (d. 1960) was a minister in the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland whose views were condemned by the GKN Synod of Assen in 1926. The GKN deposed him for his heresy.

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Abraham Kuyper*

## *If Your Soul Were in My Soul's Stead*

### **Mutual Devotion**

**D**o not quarrel about it. Every one of us must carry his own burden, must carry his own cross. And this burden of suffering is measured out to you not according to your faith, far less according to your merit, but almost exclusively according to the sovereign counsel of God.

It is not denied, therefore, that patient discharge of duty produces results that make for happiness of life; and that throwing oneself away in sinful pursuits in the end makes the reckless one pay dear. But this contrast, without more, does not explain the very unequal division of life's happiness, nor the every time surprising inequality between the cross laid on one and that laid on another.

Once, in the day of judgment, as our sense of right spells out to us and as God's Word proph-

esies the same to us, this inequality which is so offensive to us shall be straightened out, when all that have died or are yet alive shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall carry away according as they have done in life, whether it be good or evil.

But in expectation of that great and illustrious day, here in this earthly dispensation with respect to the mystery of suffering it remains a criss-crossing of two altogether divergent lines.

On one side *the line of Sinai*, i.e., the line of provisional retribution *here and now*, as when he who will not behave goes under in the social struggle, while he who orders his way aright makes notable advances.

And on the other side *the line of Golgotha*, i.e., the mystery of suffering, which foretells the cross to the righteous and makes worldly godlessness to triumph over the Man of Sorrows.

Yea, even in nature you see these lines go athwart one the other.

On one side a God who makes His sun to rise over evil and good, and rain to come down upon righteous and unrighteous. And on the other side a neglected field that makes its owner suffer hunger, over against a vine or olive-orchard that makes the diligent farmer dwell in peace and prosperity under his own vine and fig tree.

Always these two.

On the right a rule of retribution that weds suffering to sin; but toward the left a rule that mocks every idea of retribution, and erected for the only one who, born of a woman, was spotlessly pure, a tree of shame, and on that accursed tree still held Him up to scorn.

This antithesis is not explained from the blindness of human unrighteousness, for God hands Job over to Satan; and now sickness and death, which so often darken the path of the righteous by somber shadows, still come not from human failure or caprice, but from the sovereign counsel of the Eternal.

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*Reprinted from When Thou Sittest In Thine House, by Abraham Kuyper, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1929. Used by permission of Eerdmans Publishing Co.*

When you ask whether it is given us, already here, by the light of the Word, to solve that bitter struggle, which has weighed heavily upon the faithful of all ages, it certainly behooves us to confess that we know more than the friends of Job, and more than the Preacher of Jerusalem. For Gethsemane and Golgotha, which then were yet to *come*, now lie *behind* us. But then every one of us is ready at once to offer the remark that, at Golgotha, *worship* is so much easier than understanding.

So much only is clear, that the solution of the struggle between the *rule of Sinai*, which makes the godless suffer, and the *rule of Golgotha*, which makes the righteous suffer, is to be looked for in a third rule, which interprets the mystery of love and which speaks of a suffering by one *in the stead* of the other; of a going under and sinking away in *vicarious* suffering; of a coming of *the soul of one into the place of the soul of the other*.

For though at first hearing this sounds oracular, and though Job, who was the first to suggest it, speaks of it vaguely (16:4), we ourselves well know this golden rule from our own soul's experience.

We have known, we have lived through, the sacred moments, when the sorrow of another weighed so painfully upon our own soul that sometimes we were depressed and bowed down under it more than the sufferer himself.

And also, they are not strange, but from memory familiar, those blessed sensations, when it seemed to us as though the sorrow dropped from our shoulders because real

sympathy on the part of another caught our sorrow of soul from beneath.

Both times it was vicarious.

Once, when you removed the

cross from the shoulder of others, to carry it yourself in their stead, to their relief. And again, when someone took it from your shoulder and by fellowship of love and thanks to the communion of saints carried it in your stead.

It is true, this was not yet the highest, nor yet the full application of the golden rule of vicarious love.

That shone only and alone on Golgotha.

But Simon of Cyrene was there, who took the cross from Jesus, and carried it after Him, and dragged it to the cross-hill *in His stead*.



If *your soul were in my soul's stead* harmonizes of course with the opposite: If *my soul were in your stead*.

This operation of love goes over and back.

It is mutual.

From one to the other, and from the other to one.

But always with the mysterious effect that the burden of the cross is transferred, and that with one the burden is lightened and with the other it is made heavier.

Thus, you will say, this operation of love serves no purpose.

What good is it, when A suffers, that B assumes that suffering, to relieve A? Should not, by this same rule, A take his suffering back again from B, so that in the end he has his own cross back again? Yea, more yet, is it not love's claim that

you hide your suffering, so as to keep the other from entering into your sorrow?

Indeed, this would be so, if both times this suffering were borne *in the same way*.

When you perceive that it comes to this, you do better when you keep it to yourself, and hide it from the knowledge of your best friend, in the outpouring of your

soul to make known your complaint to your God and your Lord alone.

But when it becomes a suffering of *love*, because you "put your soul in the stead of his soul," no, then that transfer, that exchange of cross, that vicarious suffering of love, serves a purpose.

For see, the man who bore the sorrow, because God's counsel brought it upon him, was burdened by it, threatened to succumb under it, and was going down in it. But when by the urge of love you take that same cross from him, it works the opposite effect with you. Through love, that same cross elevates you, enriches you inwardly, and allows you moments of blessed, soul-felt happiness.

For yours is at once the reward of your suffering, when you see that, by you, the sorrow of the other has been softened.



More familiarly we call this: *ability to imagine ourselves in the condition of the other*.

Surely, much love can operate in this, and hard will be the judgment of the man who knew so little save his own self, and thereby was never able to understand others in their suffering.

But yet, to imagine yourself in the other man's condition is something far more general and superficial.

It is *more general*, for to think oneself in the condition of the other is of use in almost every relation of life.

No fathers or mothers can be good trainers unless they are able to put themselves in the place of their children. No teacher can teach unless he can enter into the condition of his pupil. No preacher can preach unless he enters sympathetically into the condition of his hearers. No nurse can care for the sick unless she can enter into the condition of her patient.

“To think oneself in the condition of others” is the general rule of all effective and fruit-bearing treatment of other people.

But the rule which governs the mystery of suffering aims far higher, because it does not remain on the surface but enters into the reality.

When I hear of a terrible shipwreck, I can imagine myself in the midst of the dreadful scenes which, before the ship sank away into the watery depths, were enacted on the sinking wreck; but this is pure *representation*; and even where I am moved by it, it is no deeper emotion than is stirred by reading Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

But here it is far more, and something altogether different.

Not thinking oneself *in* and imagining the condition *of* another, but taking one’s stand in his place; entering into what he is going through; taking the cross from him,

and carrying it in his place and in his stead.



*...hard will be the judgment of the man who knew so little save his own self, and thereby was never able to understand others in their suffering.*

This is what, in fullest sense, and with perfect releasing effect, has actually taken place on Golgotha alone.

There He bore the *punishment* that brings us *peace*. The curse that lay on

us He took away from us and bore it Himself.

And of course, so to take the cross away from the brother is to us, children in love as we are, not granted. For this you would have to be, as Jesus, altogether holy.


But walk in *the shadow* of love, thank God, yea, that we can do. Not by artificial intent, but as real love poured out in our heart by the Holy Ghost.

Then soul enters into soul.

Then we do not regard ourselves but forget ourselves, so that we enter into the hidden sanctuary of the other person’s sorrow. And at the altar of his grief, which then smokes with such leaden-gray clouds, we kneel by the side of him, bear him up from underneath, and take the weight of his sorrow upon ourselves.

Better still, for even that would be too much. Oh, the strength of our love is so small. But He whose divine beauty glitters most brightly in the sympathy of compassion, brings our soul, more deeply than we ourselves know, into the sorrow of the brother, and in the stream of this holy sympathy brings the overwhelmed heart of the brother toward us.

This then does not last long. We can neither retain nor lengthen this sacred moment.

But it has been there, this one indivisible moment, when, in the place of our brother, our soul *suffered* what he battled against, and his was the balm of comfort. 

## Book Reviews



*An Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians*, by John Brown. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001. Pp. xxx + 451. \$27.99 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.)

**T**he Banner of Truth Trust is publishing many commentaries, but all written in previous years. Some are written by Puritan writers; some by John Calvin; and some by more recent authors, such as Edward Young. This book is a part of that series, called “Geneva Series of Commentaries.”

John Brown was a Puritan of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His father and grandfather were also ministers, of the same name. He was pastor of the church in Biggar, Scotland from 1806 to 1822; he then moved to

Edinburgh, where he pastored two congregations before becoming professor of Exegetical Theology in the United Secession Church.

He has written an excellent commentary on the book of Galatians. He must have been an able exegete and must have occupied the chair of Exegetical Theology with honor, if one may judge by this commentary. Paul’s epistle to the Galatians has ranked in importance only a little lower than the letter to the Romans. Luther was quoted as saying that, of all the books he wrote, only his *Bondage of the Will* and his *Commentary on Galatians* were worth preserving after his death. *Galatians* is crucially important today as well, as a strong antidote to recent apostasies that teach justification by faith and works. No one promoting this her-

esy can deal properly and honestly with *Galatians*. This commentary is a good one.

A few instances of the excellent material in the book will give some idea of its worth.

In describing the error of Judaism, which plagued the Galatian churches, Brown quotes Luther: “They made good works, which are the effect of justification, its cause,” to which Brown adds the comment: “This was to ‘pervert’; and by this perverting the gospel, they ‘subverted the souls of the disciples’” (pp. 43, 44).

Brown is sharp in his defense of justification by faith alone. He writes: “Every plan which, like that of the Judaizing teachers, leads men to depend on their own obedience to any law to any extent, in any degree, either as the ground



of their justification or the means of their justification is another gospel" (p. 45).

Brown's discussion of chapter 2, in the main a defense of Paul's apostleship, is excellent in every respect, but particularly his explanation of verses 6, 7 and Paul's rebuke of Peter (pp. 87, 88).

Strangely, the body of the commentary does not contain a detailed development of the concept "justification." The development of that concept is put into a lengthy footnote, covering almost two pages of small print. One would make a mistake to bypass that footnote.

Brown has an interesting explanation of the difficult passage in 3:20, of which passage Brown says that there were at his time 250 interpretations. That number has since been increased. 3:20 reads: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." Brown's interpretation is worth reading.

Brown inveighs strongly

against allegorical interpretations of Scripture and warns against their danger, but one wonders whether he heeds his own warning in his interpretation of the "allegory" Paul uses in 4:24-27. Again, however, one ought to read Brown before making up his own mind.

In his discussion of 5:17, Brown demonstrates conclusively that sanctification in this life is only accomplished in principle. Connecting this verse with Paul's discussion in Romans 7, he writes: "'The flesh' here obviously signifies the depraved inclinations which are natural to man in his present state, and which, though subdued, are by no means extinguished even in the regenerate. These inclinations are personified under the name of 'the flesh,' and are represented as ready to seize every opportunity that is afforded for obtaining their gratification" (p. 284).

In his discussion of Christian liberty, the author writes: "There

are not wanting men who avow the principle that Christians have nothing to do with the law of God; and there are many who would not avow such a general statement who are yet acting as if it were true. This is fearful delusion. The madman who has mistaken his tattered garments for the flowing robes of majesty, and his manacles for golden bracelets studded with jewels, has not erred so widely as the man who has mistaken carnal license for Christian liberty" (pp. 285, 285). One ought to see clearly in these writings of Brown that the charge of those teaching justification by faith and works, against the biblical position that justification by faith alone makes men careless and profane, is an invention of sinful minds to destroy a great doctrine of Scripture.

For the most part, the more technical questions involved in the commentary are relegated to the footnotes, and can be read by those who are interested in these matters.



## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Minister Activities

The council of the Doon, Iowa PRC formed a trio consisting of Rev. A. denHartog, minister-on-loan to Singapore; Rev. Doug Kuiper, Randolph, WI; and Rev. M. VanderWal, Hope, Redlands, CA. The Lord willing, there was to be a congregational meeting to call from this trio on Saturday, January 1, after the service.

Rev. W. Bruinsma, Kalamazoo, MI, declined the call extended to him by the Hudsonville, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor.

The congregation of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI voted on December 19 to extend a call to Rev. A. denHartog to serve as their

next pastor. On the trio with Rev. denHartog were the Revs. W. Bruinsma, and G. Eriks, Loveland, CO.

The Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL has a new trio of Rev. A. denHartog; Rev. M. Dick, Grace, Standale, MI; and Rev. G. Eriks.

### School Activities

Saturday evening, December 4, there was a Christmas concert, entitled "Glory to the Newborn King," at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, to benefit Eastside Christian School. Dr. Randy Baker and Mr. Brad Baker presented a wonderful, God-glorifying hour of familiar Christmas carols with organ and piano. First Church was as full as I have ever seen it. It was literally a standing room only program, with people even sitting up on the platform in front facing the rest of

the audience. No one was disappointed, except maybe that the concert was over way too quickly. A special thanks to the two Bakers, as well as the Majestic Brass, who provided accompaniment for audience singing throughout the evening. It was truly an enjoyable evening, one that will hopefully be repeated next year.

### Congregation Activities

Again this past Christmas season, many of our congregations were in one way or another busy caroling. Each church invited young and old to come together for an evening of song. Singing usually took place in a Health Care Center, or at the homes of church members. This format was followed in our Lynden, WA PRC, with one minor twist. The carolers at Lynden were reminded to

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

bring proper identification along, because plans called for them to cross the border into Canada and sing there as well.

The 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade Catechism class at Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI went caroling to their church neighbors after their evening service on December 12. Besides singing, the students also distributed a small gift, along with an invitation to their neighbors to worship with them.

Members of the Wingham, Ontario, Canada PRC were invited to join their pastor, Rev. M. DeVries, and his wife at their home on December 5 for a time of fellowship and Psalm singing, with three women from our sister church, First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, who were visiting in the area and worshiped in Wingham on December 5 and 19.

Recent bulletins from the Doon, Iowa PRC and Faith PRC in Jenison, MI included notes of thanks to three of our retired pastors. The council and congregation of Doon thanked Rev. J. Kortering for his tireless efforts helping them during their time of vacancy, and Faith thanked Rev. G. VanBaren and Prof. H. Hanko for filling their pulpit — Rev. VanBaren for two years and Prof. Hanko since June. The Lord certainly cared for His

church through the work of these faithful preachers.

Rev. R. Cammenga preached his farewell sermon for the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI on Sunday evening, December 12. Rev. Cammenga chose for his theme that evening words from Acts 20:25-27 under the theme, "Paul's Parting Confidence." A farewell for the Cammenga family was held the evening before, with a light lunch and fellowship following the program.

The following Lord's Day, December 19, Rev. R. Cammenga was installed as the fifth pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Rev. K. Koole, one of Faith's former pastors, led the installation service, preaching from Isaiah 52:9 under the theme, "Blessing the Feet that Bring the Gospel." Rev. Cammenga preached his inaugural sermon that same evening, choosing as his text the words from Ephesians 6:19-20, "Pray for Me."

The consistory of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada approved the purchase and installation of a wireless hearing-assistance system for their sanctuary.

#### **Mission Activities**

In light of the fact that the Pittsburgh Mission had sixty first-time visitors at Light Up Night,


their Steering Committee has decided to participate annually in this event, which usually takes place the week before Thanksgiving.

Members from the council of the Loveland, CO PRC reported to their congregation that they had a good trip to Spokane, WA in early December to meet with the Fellowship there. The Miersmas and the group are doing well. They are especially excited by a few more visitors and contacts that they have had recently.

Rev. D. Overway and his family traveled to Fayetteville, N.C. in early December to preach for the saints there on behalf of the Domestic Mission Committee.

#### **Young Adult Activities**

December 3 & 4 the Young Adults Society of the South Holland, IL PRC hosted a Young Adult Retreat at the Radisson Hotel in Merrillville, IN. Rev. A. Brummel, pastor at South Holland, introduced and led discussion on Christian Compassion, based on Romans 12:10-21.

The Young Adults of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI invited their congregation to join them on Sunday evening, December 5, to read through the book of Matthew. 

## **Announcements**

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Young Adult Bible Study of Grandville PRC expresses heartfelt Christian sympathy to Brian and Michelle Huizinga, Andy and Shannon Bylsma, and Steve and Carrie Huizinga in the death of their father,

#### **DANIEL HUIZINGA,**

on November 29, 2004. May they find comfort in the words of Romans 14:8: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Dewey Engelsma, President  
Sarah Bleyenbergh, Secretary

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PRC expresses sincere sympathy to the family of

#### **MR. BOB HOVING,**

who passed into his eternal home. May they be comforted in knowing that "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Marvin Kamps, Pres.  
Judi Doezeema, Sec'y.

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The consistory and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their Christian sympathy to Carol Huizinga and her children Brian and Michelle Huizinga, Andy and Shannon Bylsma, Steve and Carrie Huizinga, Lindsey Huizinga, and Kevin Huizinga, and to Daryl and Jan Kuiper in the death of their husband, father, and brother,

#### **MR. DANIEL HUIZINGA.**

May the sure words of God's mercy comfort them: "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend unto the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me" (Psalm 86:6-7).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.  
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

### NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Jeff Kalsbeek (Phone: (616) 453-6455). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 28, 2005, D.V., at South-west PRC, 7:30 P.M.

Student Aid Committee  
Jeff Kalsbeek, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to the Tim and Sue Hoving family in the death of their father and grandfather,

#### MR. ROBERT HOVING.

May they be comforted in the promise of God that "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. William Langerak, Pres.  
Mr. Tim Pipe, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Loveland PRC extend Christian sympathy to fellow members Mr. Dan Lanting and his daughter Melissa Lanting, in the death of Dan's father,

#### REV. GEORGE LANTING.

We also convey our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Lanting and the entire family, as we mourn with you the loss of this faithful servant of God, who was our former pastor. May we find comfort in God's Word: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. Garrett Eriks, Pres.  
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Loveland PRC extend Christian sympathy to fellow member Mr. Chuck Cammenga, and to Rev. Ron Cammenga, our former pastor, and family in the sudden death of their son and brother,

#### DANIEL CAMMENGA.

May the Lord provide comfort and peace in your loss. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:1, 2).

Rev. Garrett Eriks, Pres.  
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

### NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by Bethel PRC in Roselle, Illinois on Wednesday, March 2, 2005 at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, January 31, 2005. An office-bearers' conference is planned for Tuesday, March 1, the Lord willing, on the subject of "Reformed Evangelism."

Rev. Daniel Kleyn  
Stated Clerk, Classis West

### OFFICEBEARERS' CONFERENCE CLASSIS WEST OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

Bethel PRC, Roselle, IL —  
Tuesday, March 1, 2005

#### *Reformed Evangelism*

"Go ye therefore, and teach  
all nations..." Matthew 28:19

### KEY NOTE

*The Church's Duty to Preach the  
Gospel Indiscriminately*

9:00 A.M. Rev. Douglas Kuiper  
Pastor of the Randolph PRC,  
Randolph, WI

### SECTIONALS

*Equipping our People  
for Personal Evangelism*

10:30 A.M. Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani  
Eastern US Missionary in the  
Protestant Reformed Churches

*Keeping Busy in  
Congregational Evangelism*

1:00 P.M. Rev. Mitchell Dick  
Pastor of the Grace PRC,  
Grand Rapids, MI

*Remembering That the Work  
and Fruit Is of the Lord*

2:45 P.M. Rev. Ronald VanOverloop  
Pastor of the Byron Center PRC,  
Byron Center, MI

All past and present officebearers, as well as all interested people, are invited to attend. Lunch will be provided, and a free-will offering will be taken to defray expenses.