



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

In its own way, abortion brings home to us Reformed Christians the reality of the grace of God to us and our children.

The world butchers its own offspring.

Reformed believers obediently have children in marriage; thankfully receive them; gladly rear them; and joyfully fellowship with them in the family.

See "Some Other Thoughts on Abortion"—page 435

Vol. 70, No. 19  
August, 1994





## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma  
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker  
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezema

## DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert  
Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Carl  
Haak, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John  
Heys, Rev. Steven Key, Rev. Dale Kuiper, Mr. James Lanting,  
Rev. George Lubbers, Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers, Rev. Thomas  
Mierama, Rev. Audred Spriensma, Rev. Charles Terpstra,  
Rev. Gise VanBaren, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin  
Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
4949 Ivanrest  
Grandville, MI 49418  
BUSINESS OFFICE  
The Standard Bearer  
Don Doezema  
P.O. Box 603  
Grandville, MI  
49418-0603

PH: (616) 531-1490  
(616) 538-1778  
FAX: (616) 531-3033

## CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE  
The Standard Bearer  
c/o B. VanHerk  
66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand  
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley  
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry  
Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT42 3EL  
Northern Ireland

## EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own  
articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and  
questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome.  
Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and  
must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy  
deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All  
communications relative to the contents should be sent to the  
editorial office.

## REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our  
magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted  
articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment  
is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint  
appears is sent to our editorial office.

## SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00  
elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is  
received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the  
subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you  
have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as  
early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of  
interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

## ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising  
of any kind. Announcements of church and school events,  
anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be  
placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business  
Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline  
for announcements is at least one month prior to publication  
date.

## BOUND VOLUMES

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

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

Meditation — Rev. John A. Heys	
That Wonderful Gift of Peace with God .....	433
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
Some Other Thoughts on Abortion .....	435
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker .....	437
Special Article — Rev. Charles J. Terpstra	
A Critique of Modern Church-Growth Evangelism (4) .....	438
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — Rev. Bernard Woudenberg	
More Than Logic .....	440
Search the Scriptures — Rev. George C. Lubbers	
Worthy of Double Honor .....	442
Day of Shadows — Homer C. Hoeksema	
The First Three Days of Creation (cont.) .....	445
Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
4. Abounding Lawlessness .....	448
A Cloud of Witnesses — Prof. Herman C. Hanko	
Peter Datheen:	
Father of Reformed Liturgy (3) .....	451
Book Review .....	453
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger .....	453

## Editorially speaking ...

The July, 1994 issue of the *Standard Bearer* appeared later than many of our readers expected. The reason was that we waited with the publishing of this issue until the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches had finished its sessions about the middle of June. We like to inform the readers of the *SB* of the decisions of synod as quickly as possible after synod meets. It is encouraging to discover that the arrival of the *SB* is looked for.

We suggest that the societies and classes that take up again the study of Scripture this fall consider studying the gospel of John. The *SB* will be publishing a study guide of John by the Rev. Carl Haak. The guide consists of a helpful outline of the book, chapter by chapter, and of questions that will stimulate thought and discussion. The first installment will appear in the September 1 issue of the magazine, in time for use at the first meeting of the societies and classes for Bible study.

Readers sometimes indicate interest in the response to the *SB* in the wider Reformed sphere. *The Trumpet*, a monthly that circulates among the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, is reprinting some of Prof. Hanko's articles on church history. In the April 8, 1994 issue of *Clarion*, magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the editor reflected on the series of editorials in the *SB* on women voting at the Reformed congregational meeting ("The Nose of the Camel"). A recent article in *Nederlands Dagblad*, a daily Christian newspaper in the Netherlands, commented on the same series of editorials. The article informed its many readers throughout the Netherlands that the "editor of the *Standard Bearer*, ... organ of the Protestant Reformed Churches" in America, contends that "with the decision to give women the right to vote at congregational meetings the ('liberated') Reformed Churches in the Netherlands open the door to feminism.... According to him the permission of women elders and preachers in these churches is now merely a question of time."

— DJE



# That Wonderful Gift of Peace With God

One of the richest prophecies in Scripture concerning the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ is found in Isaiah 9:6. There we read: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." All these names present tremendously comforting truths to which we must hold, and will by God's grace do so.

However, the awesome truth to which we must hold is that, although He, as our Savior, was born unto us, He was not born because of what we did, as is the case with every other child born in this world. Christ Jesus has no earthly father. In the text above we find His name called Wonderful; and He was born in a wonderful way.

Our God was pleased to use Mary for His birth, and He made her willing to be used for His birth. But although this Son came through Mary, no man filled any condition necessary for a human child to be born. Our God informed Mary that Jesus would come by His will, and by His work through the Holy Spirit. We read that literally in Luke 1:35: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the

power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

The tremendously important and comforting truth is that this Son, Christ Jesus, would represent us. He would be born in the line of King David. We read in Matthew 1:1 these words: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Then in verse 16 we read: "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

Now, through Isaiah, our God declares that Christ Jesus is given us. The idea is that Christ Jesus is a free gift of God's grace, unto a distinct, divinely chosen group of sinners. "Unto us," does not refer to the whole human race. It refers to those eternally chosen to be the members of Christ's body, which is called His church. Now a body has a unique, definite number of members, each member in a particular place to do a particular work, as designed by God, and serving Christ Jesus the Head, and with all the other members. That body has a definite number of members; and it is not designed by men. It is eternally designed by God. We find that so beautifully stated in Isaiah 43:21. There we read: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."

Besides, that He is the Son "given" to us means that we do not get salvation because of and by what we do. We do not earn salvation. It is a gift by God's grace. And to God we owe

everlasting thanks for that salvation. We are not saved because we believe. We believe because God has already begun salvation in us. Even as we are not born physically because we desired it, and did something to get it, so we are not born spiritually by our desire for it. Take hold of and believe what God presents us in Ephesians 2:8, namely, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." When we boast we are being used by Satan as his tools that are not saved by God's grace.

What a wonderful and comforting truth we have here. Our text not only reveals to the child of God that all is well. It means that all of God's promises will be fulfilled. And we can be absolutely sure of that because our God through Isaiah presents Christ Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords, upon whose shoulder the government rests, so that He has complete control over Satan and all the fallen angels, as well as on all those not chosen in Him. Because the government is upon His shoulder we have that blessed, comforting truth in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

We have no reason to complain and grumble about what happens to us physically. Since *all things* work together for our good, all that happens is sent by Him to bring us to our particular place in His kingdom, being ruled by Him who is correctly



called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Let us take note of the fact that Christ Jesus is here called the Prince of Peace. He is that because the government is upon His shoulder. In Colossians 1:17, 18 we find this comforting truth: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." He is the Son of God come into our flesh, and He has a human nature given Him through Mary. He suffered the punishment which we deserve, because of all the sins which we committed.

Now at God's right hand He is, and He is called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He brings forth wonders which we never expected, and do not deserve. And, by all means, let us keep in mind the comforting truth that coming in our flesh, and after His resurrection and His ascension into heaven to God's right hand, His name is Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

His cross and death, but also His resurrection and ascension up into heaven, caused Him to become what Isaiah correctly declared that He would be. He is the Prince of Peace. In the Hebrew language that word "prince" means the official, the captain, the head who realized peace for us. He is the One who realized peace for us.

His cross, death, resurrection, and ascension up into heaven have made Him to be what Isaiah declares that He will be. Now it can be said that His name is Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and that therefore He is the Prince of Peace.

This is an important truth for us to hold on to tightly, and keep in our souls in this vale of tears. Through Isaiah our God told us that He would become the Prince of Peace. He "shall be called ... The Prince of Peace."

Through His cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, He has in the human nature realized peace with God for us. And when He returns at God's appointed time, He will raise up our dead bodies out of their graves; and He will put Satan and all his wicked helpers into the everlasting torment of hell. He will be Prince of Peace by causing us with body and soul to walk in perfect love before God.

Let us also take hold of and rejoice more fully in the truth that He realized for us peace with God, not simply earning the way for us to be treated peacefully by God; but He will completely, when He returns, make us love God and live in perfect peace with Him. All our pain and suffering will everlastingly be gone; but also all our hatred of God and love of sin will be gone forever. As Prince of Peace He will make us peaceful members of His body.

Sad to say, that peace with God is so often brushed aside in the church world today. Salvation is presented merely as relief from punishment and glorification of the body, causing us to enjoy what our flesh wants. But the awesome and wonderful gift of salvation which He realized for us is that we will be caused, when our bodies are resurrected, to walk fully, and every moment to all eternity, in love of God in the new Jerusalem. And, by the way, that name Jerusalem means "Possession of Peace." The Prince of Peace will bring us into that everlasting peace with God, in a life wherein He deals peacefully with us.

Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is coming to make us holy and righteous citizens in the kingdom of heaven. If we mainly and merely are interested in a salvation that is deliverance from punishment, we do not reveal ourselves to be citizens in His kingdom.

The question then is whether we can say, without a shadow of doubt, that Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, has begun in our souls to cause us to love God, and to look forward to the day when with our bodies we can walk everlastingly in love of God.

Does the truth presented by God through Isaiah fill us with spiritual joy and thankfulness? Do we joyfully consider ourselves to be everlastingly chosen citizens of Christ's kingdom of heaven? Do we merely admit that before man? Or do we every day thank God for sending His Son to realize this peace for us and in us?

In Revelation 13:15-17 we are instructed and warned by our God that the day is soon coming when we will not be allowed to buy or sell, because we will refuse to receive a mark of that beast, the Antichrist, on our right hand or on our foreheads. Therefore we must hold on tightly to this truth about Jesus Christ being our Prince of Peace. Him we can truthfully expect to come and give us, with body as well as soul, the peace that He earned for us. For in Revelation 22:7 and 12 we read: "Behold I come quickly." As the Prince of Peace He will bring us everlasting peace in heavenly glory.

Let us then with our hearts as well as mouths sing from *Psalter* #264:1, that glorious truth which is based on Psalm 98:4, namely:

Come, let us sing before the Lord  
New songs of praise with sweet  
accord.

For wonders great by Him are  
done,  
His mighty arm has vict'ry won.

□





# Some Other Thoughts on Abortion

The Reformed Christian may not simply fall in with the thinking of the decent heathens or even of all other Christians on abortion.

Abortion is murder, the killing of humans, who were originally created in the image of God, without divine warrant. The law of God forbids and condemns murder (Gen. 9:5, 6; Ex. 20:13). Humans begin to exist as persons at conception, as the Word of God teaches in Psalm 139:13-16: "... thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.... Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Mothers and doctors, therefore, who kill unborn babies at any stage of the pregnancy are guilty of murder. The state that legalizes abortion is guilty of murder.

Of these things, there is some knowledge outside the sphere of Reformed Christianity and even outside the sphere of the church altogether.

But the Reformed Christian must go further in his or her reflection on abortion.

The recent development in Western civilization (more accurately, Western barbarism) of legalizing abortion is a significant development in the rejection of God, whom Western nations have clearly known both from creation and from Holy Scripture. Abortion is a striking, appalling instance of the abounding of lawlessness in the last days forecast by Jesus in Matthew 24:12. The approval of homosexuality both by the official

organs of government and by the people is another. The spirit of Antichrist, who is now about to be revealed, changes the fundamental laws of God, made known both in Scripture and in nature, as God's prophet foretold in Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 11:36.

The abortion decree by the Supreme Court of the United States was appalling. The state took to itself the sovereign authority of God over life and death. When the state executes the murderer or revolutionary, it is the servant of the sovereign God (Rom. 13:1-7). When the state sanctions the destruction of the bothersome and burdensome, it usurps God's sovereignty. In the language of II Thessalonians 2:4, it opposes and exalts itself above all that is called God, showing itself that it is God. Reformed Christians must see on the features of the "nine old men" (now, men and women) of the Court the visage of the "man of sin," the "beast from the sea."

This is not so much because these officials of civil government authorized the slaughter of millions of humans, even though they were innocent before the tribunal of the state, as it is because the Court seized upon the prerogatives of God in Jesus Christ. Not to the Supreme Court, but to the risen Jesus, His Messiah, has God given the keys of the grave and death (Rev. 1:18). *Roe v. Wade* was a lurch toward the kingdom of the beast.

The response of the Reformed Christian, accordingly, should not only be condemnation of abortion by lawful means. But it must also be heightened watchfulness for the coming of Jesus Christ which is near. This watchfulness must include spiritual preparation for the open conflict with the United States government that is impending. It is not now a question whether our government will make demands upon the Reformed church and upon the Reformed Christian that they cannot obey and whether our government will persecute them for obeying God rather than men. The only question is when and how this will take place. The state that claims for itself the sovereignty belonging alone to God, as the United States has done in the decision on abortion, must turn on those citizens who will have no other god before the one, true God revealed in Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture.

Although the lawlessness of abortion stems ultimately from rebellious theology, it makes headway by means of corrupt ethics. Abortion is the final solution to the problem caused by sexual promiscuity and irresponsibility. North America promotes the enjoyment of the pleasure of sex outside the bond of marriage. Every aspect of our society encourages fornication: music, books, television, movies, advertising, and education. The result of fornication is unwanted

*Roe v. Wade  
was a lurch  
toward  
the kingdom  
of the beast.*



babies. The solution? Kill the babies!

Even where marriage is used, there is no recognition of the calling to have children or of the responsibility to receive and rear the fruit of the sexual union. Marriage is merely a means of sensual self-gratification. To get rid of the hindrances, abort!

Reformed Christians may not, with narrowed vision, concentrate on the murder of the unborn. Their testimony to the world must condemn the unchastity and the dishonoring of marriage that give birth to abortion.

Indeed, we must see abortion as an evidence of the dreadful spiritual condition of humanity outside of Christ that the Reformed faith confesses in the doctrine of total depravity. The world is evil, completely and intensely evil. Mothers destroy their own children and scream for the right to do so. Doctors take life. Justices decree the righteousness of murder. The creature plays Creator.

The depravity of which abortion is a glaring expression is not a matter of illiteracy, poverty, and social deprivation, but of sinful human nature. It is shared by the unwed mother-to-be in the ghetto and by the distinguished, learned aristocrats on the bench of the Supreme Court.

From this world, the Reformed believer is called to separate himself by the Word of God. Abortion is an urgent reminder. For there is divine wrath upon this wickedness. An impenitent Justice Harry Blackmun, main framer of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, lauded upon his recent retirement as a great jurist, will shortly stand in judgment before the Judge of all the earth. The sentence will be the everlasting death due a man who has done evil, not only in decreeing the death of scores of millions of boys and girls but also in

betraying his office as minister of God, charged to punish evildoers and protect well-doers.

Wrath falls upon the nation. Every storm, earthquake, and natural disaster; all the social and economic trouble; and, particularly, the increasing violence are God's punishments of the nation for the national sin of abortion, as for its other transgressions. In the end, the nation will perish, perhaps in a judgment of God in history, certainly in the Day of Christ.

Abortion makes loud to the Reformed ear the call of God in the gospel, Come out, my people, and be separate, "that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). This call the Reformed believer obeys, not by any physical removal to a remote place or to another country, certainly not by any revolutionary behavior, but by living antithetically in the power of the Holy Spirit. He refuses to amuse himself with the world's pornography; he keeps himself from the television programs, movies, and books that entertain by means of violence; he will not allow the state's schools to teach his children the goodness of adultery, the lawfulness of abortion, and the necessity of the deifying of man; he sees to it that his thinking on sex, marriage, children, state, justice, killing, and bearing (rather than escaping) responsibility is formed exclusively by Holy Scripture; and he most assuredly leaves, indeed, flees, the church that is

unable unequivocally to condemn abortion, as well as the sexual unchastity for which abortion is the world's panacea.

In this separation is nothing of pride. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and plea-

tures . . ." (Titus 3:3). Resentment of our own children, when they come, is heart-abortion. Reformed Christians who now vehemently (and rightly) condemn abortion will soon be put to the test concerning the genuineness of their abhorrence of the destruction of the unborn. When the pill is marketed in North America that enables a woman to destroy the unborn child soon after conception in the privacy of her bathroom, without any trip to an abortion clinic, the Reformed young woman who has sinned and is sorry, but dreads being found out, and the Reformed couple who have convinced themselves that they cannot bear the responsibility of yet another child will be tested whether their hatred of abortion was rooted in the love of God.

Grace rescues us from this present, evil, aborting, heaven-storming, perishing world.

Only grace.

In its own way, abortion brings home to us Reformed Christians the reality of the grace of God to us and our children.

The world butchers its own offspring.

Reformed believers obediently have children in marriage; thankfully receive them; gladly rear them; and joyfully fellowship with them in the family.

The grace of God in the covenant with believers and their children makes the difference.

This is the difference. Either parents bury their children in the blood of Christ in baptism, or they choke them in their own and their mother's blood in abortion.

We have it so good in the covenant. The covenant means life for us and for our sons and daughters.

We must be thankful.

Outside the covenant, it is horrible: grisly death for unbelievers and their children.

Well may we pray the petition of Psalm 74:20: "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." □

— DJE

*The  
Reformed be-  
liever ...  
flees the church  
that is  
unable  
unequivocally  
to condemn  
abortion,  
as well as the  
sexual  
unchastity  
for which  
abortion  
is the world's  
panacea.*



## ■ The Church's Response to Homosexuality

Again, as it had at three previous synods, the Reformed Church in America (RCA) dealt with this issue at its General Synod which met in June at Central College in Pella, Iowa. Jeff Japinga reports that the RCA did, "... what no other mainline denomination has been able to do: find some common ground on one of the most divisive issues facing the North American church today — the issue of the church's response to homosexuality." In study papers and statements adopted by the synods of 1978, 1979, and 1990 the RCA took the position that while "the practicing homosexual lifestyle is contrary to Scripture," the church is "called to minister in love to persons of homosexual orientation." Obviously this position did not put the issue to rest in the RCA. This year's General Synod was presented with a recommendation from a task force formed to study the issue of homosexuality that called upon the local congregations, classes, and synods to "enter into a season of discovery and discernment guided by study, prayer, listening, and discussion" using a process outlined in the report.

After three hours of debate the synod's advisory committee voted ten to seven to advise synod not to approve the task force's recommendation. The majority of the advisory committee took the position that, "the time for talking about this issue is past, we know what we believe, and we cannot compromise those beliefs. We need simply to act on them." The

minority responded, "There must always be time for serious inquiry into the Word. We must always be open to new insights." Some saw the task force's recommendation as a "slippery slope that will lead to the adoption in the RCA of a secular gay rights agenda." Others regarded the recommendation as a means to "bridge chasms of misunderstanding and to share models of ministry with each other."

The synod did not adopt the task force's recommendation. Instead it unanimously approved a substitute which calls "the RCA members and churches to a process of repentance for failing to live up to its own pastoral statements on homosexuality, and to a process of prayer, learning, and growth in ministry on issues surrounding the question of homosexuality. Finally, it asks the church's Commission on Theology to develop a study guide and collect models for ministry that will help local congregations grapple with their own calls to minister in this area." Moments after approving this recommendation the delegates sang the doxology.

Japinga comments, "The recommendation still leaves hard work to be done. The theology commission must now prepare study and ministry resources for submission to next year's synod, no small task. And the euphoria of the moment always, in such a volatile issue, is tenuous at best. But for one shining day, the church came together on an issue that has been deeply divisive.... In doing that, synod practiced what it would ultimately preach: "that in discussing faithfully we can understand, and in our understanding we can act, according to the will of God."

How much discussion does it take? How much study does it take to determine how the church ought to respond to homosexuality? In the

light of the teaching of Holy Scripture in Genesis 18 and 19, Romans 1:18-32, I Corinthians 6:9-10 ("effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind" refer to homosexuals, sodomites), and I Timothy 1:10 this is exceedingly sinful activity. It is, in fact, the most vile manifestation of the reprobate mind possible. The passage in Romans 1 calls this "vile affections." How ought the church respond to this? The church must in the love of God command homosexuals to repent of and leave this sin. The church must point such repentant sinners to the cross of Jesus Christ by whose blood also this vile sin is washed away. Those who after being admonished refuse to repent of their homosexuality must be disciplined and excommunicated from the church of Christ.

The same synod refused to seat ten delegates representing Classis Muskegon and Classis North Grand Rapids because these classes had not fully paid their 1993 assessments. Christ Community Church, Spring Lake, Michigan (residing in Classis Muskegon) refused to pay its portion of the synodical assessments intended for the *Church Herald*, the RCA's church magazine; and Seventh Reformed Church in Grand Rapids refused to pay across a broad range of denominational assessments, citing philosophical and theological differences with the programs involved. The delegates from these classes were allowed the privilege of the floor on all issues. Thus, for the first time in the long history of the General Synod of the RCA, classis delegates were not seated because of non-payment of their assessments.

Just a brief comment on all this. As much as undersigned respects the congregation of Seventh Reformed Church in Grand Rapids for its conservative stance, refusing to pay syn-

---

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



odical assessments is not the way to protest denominational wrong doing. Nor will this free the congregation from its corporate responsibility with respect to RCA positions and actions. Seventh must protest, and if she cannot get the RCA back to its confessional moorings, she must leave the denomination.

*The Church Herald*

## ■ Women in Church Office

This was the most troubling issue at the last synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). By a vote of 95 to 89 the synod decided not to ratify the change in the Church Order of the CRC that would open all offices of the church to women. The synod approached the women's issue via two

sharply contrasting reports from its advisory committee. The majority report used biblical grounds to argue against ratifying the change, while the minority report cited past biblical studies and pastoral grounds to argue for ratification.

In related decisions the synod passed a motion to "urge all councils that have ordained women elders, evangelists, or ministers to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and ...not to ordain any additional women elders, evangelists, or ministers." Synod agreed that 1992's decision is still valid. That decision allows women "to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders." But the synod also appointed a committee to clarify how expounding dif-

fers from exhorting and preaching. All this took about three days of the synod's time. Leading women in the CRC served notice that they are not about to give up on the cause even if it takes years. "We're in for the long term," said Joan Flikkema, executive secretary of the Committee for Women in the CRC.

In our opinion it is only a matter of time before the CRC opens all offices of the church to women.

Meanwhile, yet another church voted to leave the denomination. By unanimous vote of its council and majority vote of its members the Second CRC of Toronto decided to leave the denomination as of June 15, 1994.

□

*The Banner  
Christian Renewal*

*Special Article*

*Rev. Charles Terpstra*

# A Critique of Modern Church-Growth Evangelism (4)

## IV. THE NATURE OF THE GROWTH

A final area in which the modern church growth movement is to be examined and critiqued is in the area of the nature of growth itself. As Guinness points out in his book, the term is capable of double meaning: qualitative growth, referring to spiritual depth and character; and quantitative growth, referring to size and numbers. The church needs both, he

says, but while they may be distinguished, they ought not to be separated.<sup>1</sup>

One of the problems is that in the teaching and practice of the church growth movement the two kinds of growth are often confused or separated. Barna, for example, states that there are two different sets of tactics to be used for spiritual growth and for numerical growth. For the former we must use biblical principles; for the

latter we must use marketing tactics.<sup>2</sup> But this is a false separation and a false way to approach true church growth. Both must and are achieved through the one means of biblical principles and preaching.

Another problem is that there is an over-emphasis on numerical growth in the new evangelism. Guinness quotes one megachurch pastor who said concerning his fast growing church: "I want the biggest church I can think of."<sup>3</sup> And Webster

*Rev. Terpstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.*

1. Os Guinness, *Dining With the Devil*, "The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity" (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 26.

2. Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 35.

3. *Ibid.*, 26.



points out that even though church growth leaders warn about getting caught up in the "numbers game," nevertheless they view a ten percent annual growth rate as one of the marks of success.<sup>4</sup> Further, in their seminars and conferences the magical number of one thousand members is held before church pastors as the first step in attaining to "megachurch" status, and a lot of pressure is put on pastors and leaders to grow in size and numbers. It should not take us aback then when we read that for some church growth experts "the No. 1 rule of church growth is that a church will never get bigger than its parking lot." We concur with the sentiments of Guinness when he replies, "Its parking lot? ...Above growth in faith? Before growth in the Word and Spirit? God forbid.... What truly matters after the accumulated wisdom of modernity has been put to good use is that the *real* character of the church remains to be demonstrated, the *real* growth of the church remains to be seen."<sup>5</sup>

Criticism must also be leveled at the common church growth movement's notion that the growth of the church is man-controlled and man-achieved. This is evident from the theology of the movement, which is predominantly Arminian. It teaches the sovereignty of man, not the sovereignty of God, in salvation; and therefore it promotes the ability of man to control and bring about church growth through human means and methods. Why else would this new evangelism pay such meticulous attention to methodology and technology and marketing, and all the rest? J.I. Packer warned about this very thing over thirty years ago:

If we forget that it is God's Prerogative to give results when the gospel is preached, we shall start to think that it is our responsibility to secure them. And if we forget that only God can

give faith, we shall start to think that the making of converts depends, in the last analysis, not on God, but on us, and that the decisive factor is the way in which we evangelize. And this line of thought, consistently followed through, will lead us far astray.<sup>6</sup>

I am afraid that Packer's warning has gone forgotten in today's church world. From a certain point of view this should not come as a surprise, not only because of the natural pride of man, but also because historically in this country this theology and these "new measures" were advanced long ago already. It was Charles Finney, the 19th-century evangelist, who first introduced them during the religious revivals of his time. Rejecting the Calvinism of his day, along with the "old" way of carrying out evangelism, Finney sought to create conversions through the use of emotional preaching, the "anxious seat," and the "decision altar," since he believed salvation was a matter of the sinner's free will. As John MacArthur has written, "Finney's approach to ministry thus foreshadowed and laid the foundation for modern pragmatism. His teaching and methods have colored much of American evangelism for the past century and a half. He could rightly be called the father of evangelical pragmatism. The modern market-driven ministry is simply the culmination of the movement Finney began."<sup>7</sup>

How then must we perceive and work toward the growth of the church? We must ever keep in mind the basics of our Reformed faith and practice, that it is God who is sovereign in the work of salvation and that it is God therefore who causes the

church to grow, both spiritually and numerically. Christ said that He would build His church, and He does that through the means of the Word preached and taught (Matt. 16:18; 28:19,20). Acts 2:47 states that it is the Lord who adds to the church daily such as should be saved. That takes place through the means of the preaching and fellowship and worship of the church, and that is what we must be busy doing then. In I Corinthians 3:6,7 Paul stated that he had planted and Apollos had watered, but that it was God who gave the increase. "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." That too we must remember.

The words of Os Guinness are appropriate as we conclude this subject:

If Jesus Christ is the head of the church and hence the source and goal of its entire life, true growth is only possible in obedience to him. Conversely, if the church becomes detached from Jesus Christ and his word, it cannot truly grow however active and successful it may seem to be.... The authentic movements in the church are those that are set in motion by God's decisive authority, especially the decisive authority of grace.<sup>8</sup>

May the Lord continue to set us in motion by the power of His grace unto the gathering and upbuilding of His church. And may we labor in obedience to Him by sticking to and laboring in the preaching of the holy gospel of Jesus Christ, both on the mission field and in the established congregation. Only in that way can we expect His blessing. "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1). □

6. J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1961), 27.

7. John F. MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993), 159. Cf. also his appendix on this subject, 227-235.

8. Guinness, *Dining With the Devil*, 39.

4. Ibid., 34.

5. Guinness, *Dining With the Devil*, 38-39.



# More Than Logic

*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

John 3:3

God is a logical God. He cannot lie (Numbers 23:19); and therefore He cannot deny or contradict Himself, which is the foundation for the basic principle underlying all true logic. And because of it, God's revelation to us, the Bible, can be relied upon and understood. We can exegete it, which is to say, we can glean from it truths which can be received with certainty, knowing that what God says at one point, He will not contradict at another. This provides the basic guideline by which a true interpretation of Scripture can be established, and distinguished from that which is false.

The rule goes in effect like this: an individual passage of Scripture is interpreted by all of the rest of Scripture — which is to say, an interpretation of a particular passage of the Bible can be accepted as true only when it is in harmony with, and seen in the light of, all of the rest of the Scriptures. This rule is implicit in what Jesus said in John 10:35, "The scripture cannot be broken." With this rule in hand the church of God has been able to elicit from the Bible those basic doctrines which form the foundation of the

Christian faith, and which we now find set forth in the historic creeds of Christianity. God is a logical God; and upon this fact the church of God is built.

But this does not mean that with nothing more than logic one can arrive at truth, either from the Bible or anywhere else. It simply is not so, and for a number of reasons.

First of all, there are limits to what God has seen well to reveal to us; He has not told us everything. There is much which God has revealed; but there are also many other things which He has not. The result is that there are limits beyond which all the efforts of man cannot pass. It is not for us to be able to figure out what God has not said.

We have a striking example of this with Moses on Mt. Sinai, following Israel's great sin. Moses was struggling with a problem; how could God both insist that this sin of Israel had to be punished (Ex. 32:33), and at the same time promise to send His angel to lead them into the promised land (32:34)? And so it was finally, after struggling back and forth with this problem, that Moses exclaimed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (33:18) — to which the Lord replied, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (33:20). God would not, and could not, reveal to Moses everything about himself and his will; but this much He would do: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will

show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (33:19). In effect, God was saying that He would reveal to Moses as much as Moses was able to receive, which in this instance was the fact of election, that God shows mercy to whom He has chosen to do so. With this Moses had to be satisfied, even though there was much more he might wish to know — even as to this day there are many questions about election to which we are given no answers either, such as, who are the elect, and why God has chosen some and not others, or how can sin have come to be without God being its author. The fact of these things He has told us; but the details He has not made known.

This is true in other areas as well. God is God; and we are but creatures. God is infinite, with a complete knowledge of all things; while we are creatures who cannot go beyond the limits within which He created us. It is something that every good theologian must recognize. We may and should deal with what God has revealed, but beyond that we should not seek to tread. We should deal with what is given in an orderly and systematic way (I Cor. 14:40); but we will never be able to fill in all the gaps, and there will always remain questions to which we are given no answers. We must use what God has given, and with that we must stop.

There is more. God has made us complex organisms, not just physically, but also spiritually; and our intellect is only part of that. Man has been given not just a mind with which to think, but also a heart to contain his deepest commitments of love, and a

*Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.*



will to choose the way in which he will live. All of these take part in whatever one comes to understand and believe; and, when one rejects God's truths, he does it, not just with his mind, but with his whole being. When one does not believe, it is not just a lack of understanding; it is because with the heart one does not want it, and with his will he refuses to do what it requires. Man does not understand what God has revealed because he does not want the conclusions to which it leads. It is not just the mind; with his whole being he rejects what God has said.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have a rather interesting reflection on this by Rev. Hoeksema, made in a series of sermons on the first chapter of Romans during the mid-thirties (transcribed by Mr. Martin Swart). It had to do with the gross sins described at the end of the chapter, such abhorrent things as sexual perversion and homosexuality, to say nothing of "unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness," etc. Of these he observed, that they are not just sins in themselves (although they certainly are that), they are the judgments of God. It is not that people, when they started down this way of transgression, intended to become perverts, homosexuals, and such like. For the most part they would have stood aghast at the suggestion that this should be their end. It is simply that when they left the Word of God — not wanting "to retain God in their knowledge" — the result was that "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). It is the judgment of God which has brought them (as with much of the society in which we now live) to this loathsome end; and when still they do not repent, but with all kinds of rationalized arguments seek to excuse what they do and escape the consequences, they only thrust themselves on toward that most terrible consequence of all, eternity in hell.

\* \* \* \* \*

Simple reasoning will never

change this; only one thing can. A person may try all the reasoning in the world, and all kinds of rhetorical gimmicks as well — such as telling everyone that God loves them, and really would like to save them, as contrary to Scripture as this may be — but it will never change a soul. Only God can do that, as Ezekiel 11:19 says, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Without that, no one will ever come to the truth.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is this that makes it so ironical that through the years Rev. Hoeksema has so often been accused of Rationalism. In actuality it is hard to imagine anyone farther removed from that.

But let him answer for himself, as he dealt with the subject in a sermon about the men on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24:25-27 (transcribed from a tape).

They were men who wanted to understand. They were men who must understand, not like Rationalists, but like believers. A Rationalist (which we are sometimes accused of being, very mistakenly and very foolishly) is one who wants to follow his reason, who does not want to believe except that which he understands by his own logical reason. Reason, understanding, is for him the basis of what he believes. That was not the case with these men. They were no Rationalists. The believer is characterized by this. He also must understand. We must understand. Of course. But our understanding is not based on our own logic, on our own reason, but is based on the revelation of God in Christ Jesus in the Scriptures. That is the difference. As soon as you assume that position you are always safe. You can talk as much as you want. You can reason as much as you want. You can want to understand as much as you want — if only your reasoning and your understanding is based on the revelation of God in Holy Writ.

Hoeksema's teachings — if his

critics would only take time to study them out — always presupposed the gift of faith. He never questioned but that the reasoning of the human mind, apart from the special operation of the Holy Spirit, can only come to naught. The Spirit of God must first open the mind and heart to receive what God has made known, as Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Then, and only then, can one's reason and understanding step in as a necessary part of true faith. Faith is a certain knowledge (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7); and there can be no knowledge without reason and understanding. That leaves no room for contradictions, either in reality or appearance, for the mind cannot grasp that which is contradictory. And God in His revelation cannot contradict Himself; for God cannot lie.

It was because of this that the doctrine of election was always so important to Hoeksema. It was not merely a matter of filling out his favorite theological paradigm; he understood the limitations of human thought full well, and had no desire to answer questions beyond that which God has made known. It was rather because he, as a pastor, had worked with many souls; and, as an exegete, had delved deeply into God's Word. To do this was for him a privilege which he relished to the end; but always in the awareness that it could be done only if the Spirit gave the ability to perceive. And so was his privilege to teach and expound the Word; but always in the realization that it would be received only by those with whom God had provided hearing ears. Human effort cannot bring this to be; only the Spirit of God can, as the Scriptures say, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

This is no Rationalism. *Soli Gratia*; it is pure grace! □



# Worthy of Double Honor

## Lesson 16

*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward.*

I Timothy 5:17, 18

Compare the following Scripture references: Philippians 2:29; Acts 28:10; Deuteronomy 28:29; I Corinthians 9:9; Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14; Matthew 10:10.

Some observations on the text and context:

1. It might seem that Paul is digressing from the central theme of chapters 4 and 5. However, when we look closely at our text here we will notice that he is still speaking of how the children of God ought to conduct themselves in the house of God. In the former chapter Paul exhorts Timothy how he ought to conduct himself toward those of different gender and age levels. Next, Paul speaks of the honor which children and grandchildren should show especially toward their widowed mother/grandmother. It is a horrible sin to fail to provide for such needy parents. Providing for them is an exercise in godliness.

2. In verses 17, 18 the central theme is still the matter of practical godliness in giving due honor to the "elders" in the church of God. Here every member in the church is called

by God to give "double honor." He will need to inquire into the scope and depth of this required honor. Here the Bible itself has something to say about the implication of the term "double." In order to stimulate your interest, dear reader, may I request you to read I Thessalonians 5:12, 13. I believe that in these verses is the bottom-line for what is "good and acceptable before God." Such should be the constant conduct of those who confess to be new creatures, those who glory in the cross of Christ. Read Galatians 6:14-16.

### The Proper Esteem and Honor Due to the Elders in the Church of God

Paul is here speaking of those men who desired a good work as being under-shepherds of the sheep and of the lambs of Jesus in the church. Hence, he is not speaking merely of elderly men (I Tim. 5:1), but of elders in the sense of office-bearers, as these were set before us in chapter 3:1-5.

Paul makes mention of twofold elders: the ministers of the Word who preach and teach, and the elders who rule well in the church. We have noticed this when we wrote on chapter 3. Elders are men who must be blameless, but are not perfect. The same is true of fathers and mothers. It must be affirmed of all ministers and elders in the church that they have not yet attained to the ethical perfection of the law of Christ (Phil. 3:12).

Notwithstanding, every member, young or old, male or female, is called of God to give honor to these "elders" of Christ. Those whom the text calls

elders who do not labor in the Word and doctrine are worthy of honor and respect. This is our calling because their "office" is sanctified to be a "good work," adapted perfectly for the perfecting of the saints. He that despises the ministers and elders in the church despises Christ in so doing. Now the text tells us that they who "labor" in the Word and doctrine are to be accounted by the members in the church to be worthy of "double" honor. The term is also employed for terrible and righteous judgment. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double" (Rev. 18:6). It was Christ at Calvary who hath so borne the wrath of God that we might receive *double* for all our sins (cf. Is. 40:2).

It is on that high and exalted plateau that our text places us when we are enjoined to give *double* honor to those whom we are to count worthy of double honor! Just read I Thessalonians 5:12, 13. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." Well may every Christian family write these words in the palms of their hands. Read also Hebrews 13:17. Think of it: these are they who labor and who "watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." How highly should we esteem the ministers and the el-

*Rev. Lubbers is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



ders? As much as we love our own soul's salvation! How these ministers must strive to show themselves approved of God, workmen who rightly divide the word of truth, ever striving to teach sound doctrine which is health, joy, and peace to our souls.

\* \* \* \* \*

The workmen in God's church are worthy of their reward. The reward due to faithful workmen is a reward which is peculiarly fitting and becoming. Ministers, strictly speaking, are not paid a salary. The amount of the "salary" is, when all things are equal, a reward. Really it is an "honorarium." Did not Jesus, in Matthew 10:10, speak of His disciples as being "workmen" who are worthy of their food? Truly, these workmen are not some cheap beggars, but they are preachers of the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom which is not of this earth (John 18:36, 37). Are these workmen not they whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains, saying to poor sinners "behold your God" (Is. 52:7)? Must these "workers" in the temple of God not eat from the altar as did the priests and the Levites in the Old Testament (Num. 18:20-31)? And hear Paul arguing from the Scriptures in I Corinthians 9:1-14. Just one brief quotation is in order: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14).

We do well to take note. Let these words sink deep into our hearts!

Notice the proof which Paul cites from the Scriptures. "For it is written (present tense) in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." Does God take care also of oxen? Does the ox also have a reward for his work on the earthly level? Yes, now especially for the servants who labor in His vineyard.

Paul is reasoning from the lesser to the greater, from the lower to the higher. Yes, from the analogy of God's righteous and kind dealing with oxen, to His dealing with those who labor in the Word and doctrine. Look at this lowly ox. Is this not the worthy, laboring domestic animal whose toil

and labor contributes so very largely for the bread for the table of the Israelites as they dwell in the holy land? He is God's chosen and created clean animal. He never contributes as a male animal to the increase of the number of the herd. Was he not emasculated? His place in the herd is no more. But he is faithful year in and year out to pull the plow that tills the soil in preparation to receive the seed that is sown. Then comes the wheat, the corn, the barley. It is grain which must be trodden by the ox on the threshing-floor. It was a time of feasting in the land. Yes, the harvest was the Lord's reward to him who sowed the grain. The farmer was worthy of that reward, was he not? But what about the ox who pulled the plow and harrow? Does the ox also have a reward of God? Yes, his reward is that there is fodder for him in a well-filled barn. But must the ox not feast also while he toils in the heat of the summer day? Should he be muzzled, lest he reach down and munch a bit of the new harvest in the land? Let us remember that the word which obtained for Jesus' disciples as they labored in the harvest of Christ on the higher level, obtains equally for the brute beast (Deut. 25:4; 24:14). And when the inspired writer asks, "Does not the Scripture say?" it is tantamount to asking, "Does not God say?"

If the great, high, and lofty God says, ever speaks, these words, are not we ever to have our ears attuned to these words? *Sapienti Sat* (To the wise, sufficient)!

These appointed brethren who labor, who care for our souls as they who must give account, shall we not count them worthy of honor far beyond all that we can ask or think? Yes, read carefully I Thessalonians 5:12, 13. And be at peace among yourselves!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Against an elder receive not an accusation (Gr. kateegorian), but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prefer-*

*ring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*

In this quoted passage Timothy is most solemnly enjoined that he, as well as all who shall need to conduct a hearing and trial in the church, the very house where God dwells with His people, is never to allow any office-bearer in the church to be tried except upon the testimony of two or three witnesses.

We will need to take a close and careful look at the text.

The first matter to consider is that the "accusation" is a formal, legal request presented in a "court." In the New Testament the Greek term *kateegoria* (see our English word "categorically," which refers to the logical category) nearly always refers to a judicial sense. Compare: Matthew 3:3 (Matt. 12:10; Luke 6:7); Matthew 15:3, 4; Matthew 27:12; Luke 23:2; John 5:45; Acts 22:30; 24:2, 8, 13, 19; and Revelation 12:20.

When anyone appears before the church judiciary with a weighty accusation, but he has no "witness" to corroborate his accusation, he must be told categorically that the body-politic cannot, will not, and may not even hear his "accusation." For he has entered the court of the representative of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels. The place where the accuser stands is holy ground. The Greek text indicates that the "Lord Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Christ at God's right hand, is this very God. Here is God manifest in the flesh, received up in glory (I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:4). He is present with all His holy angels. Where two or three men are gathered together in Christ's name, He is in the midst of them.

Did Paul not have such power in the church? See I Corinthians 5:1-5 and also I Timothy 1:20, as well as Acts 5:1-11.

Now, what is the maxim here? It is that nothing may be transacted by those who are appointed of Christ to judge in an unfair and unrighteous way! Two things must be clearly verified. 1) Is there ground for this "accusation" which is brought by the



accuser? 2) Is there fact and truthfulness in the accusation? A hearing must be had where the accuser meets face to face with the accused "elder." And this matter of factuality cannot be decided upon the testimony of one man (Deut. 20:15; Num. 35:30; Matt. 18:16; John 8:13-18; John 5:25-38). If Jesus, the eternal Son of God, very God in the flesh, placed Himself under this rule concerning the testimony of the demand of "two or three witnesses," would He not demand that in His church no accusation should ever be taken seriously when the required "witnesses" are lacking?

And if a trial is to begin in the Name of the Lord, then it is of paramount importance that these witnesses have actually seen or heard with their own eyes and ears. In no court may a witness aver what he has "heard" others say. (Read I Corinthians 15:5-10.)

Two things are an absolute must on the part of those who must hear the evidence and form their united judgment: 1) They may not make a subjective pre-judgment. 2) They may in their judgment not have partiality. Back of prejudiced judges is the deep error of respect for persons. They must make a righteous judgment (Prov. 21:27-31; 11:1; Ex. 20:16; Lord's Day 43, Q. and A. 112. [Notice the

proof texts!]).

### Some Questions and Suggestions to consider

1. In I Timothy 5:22 we read, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."

Does the expression, "laying on of hands," refer to the official installation of men into the office of elder here? Compare chapter 4:14. See also Acts 6:6.

2. How could Timothy conceivably be a "partaker of other men's sin" if he laid his hands on them to install them into office? What is the strong motivation for the exhortation, "keep thyself pure"? Does this mean that Timothy was responsible before God to see that only those who were fit for the office would receive this official approval? Was it not very important that only those who are spoken of in I Timothy 3:2-7 receive the official approval of Christ through Timothy? Were only such men fit to labor in the house of God? (Confer II Timothy 2:19-21.)

3. Is there an important Scriptural nuance in Paul's using such an expression as "keep thyself pure"? How does an officebearer perform this? Does Paul not assume that Timothy had a clean record in regard to

placing men in offices in the church? He did not need to make himself "pure" in this regard, did he? Did this require a certain vigilance and prayerful watchfulness to hew to the divine rules? Did you notice the meaning of the verb: to *watch*, to *keep*, to *guard*? Biblical scholars tell us that the term *agnos* originally, in classic Greek, meant: that which awakens religious awe. In civic life the term is a term of honor denoting the blameless discharge of office. Timothy and all officebearers in the church disgrace themselves if they stoop to the evil practice of disregarding the rule to lay hands suddenly, thoughtlessly, on no man.

4. Is the physical well-being and health of ministers and elders of great importance for the ardent labors of their respective office, as they are described in I Timothy 3:1ff.? It seems that Timothy was ailing often. He had "often infirmities." It seems that he rather scrupulously avoided drinking any wine. He was a teetotaler in effect. Such is the implication of the Greek term *hudropotei*. Paul exhorts him to use a little medical- tonic for that "preacher-stomach." (For evil use of wine, which is a mocker, read Proverbs 20:1; Genesis 9:21; 19:32, 33. For good use in God's kingdom see John 2:3-10.) □

## Earth and Heaven

Here bliss is short, imperfect, insecure;  
But total, absolute, and perfect there.  
Here, time's a moment, short our happiest state,  
There, infinite duration is our date.  
Here, Satan tempts, and troubles e'en the best;  
There, Satan's power extends not to the blest.  
In a weak, simple body, here I dwell;  
But there I drop this frail and sickly shell.  
Here, my best thoughts are stained with guilt and fear;  
But love and pardon shall be perfect there.  
Here, my best duties are defiled with sin;  
There, all is ease without and peace within.  
Here, feeble faith supplies my only light;  
There, faith and hope are swallowed up in sight.  
Here, love of self my fairest works destroys;  
There, love of God shall perfect all my joys.

Here, things, as in a glass, are darkly shown;  
There, I shall know as clearly as I am known.  
Frail are the fairest flowers which bloom below;  
There, freshest palms on roots immortal grow.  
Here, wants and cares perplex my anxious mind;  
But spirits there a calm fruition find.  
The soul on earth is an immortal guest,  
Condemned to starve at an unreal feast:  
A spark, which upwards tends by force;  
A stream, diverted from its parent source;  
A drop, dis severed from the boundless sea;  
A moment, parted from eternity;  
A pilgrim, panting for the rest to come;  
An exile, anxious for his native home.

The Standard Bearer  
March 15, 1933



## Chapter 3

# The First Three Days of Creation (cont.)

*And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.*

*And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1:9, 10

### God's Creation of the Earth and the Seas

When a man builds for himself a house (and all man's work is, after all, but a very faint reflection of the work of his Creator), he raises the main structure first. He lays the foundation. He raises the framework and the walls. He covers the structure with a roof. And only when he has completed that main structure does he direct his attention to the interior details of it and proceed to the finishing and furnishing of those elements that made for comfort and service and beauty.

This comparison may be applied to the divine work of creation. In God's work of creation the main structure of the universe is first. In the beginning God created the so-called chaos, the raw material of the heavens and the earth that was without form and void. Then He created the light, which is so indispensable for all the further work of creation and for

the existence of the physical world. On the second day the firmament was created, not as a solid dome, but as the deep ocean in which all the bodies of heaven, together with the earth, are sustained, kept separate, and move.

On the third day, the work of creation included, first of all, the completion of that main structure of the universe, particularly the structure of the earth itself, which was designed to be the habitation of man as the image-bearer and covenant friend of God. Of this we read in Genesis 1:9, 10: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good."

In these few words is depicted for us another of those uniquely divine works which defy all human comprehension and which could never be discovered and known through human investigation. That there are seas we know; and that there is the dry land we can observe. But that the dry land and the seas came into existence and that they constitute the fixed and basic order of the universe as far as the earth is concerned — that is a work of God's almighty power. That is a work, once and for all wrought, which is beyond man's probing. He may climb the heights of the mountains. He may explore the continents, and map their surfaces. He may investigate and analyze the earth's material. He may make use of the earth's soil and productivity. He

may burrow into the earth and bring forth its resources of diamonds and gold and silver, of iron and copper and the "black gold" of petroleum. In his scientific curiosity he may even seek to drill into what he calls the earth's mantle, and he may dream of reaching the earth's molten core. He may fly upon the face of the firmament. He may seek for the source of the winds which constantly blow upon the earth's surface, and he may check their currents. He may sail upon the surface of the seas, and use them for his commerce. He may even plow through the depths of the seas to an extent, and he may probe the mighty deep. He may reckon with the sweep of its tides, and he may chart its shoals and map its pathways. But in all these things he observes and operates with that which is, which was once fixed and finished. And if he would know how and when the earth and its fullness, with its dry land and seas, with all its resources and powers, with its riches and productivity, with all its tremendous energies but also stability, came into existence, there is but one answer. It is the answer of Him who made all these things, the answer of the Creator, who formed them all before there was even a man to witness them, the answer of revelation, simple and yet profoundly mysterious: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so."

With that will compare no elaborate and cunningly devised theory of things that are seen being made of

---

*The late Homer Hoeksema was professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*



things which do appear, or evolving from them in the course of millions of years. Elaborate theory upon elaborate theory will never suffice to explain either the reality of the earth or the work which produced it. And millions of years will never enable man to reach beyond things that are seen. There is but one "explanation," and it, while perfectly reasonable, is as far beyond our comprehension as the Creator is above the creature. That "explanation" is God, the incomparable Creator, and His omnipotent will. He Himself tells us of His own work in His own Word. And by faith we understand that the world, including the earth and the seas, was framed by the Word of God.

How frequently Scripture calls upon God's people to contemplate this particular wonder-work of the Creator.

In question after searching question we are reminded of this in Job 38:4ff.:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

Of the earth and its fullness the psalmist in Psalm 24 declares that Jehovah is the possessor, "For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods" (vv. 1, 2). In Psalm 33 we are reminded: "He gathereth

the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses." Psalm 90 speaks of the bringing forth of the mountains and the

formation of the earth, in order to teach us that God is before them, even from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 90:2). Psalm 104 connects this wonder-work with God's greatness and honor and majesty: "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment:

the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth" (Ps. 104:5-9). Psalm 95 teaches us: "In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Graphically Proverbs 8 speaks of the eternal Wisdom by way of comparison with these wonder-works of God's creation: "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world ... when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him..." (Prov. 8:24-30).

Scripture generally, therefore, impresses us with the tremendous character of this work of God.

To gain some degree of insight into what took place in this creative

work of the third day we must remind ourselves that we must not think of the earth merely in its present state, except that prior to the third day its entire surface was covered with water. We must rather conceive of the earth as in its chaotic, unformed state, as it was created in the beginning, as the seething energies implied in the creation of light were pent up in it, and as it belonged to what are called the waters below the firmament, but as yet unordered and unstructured.

Although man today actually knows very little in detail about the bowels of the earth, and although he can learn little or nothing by direct observation concerning its deep interior, we are told that the ball, or sphere, called the earth is a well-ordered structure. From its outer surface to its center is said to be a little over 3,900 miles. Of this, the top 20 to 25 miles comprises the crust, or upper layer, about which man can learn something by direct observation. Below this is the so-called mantle, said to extend to a depth of some 1,800 miles, in which, it is claimed, deep-focus earthquakes originate. Below this is what is called the core, to a depth of more than 2,100 miles. We are also told that the density of the materials of the earth increases with the depth. Moreover, as one bores into the earth's depths, the temperature increases to the point of a claimed 2,500 degrees Celsius in the core, where, obviously, all must be in a molten state.

But supposing that the above description is generally accurate, we must remember that, apart from any radical changes which may have been accomplished through the Flood, all this became reality on the third day. Prior to that creative act of the third day all those elements which now constitute the well-ordered structure of the earth and of the dry land and the seas were in a chaotic, unformed state. The Almighty Creator operated by His Word and Spirit in the bowels of the earth in such a way that the heavier materials suddenly gravitated toward the earth's center, while the lighter materials rose to the surface, both the solid materials to form

*Elaborate theory upon elaborate theory will never suffice to explain either the reality of the earth or the work which produced it.*



the dry land, and the water, with its dissolved materials, to form the seas. In part, the crust of the earth was raised to form the dry land with its hills and dales, its mountains and valleys, its productive soil and fertile plains, its craggy precipices and granite rocks. At the same time, in part, that crust of the earth was depressed to form great basins into which billions of tons of water were gathered together into one place.

All this took place simply and directly by the Word of God. He spake: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast. In one mighty convulsion, as it were, all the well-ordered structure of our earth, with its dry land and seas, was brought into being. "And it was so," the text tells us. There stood the earth — not in need of development and evolution — but ready-made, as the fit habitation for the living creatures.

What puny little man, who was not even present, may say that this could not be?

Indeed, man walks on God's earth every day and in all his existence reckons with its dependable so-called natural laws. He traverses the seas, and he flies upon the face of the firmament. He even probes the depths of that earth, and discovers its mighty, pent-up increased energies. He also beholds on a minor scale that the Lord God still through a single convulsive earthquake may cause an entire island to be swallowed up by the sea, or may bring a new island rising out of the ocean's depths.

But because he does not believe, because he does not believe either that our God will destroy this present earth, and that He can and will make a new heavens and earth in the day of

our Lord Jesus Christ, he also has the arrogance to assert that the infinite God could not have wrought this work by creative fiat.

And how else, pray, would the Lord instruct us concerning this mighty and mysterious work of His, a work which defies all human imagination and description, than to tell us, as He does, simply and directly, "And God said ... and it was so"?

Thus it was, and thus we who believe in the Almighty Creator and Redeemer accept it.

We do so by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are also taught that this was not God's final work, nor the final realization of His purpose with respect to the earth.

For while God indeed saw, as the text tells us, that this first earth was good, that is, fit to serve the living creatures about to be created, He had in mind some better thing for His people in Christ Jesus. And also with a view to that ultimate purpose the earth as it was first created was good, that is, adapted to serve that purpose.

The dry land created on the third day was to have a history and a final consummation.

It is not at all impossible, we believe, on the basis of the Scriptural data in Genesis and in II Peter 3, that, in the first place, the continents as we know them today were not yet formed on the third day. The waters were gathered into one place, and there was possibly only one whole piece of dry land, which was also not as large, seeing that there was no need as yet for a big home for a small family. This would be in harmony with the fact that the apostle Peter tells us that the earth was "standing

in the water and out of the water." This would also tend to explain the fact that there was neither rain nor rainbow before the Flood, and that the Lord God watered the face of the

ground by means of a mist. This would also explain that the pre-diluvian unbelievers were such big fools: for they stood in the midst of the water and said that there would be no flood!

In whatever way all these details must be understood, we are instructed by Scripture that great changes have taken place in the earth. It has had a history. One of those great changes took place at the time of the fall and the curse. But Scripture also teaches us that the earth was stable up to the time of the Flood. It is not our purpose at this time to enter into detail with respect to that universal and catastrophic Deluge. We would only call attention to the fact that Scripture teaches us that through the opening of the windows of heaven and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep such a tremendous and catastrophic judgment was wrought that the apostle Peter characterizes that Flood as the end of the world, so that he makes distinction between the world that now is and the world that then was. The Flood, however, was only a type of the final end. After the Flood the basic structure of things must remain until the day of Christ, the day that shall be characterized by the complete breakup of the physical universe. For God has promised, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." That will be the final end. For that word, "yet once more," according to Hebrews 12:27, signifies "the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

This earth, therefore, is not the last. With all its relative stability, it is not destined to endure. The present earth shall pass away, along with the present heavens. In principle, this has already been accomplished. Of this the very rending of the rocks and the earthquake at the time of our Lord's death testify. Every earthquake that ever takes place is but a sign and a reminder that, after all, this present earth is not stable but shall pass away, in order to make room for the new creation. □

*How else  
would the Lord  
instruct us  
concerning  
this mighty and  
mysterious  
work of His,...  
than to tell us,  
as He does,  
simply  
and directly,  
"And God said  
... and it was  
so"?*



## 4. Abounding Lawlessness

No one can possibly fail to see the lawlessness that pervades our society from the highest levels of government to the lowliest slum-dwellers in the great cities. Lawlessness screams out at us in every news report. It shakes the very foundation of the state when it is exposed in the lives of the heads of government. It is the reason why none of us dares walk the city streets after dark and why many tremble behind locked doors and barred windows throughout the night.

We see lawlessness, but do we understand?

Jesus foretold this lawlessness in Matthew 24 as one of the signs of His coming and the end of the world. In verses 12 and 13, He said: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." These verses are part of Jesus' answer to His disciples' question in verse 3: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" They are connected with verse 11 which speaks of the rising of false prophets who shall deceive many people. The number of the faithful people of God will become smaller and smaller at the end. One reason for this will be the deception of many by false prophets. Another reason will be the abounding of iniquity which causes the love of many to become cold. "Iniquity" is actually the word that means "lawlessness." Jesus told His disciples — and us — that a sign of the end would be abounding lawlessness, the very

thing we see today, not only in our own country but also in all the world.

This characterizing of the last days as a time of lawlessness is found elsewhere in Scripture. Paul emphasized the lawlessness of the last days in II Thessalonians 2, the chapter on the arising of the Antichrist — a chapter, incidentally, that we will come back to later on in this series on the doctrine of the last things, when we consider Antichrist and his kingdom. In verse 3, Paul called the Antichrist "that man of sin." The word "sin," here, is the same word that occurs in Matthew 24:12 and is there translated "iniquity" — the word "lawlessness." Verse 7 speaks of a "mystery of iniquity" that has been working in the world to produce Antichrist all through history and that will finally be successful. Again, "iniquity" is literally "lawlessness." Verse 8 calls the Antichrist "that Wicked (one)." Once more, the word used to describe Antichrist is the word "lawless." Antichrist will be spawned by lawlessness, and he and his world-kingdom will be the epitome of lawlessness.

The lawlessness of the last days is also taught when Scripture compares them with the days just before the Flood in the time of Noah. Jesus made this comparison in verse 37 of Matthew 24: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Genesis 6 describes the world in the days of Noah: "the wickedness of man was great in the earth..., the earth also was corrupt

before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Luke 17:28-30 compares the world of the last days with the Old Testament city of Sodom at the time God destroyed it with fire and brimstone — a comparison of special significance today, when the world shamelessly practices the same vile sin for which Sodom was notorious and to which it gave its name, homosexuality, or sodomy.

Lawlessness will abound at the end, say the Scriptures. Lawlessness is a life of disobedience to the law of God, but disobedience of a special kind: the deliberate trampling upon God's law. A lawless man is not someone who is ignorant of the law, or even someone who breaks the law whose authority he acknowledges. But he is a man who holds the law of God in contempt. He "owns" no law. He has made up his mind to do as he pleases, to do "his own thing," as the modern jargon puts it. The lawless man, or woman, openly practices the very thing which the law of God forbids — as normal, acceptable, right behavior!

Such a time is the present day, and such a society is our society — a lawless time and a lawless society. The government itself, God's servant to rule by law, becomes guilty of lawlessness. No, I do not now refer to the fact that the politicians occupy their offices for the sake of their own wealth, their own fame, and their own power, which is really no new thing under the sun. But I am speaking of the fact that the state solemnly legalizes the



murder of unborn children in its abortion-statutes, while at the same time prohibiting by law the execution of murderers. Those concerning whom God says, "Thou shalt not kill," the state murders. Those of whom God says, "Punish with death," the state saves alive, and often sets free for more mayhem and murder among the citizenry. The state is showing its radical lawlessness in the view it takes of its function in society. The duty of government is to punish evildoers and protect and reward those who do well, and thus to maintain order in society. We now see the state abandoning this, its fundamental task (with ruinous consequences for the country), and intruding itself into areas of the life of its citizens where it has no business whatever.

Lawlessness also characterizes the behavior of the people. They despise authority: children, that of their parents; wives, that of their husbands; employees, that of their employers; citizens, that of their rulers. It is not only that they disobey their superiors in practice, but that they deny that they have any superiors to whom honor and obedience are due!

The institution of marriage is overturned. Fornication, which has always been practiced, now becomes ordinary, acceptable behavior, a way of life so that parents and schools distribute birth-control pills to the girls and condoms to the boys. Putting away one's wife, or husband, and taking someone else's mate is not only legalized, but also is so prevalent that it is now taken for granted. Lust is deified and worshiped in the movies and television programs, in the books and magazines, in advertising and selling. Sexual filthiness, that is to say, is flaunted.

The tide of lawlessness rolls over the whole world.

Lawlessness abounds today. This is what Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Lawlessness, or iniquity, has always been present in the world. It rooted itself in the human race when Adam deliberately set aside God's

command, "Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree," and ate of the forbidden fruit. Down through history, sin has been developing. The root of Adam's transgression has been sprouting into a giant tree, producing luxuriant foliage and finally bearing all manner of fruit that is now ripening in the end of the ages in the entire human race.

Sin's development to the extreme of abounding lawlessness is necessary for the coming of the end. The end cannot come until there has been this full development. For the end will be judgment, *final* judgment, of the wicked world, and God in His justice will pour out this judgment only when sin is fully manifested as sin, that is, when the world has filled its cup of iniquity.

But Jesus was concerned about the effect of lawlessness on the churches, on those who profess to be God's people in the world. He had no abstract interest in the crime rate, nor was He concerned about the ungodly world. But He said, "because lawlessness shall abound, *the love of many shall wax cold.*" Now, it is only people in the churches who have love that can wax cold; the unbelieving world never had any love. The effect of abounding iniquity, therefore, is going to be more forsaking of the church and the church's God by those who once professed allegiance to her and to her God.

There will be *many* whose love waxes cold on account of iniquity. Jesus gives us a radically different view of the state of affairs at the end from that which looks for the world to become better and for the size of the church to be swelled through the conversion of multitudes and even whole nations. Not so! The world is ever the world, going on from bad to worse, exhausting the resources of sin. And the church becomes smaller and smaller. *Many* will be deceived by false doctrine;

*many* will be offended because of persecution; *many* will have their love wax cold because of iniquity.

The love that the text speaks of is the love of a man for God, love for Jesus Christ, love for the gospel of the Scriptures, love for the church. This love is "blown cold" by iniquity. This literally is what Jesus said: "The love of many shall be *blown cold* by abounding iniquity." He did not say that because people's love becomes cold, there will be abounding iniquity, but that the iniquity cools off people's love. In the last days, an icy wind blows through the churches, cooling the love of many, and that icy wind is lawlessness. The essence of lawlessness is lack of love for God, or, to put it differently, hatred for God. The law which lawlessness despises is this: Love God! So, it is the natural effect of lawlessness to put out the fire of a man's love for God.

This is what is happening in the churches today. The iniquity that abounds in the world is approved and practiced in the churches. Many in the churches refuse to honor the authority of parents, of husbands, and of employers. Many in the churches openly practice adultery by divorcing their own mate and taking someone else's. Many in the churches freely make the enjoyment of lust part of their lives in their movie attendance, in their television viewing, in the songs they listen to, and in their reading. Their love for God has been blown cold.

But there is another way in which this is happening in the churches today, on a vast scale. Love for God is made to take a back seat to love for earthly things: money, possessions, earthly comforts, and pleasure.

We make a mistake when we think of lawlessness only in terms of murders, robberies, riots, adulteries, and totalitarian tyranny. The essence of lawlessness is love for self or love for some thing instead of, or before, love for God. Lawlessness

*Lawlessness  
is compatible  
with  
an outwardly  
decent life.*



is compatible with an outwardly decent life. This is what Jesus warned His disciples about in Matthew 24. When in verses 37-39 He compared the last days to the time of Noah, He stressed the sheer worldliness of the people: They ate and drank, they married, and they gave in marriage. They loved the world and its things. That was god to them. This is the icy wind blowing through the churches today, and let no one of us exempt himself from the threat. Everything comes first before God and His Kingdom: job, money, recreation, eating and drinking, a good time. There are pleasures to be enjoyed in living such a life, of course. This is the appeal of iniquity.

One outstanding evidence of the blowing cold of the love of many by the wind of iniquity is the growing desecration of the Sabbath. Professed Christians use the Lord's day just as does the ungodly world: to pursue pleasure. It is a day for football games and sightseeing. Or, in exact violation of the fourth commandment, they work. Attendance at the worship service becomes infrequent; many never make the second service on Sunday. The clamor for shortening the length of the sermon and for doing away with preaching as a proclamation of the Word of God, the Scriptures, becomes louder and louder. And what does all this mean but that many are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, so that worshipping God, knowing God, and walking

with God in sweet communion has no attraction for them.

How terrible!

What a grief to see entire churches, where in time past love for God, His truth, and His law once burned, now cold towards God! What a grief to see men who have been brought up in the fear of God turn their back on Him, although they have been baptized and probably made public confession of their faith. Above all, what a grief to see the good commandments of our heavenly Father trampled in the muck of the filthy will of men. We weep over the abounding lawlessness. As the Psalm expresses it: "Because thy statutes are despised, with overwhelming grief I weep." And how terrible is the state of those whose love has been blown cold by lawlessness. Jesus indicated this when He added, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The implication is that he who does not endure, but whose love waxes cold, shall be damned.

In these words of our Lord concerning lawlessness is implied an admonition to His disciples. It is not this, that we get busy and try to check the abounding of lawlessness in the world and to improve our lawless society. Rather, we are admonished to stand in antithetical opposition to the lawless world, as people who regard and keep the law of God, that is, as people who love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength and their neighbor as themselves. God has graciously

made us righteous men and women in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Our calling is to live that way, by God's grace. We must guard against the influence of iniquity, as well as against the danger of false doctrine, for the Devil seeks to destroy men by the allure of the pleasures of sin just as much as by the deception of heresy.

Examine yourself! What is your first and great love? Self? Money? A name and fame? Fun? Earthly ease? If it is not God and His Christ, you must repent, seek forgiveness, and be renewed to take up your struggle once more against lawlessness.

In this struggle of the believers, it is vital that we and our children be members of a church that honors the law of God both in the preaching and teaching and in the discipline of elders, and that calls us to obey that law. The church that does this is the church that preaches the gospel of salvation by God's free and sovereign grace alone. The message of God's great love for us in Jesus Christ is the message that stirs up love for God in our hearts, kindles the fire of love for God, maintains that fire, and makes that fire ever hotter, even in lawless times like these.

In this way the Spirit of Christ preserves us unto the end. Some will endure — such is the comfort of the text. Powerful though the ungodly forces are, they will not be able to separate God's people from the love of God. Enduring, we shall be saved.

□

*And because iniquity shall abound,  
the love of many shall wax cold.  
But he that shall endure unto the end,  
the same shall be saved.*

Matthew 24:12, 13



# Peter Datheen: Father of Reformed Liturgy (3)

## Introduction

It is a popular pastime nowadays to attempt to find one's roots. No one can deny that this is indeed interesting—to learn of one's ancestors, their struggles and sorrows, their lives and callings.

It is a more profitable pastime for people of God who recognize the truth of God's covenant that God saves His church in the line of generations, to trace their spiritual roots. To know one's family roots can sometimes be embarrassing, for often skeletons are found in unexpected closets. To know one's spiritual roots is of great profit, for these roots are the stories of saints and martyrs who have now joined the company of just men made perfect.

The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, the spiritual roots of the majority of the members in the Protestant Reformed Churches, were born in fierce persecution. Out of that fierce persecution arose a marvelous creed (our Belgic Confession), a strong biblical church government which has served the Reformed churches well for over 400 years, and a beautiful liturgy, most of which is still in use today. The liturgy also was born out of persecution. It is well that when we use it we appreciate this fact. Peter Datheen played a role in our confessional heritage, a significant part in our church government heritage, and

was no less than the father of our liturgical heritage. He was Holland's greatest Reformer.

To his life and work we now turn.

## Early Life

Peter Datheen's early life is so hidden in obscurity that the date of his birth is not known, and nothing has come down to us of his parents. He was born sometime during 1531 or 1532 in the town of Cassel, in Flanders, a part of the Lowlands at that time, now a part of Belgium. Somehow someone forgot to include in the church records both the date of his birth and the date of his baptism. The records of that time are extant; Datheen's name is not to be found in them.

At an early age, for an unknown reason, he was placed in a Carmelite monastery in Ypres. This, though a seeming tragedy, was part of a remarkable plan of God to prepare Datheen for his work.

Three things happened in this cold monastery.

The Carmelites were a monastic order which specialized in hospitals and healing. Perhaps the most advanced knowledge of illness and medicine could be found among these monks. Datheen received an education in medicine and healing, something which was going to serve him well in the distant future.

Persecution was raging in the Netherlands and three converted monks were burned near the cloister where Datheen lived. The story of their martyrdom and their heroic con-

fession moved him deeply. He wondered how his church could possibly be the agent of such terrible persecution, and doubts about his church filled his soul.

Within his own cloister many were sympathetic to Reformation teaching, and Datheen learned much Reformation doctrine from those who shared with him the monastic life.

But the cloister at Ypres was not the only hotbed of heresy—according to Roman persecutors; many such monasteries hid those who were persuaded of the biblical truth of Luther's and Calvin's teachings. As the reports grew, a systematic search of such cloisters was undertaken, and one by one the monasteries which harbored heresy were dismantled and their inhabitants put to the flames.

At about 18 or 19 years old, Datheen fled, the beginning of a long life of being a fugitive for the faith. He went to London where many refugees from the Lowlands had gone to escape the fire and sword of the Romish Church.

In London a church had already been formed by merchants from the Lowlands who were in London for business purposes. To this church many joined themselves, among whom was a Polish Reformer, one who himself was to leave an unmistakable stamp on the Dutch Reformation: John à Lasco. He had become superintendent of the church.

Peter Datheen secured work as a printer in London and attended the church of refugees. Edward VI, only son of Henry VIII, was on the throne,

---

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



a staunch, though young, Protestant, who did all he could to promote the Reformation in England. The church of refugees flourished and grew as the number of exiles swelled. At one time the church had no fewer than 4000 members, the French-speaking people in one group and the Dutch-speaking refugees in another.

But it was a church without creed or liturgy, and some of the early work in developing a Reformed liturgy was done here in London by à Lasco and Utenhove. Particularly, the Scriptures were translated into the native tongue of the refugees, and a rhymed version of the Psalms was prepared. The government required a specific liturgy, and John à Lasco prepared one along with an order of worship. The beginnings of a church order were also prepared by Martinus Micronius who wrote his "Christian Ordinances."

The congregation soon recognized that Datheen was a man of unusual ability and of deep conviction and that he had gifts for the ministry. And so the leaders of the church prevailed upon Datheen to quit his job as printer and give himself over full time to study for the ministry of the gospel. This also he did, and in these few years of peace and quiet Datheen was prepared for his life's work.

During this time he also married a former nun by the name of Benedicta, with whom he had one daughter, Christiana.

But the peace and quiet of life in London was soon over. Edward died after only a few years on the throne of England, and Henry's cruel and thoroughly Roman Catholic daughter came to the throne. She has gone down in history as Bloody Mary, for at her hands persecution against Protestants in England broke out.

The church in London was scattered, and many refugees were now forced to flee England. But the work of liturgy and church government went along with the refugees and was transplanted to Frankfurt in Germany.

It is hard for us, who know no such persecution, to appreciate the suffering of these saints. Literally

hounded from one country to another, they were hunted like wild dogs. Forced to flee from one place to another with wives and children, leaving behind all they possessed, they were truly pilgrims and strangers in the earth. And it was the false church which sought their lives! So it will be a few years hence when once again the same will be true for us.

### Ministry in Germany

Many refugees from England, France, and the Lowlands were now settling in Germany in various Protestant provinces in the hopes of finding there some surcease from suffering. Frankfurt in Germany was such a place. It had been a strongly Lutheran city, but Calvinistic refugees had made it also Reformed. John à Lasco had gone to Frankfurt earlier than Datheen and had begun to organize a Reformed Church in that city. Under the leadership of à Lasco, the congregation called Datheen as its pastor. In September of 1555, when Datheen was 23 or 24 years old, he with his wife and daughter settled into the ministry in Frankfurt. The Reformer Micronius installed him into office as pastor of the Flemish congregation.

Here his one and only daughter was born, Christiana.

But this period too did not last long.

The Lutherans in the city became alarmed at the growing influence of Reformed thought. The radical and fiery Joachim Westphal, with whom Calvin carried on a bitter controversy over the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, incited the Lutheran clergy and people against the Reformed congregation. On April 23, 1561 the magistrates of the city forbade the congregation of refugees to worship according to their convictions. Frederick III (The Pious) made a special plea to the magistrates for toleration, but none was given. The congregation was forced to break up if it refused to become Lutheran. So it did. Again the people were forced to flee.

Many returned to England, where Elizabeth now sat on the throne. Under her rule peace came to the refu-

gees. Many went back to the Netherlands and perished in the flames of the inquisition. Some went to Frankenthal in the Palatinate where Frederick III ruled. With these latter Datheen traveled.

### Years in the Palatinate

God gave Datheen good years in the Palatinate, years which Datheen did not waste. They were his most productive years as far as his work in liturgy was concerned. What we owe to Datheen today is what he accomplished under the benign hand of the father of the Heidelberg Catechism, Frederick III.

Soon after his arrival in the Palatinate he was summoned, because of his reputation, to the court of the prince. There he served as court pastor. During this time he was entrusted with various diplomatic responsibilities and missions. He continued to minister to the needs of the exiles. He, with four other pastors, engaged in a debate with five Lutheran ministers under the supervision of the Elector.

These were busy years, but happy ones. He was full of zeal for the cause of the church; he labored hard for the organization of the church; he spent himself in the cause of the gospel.

But above all he did marvelous work to develop a distinctively Reformed liturgy for the churches in the Lowlands. Aware that persecution was still so severe that a normal life for the church was impossible, he believed that God would send a better day. His faith was expressed in his introduction to a Church Order which was "for the Netherlands Churches, if they should, by the grace of God, arrive at a public and free exercise of their religion."

His heart was really in the Lowlands and with his suffering fellow saints. □



*Letters to a Young Pastor: Letters to Rev. R. Harbach by A. W. Pink.* Grandville, MI: The Evangelism Committee of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, 1993. 40 pages (paper). N. p. [Reviewed by the Editor.]

The Evangelism Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC has published a 40-page booklet containing letters written by well-known Bible expositor A. W. Pink to Rev. Robert C. Harbach. Pink wrote the letters during the years 1943-1949.

The letters contain little explanation of Scripture; some advice to a

young pastor concerning the ministry; and repeated expressions of concern that Pink's magazine had relatively few subscribers.

One piece of advice was that Harbach not "waste time listening to the Wireless or secular reading" (p. 23).

The Bible teacher made the intriguing assertion that a few servants of God are specially gifted to be teachers of the Bible in distinction from the rest of us who are "merely 'preachers'":

It is God's method to use human

instrumentality, and He has called and equipped a few of His servants to be teachers (not merely "preachers") — specially gifted by Him to "open" His Word, and they are "to be highly esteemed for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:12, 13).

Grandville's Evangelism Committee can do a better job of editing its publications. The preface has many grammatical errors. The body of the booklet suffers confusion at several places where, apparently, editorial comment is attempted to be inserted into Pink's letters (see pp. 9, 27). □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Congregational Activities

We extend our congratulations to our Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI which celebrated its 50th Anniversary Commemoration as an organized congregation on the weekend of June 10-12. On Friday evening, June 10, there was a program in Southeast which included a speech by Rev. D. Kuiper (Southeast's pastor), special musical numbers, photo displays, and a coffee hour. Saturday the celebration continued with an expanded version of Southeast's annual church picnic. This year's picnic was held at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI, the afternoon being filled with activities for all ages, followed by a special program at 4:00, and dinner at 5:00, with everything, and I mean everything, provided. After dinner the celebration concluded with a softball game.

On Sunday a warm welcome was extended by Southeast to one of their former pastors, Rev. C. Haak and family, who preached in the morning from Deuteronomy 32:11-12 on the

theme, "As an Eagle ... so the Lord did lead them." A welcome was also extended to Rev. J. Slopsema, a son of the congregation, who preached in the afternoon from Proverbs 23:23 on the theme, "Buying the Truth."

The building plans of our Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL suffered a major setback recently when it was discovered that their church property had failed a soil perk test. This failed test will mean at least two things for Peace. First, their building plans will be delayed considerably, since building permit requirements have not been met. And second, the congregation is faced with some large additional expenditures to make the ground suitable for building.

In mid-May the congregation of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was able to arrange for Fook Meng, a student in our seminary, along with his wife, Lee Choo, to spend a weekend in their congregation before leaving for Singapore, the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore, and home. Hope arranged to have an informal time of fellowship after church with them, at which time Fook Meng was to tell something about his own life and the work of the church in Singapore.

Pastor Mahtani, of our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, was invited to speak at a Sindhi Christian Conference in South Carolina during the first week of July. His consistory gave its approval, and was indeed thankful also for this opportunity to bring the Reformed truth.

In a young people's convention update from our Lynden, WA PRC, this year's host congregation, we learn that there are now ("now" being early July) about 300 young people registered at Fairhaven College in Bellingham.

### Evangelism Activities

In a newsletter to their congregation the Extension Committee of our Lynden, WA PRC reported to their congregation that they recently received an order for approximately 700 pamphlets from a minister in Quebec who also asked about the possibility of having Lynden's pamphlets put in the French language.

The Reformed Witness Committee of our Doon, Edgerton, and Hull PRC's in Iowa and Minnesota have completed their fifth year of the Dordt Bible Study held at Dordt College. They report they had a very favorable response from students from our own

---

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



churches as well as those from other churches. They spent the first semester this past school year studying various issues concerning the end of time, and the second semester studying various topics dealing with the Christian and his daily life. The R.W.C. has approved the continuing of this study for the upcoming school year, with plans to start study this fall with the book of Jonah.

Our Byron Center, MI PRC recently sponsored two Bible study classes at their church. One week Prof. D. Engelsma led a study on "The Free Offer of the Gospel," followed one week later by Rev. B. Gritters leading a study on "The Proper Presentation of the Gospel to Unbelievers."

### Denominational Activities

On June 21 a workshop was held at our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI for all area Sunday School teachers and parents of Sunday schoolers. Three sectionals were led by area P.R. school teachers dealing with ideas on presentation, motivation, and parental involvement.

Two students from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, Mr. David Higgs and Mr. Chris Connors, recently completed their studies in our churches' seminary, and after graduation in late May were able to return home, with plans to take up their labors in God's kingdom there.

### Minister Activities

Rev. C. Terpstra declined the call he had been considering to serve as pastor of our Hudsonville, MI PRC. Hudsonville's council has since formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. Bruinsma, Gritters, and Slopsema, from which their congregation will call on July 24.

Rev. Carl Haak received the call from Loveland PRC to be home missionary.

### Food for Thought

"Make the Sabbath the market-day for thy soul. Sunday is not a day to feast our bodies, but our souls."

— Toplady

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 22, 1994

**MR. and MRS. GEORGE  
HOEKSTRA**

will celebrate 50 years of marriage. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to God for their love for Him and His truth and for their love for us manifested by their nurturing of us in that truth.

"The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalm 102:28).

- ✿ Pete and Judy Hoekstra
- ✿ Bill and Karen Pipe
- ✿ Cornie and Edith Brummel
- ✿ George and Myra Hoekstra
- ✿ Ed and Brenda Hoekstra
- ✿ Jon and Floretta Engelsma
- ✿ Bob and Marylou Vermeer
- ✿ Marlin and Joy Hoekstra
- ✿ Brian and Lois Dykstra
- ✿ Rich and Pam Hoekstra

44 grandchildren

5 great grandchildren

Hudsonville, MI

### NOTICE!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in the Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, IA on Wednesday, September 7, 1994 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hull's consistory.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop,  
Stated Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

The Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education has scholarship money available for prospective teachers who wish to pursue a degree in Special Education. For more information, contact:

Greg VanOverloop  
2775 Sun Valley  
Jenison, MI 49428  
(phone: 616-669-0665).

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 1994 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, MI.

Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

Seminary Convocation will be held on September 7, 1994, in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, at 8 P.M. Prof. Hanks will speak. A cordial invitation is extended to all who are able to attend.