



# THE STANDARD BEARER

A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine

## PRAYER ON PREPARING TO GO TO SCHOOL

by John Calvin

*Psalm 119:9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

O Lord, Who art the fountain of all wisdom and learning, since Thou of Thy special goodness hast granted that my youth is instructed in good arts which may assist me to honest and holy living, grant also, by enlightening my mind, which otherwise labors under blindness, that I may be fit to acquire knowledge; strengthen my memory faithfully to retain what I may have learned: and govern my heart, that I may be willing and even eager to profit, lest the opportunity which Thou now givest me be lost through my sluggishness. Be pleased therefore to infuse Thy Spirit into me, the Spirit of understanding, of truth, judgment, and prudence, lest my study be without success, and the labor of my teacher be in vain.

In whatever kind of study I engage, enable me to remember to keep its proper end in view, namely, to know Thee in Christ Jesus Thy Son; and may every thing that I learn assist me to observe the right rule of godliness. And seeing Thou promisest that Thou wilt bestow wisdom on babes, and such as are humble, and the knowledge of Thyself on the upright in heart, while Thou declarest that Thou wilt cast down the wicked and the proud, so that they will fade away in their ways, I entreat that Thou wouldst be pleased to turn me to true humility, that thus I may show myself teachable and obedient first of all to Thyself, and then to those also who by Thy authority are placed over me. Be pleased at the same time to root out all vicious desires from my heart, and inspire it with an earnest desire of seeking Thee. Finally, let the only end at which I aim be so to qualify myself in early life, that when I grow up I may serve Thee in whatever station Thou mayest assign me. Amen.

*Psalm 25:14. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.*

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## Editorially speaking ...

As this issue of the *Standard Bearer* is being read, we are preparing the October 1 issue for publication.

There will be an October 1, 1994 issue of the *SB*, God willing. Should God be unwilling, the explanation of His unwillingness will not be that Christ returned in September, 1994.

This was the foolish, wicked prediction by self-ordained teacher of the church, Harold Camping. In a book, *1994?*, that appeared late in 1992, Mr. Camping prophesied that Christ will return sometime between September 15 and September 27, 1994.

My editorial in the January 1, 1993 *SB* brought Mr. Camping's book and prophecy to the attention of the readers of our magazine (see also the letter and the editorial in the March 15, 1993 issue of the *SB*). The editorial analyzed the book and criticized the prophecy. I assured our readers, from the Scriptures, that Christ would not, indeed *could not*, return in so short a time. I also prepared an announcement that would be published in the October 1, 1994 issue of the *SB*. The announcement was given in full in the editorial of January 1, 1993.

This announcement will appear in the October 1, 1994 issue of the *SB*.

Look for it.

— DJE



# The Secret of the Lord

*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

Psalm 25:14

The secret of the Lord. To this secret of Jehovah belong the things that no eye has seen or can see. They are things that no ear has ever heard or can hear.

These things exceed the fondest imagination of man, whose thoughts are of the earth earthy. They belong to the counsel, the eternal plan and purpose of God concerning the mysteries of the kingdom of God — things that can be known and understood only by revelation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jesus teaches us: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:22, 23).

The Lord is comparing spiritual blindness with physical blindness. When He says that the light of the body is the eye, He is referring to physical sight. When physical sight is lacking, the whole body is full of darkness. Such blindness is a serious handicap, for a blind person must grope and feel to get about.

But mental blindness is far worse. A mentally retarded person cannot

think, cannot be engaged in ordinary activities, can serve no useful purpose. For him life is meaningless, empty, vain. He walks in mental darkness.

Yet Jesus is referring to a blindness that is the worst of all, namely, spiritual blindness. He says: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great, how horrible is that darkness!" It is the darkness of spiritual death. For this is eternal life: "That they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Not only is it true that the unbeliever cannot see, but he will not see. He refuses to believe. He would much rather engage himself in denying and ridiculing the very idea of God. We read in Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:4). We can know the spiritual and the heavenly only by revelation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Revelation belongs to the wonder of salvation.

The sun spreads light and heat upon the earth because the earth reflects that light. So also the child of God receives and reflects the light of revelation through the Spirit within him. Scripture makes the distinction between "manifestation" and "rev-

elation." God manifests His power and Godhead to the wicked, so that they are forever without excuse. They can see God's handiwork in creation, can marvel at the beauty of the starry heaven, stand amazed at the riches of earth's treasures, and even tremble in terror at the destructive power of an earthquake. But they cannot and will not say: "God has created, upholds, and governs all things!" That is possible only by faith. And faith requires revelation. Our God in infinite wisdom and goodness gives us both!

The wonder of salvation is that the light of God shines upon our regenerated hearts and minds, so that we behold by faith the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Only the Holy Spirit, who searches the depths of God, can perform that work of grace in us.

The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

The secret of the Lord.

Strange as it may seem, in the figurative Hebrew language the root meaning of the word used for "secret" is cushion. The idea is that two persons occupy one seat. They sit close together and communicate in confidential fellowship.

The word "secret," therefore, speaks of the intimacy of our covenant friendship and fellowship with God, like the bond of fellowship that unites husband and wife in marital union.

The Scriptures remind us that God has established an eternal covenant of friendship and fellowship with us. We have been sovereignly and individually chosen from before the foundations of the earth, we have been redeemed by the precious blood of



God's only begotten Son, and we have been efficaciously called out of death into life. Our names are written in the Book of Life, and we are kept by the power of God unto the salvation out of death into life. Our names are written in the Book of Life, and we are kept by the power of God unto the salvation that is being prepared in glory, in order that we may live in intimate fellowship with God in Christ Jesus through all eternity.

Christ refers to Himself as the good Shepherd, who loves His sheep which are given to Him of the Father, lays down His life for them, calls them by name, and draws them to Himself. He leads them in green pastures and beside still waters, and in due time gathers them unto Himself in the sheepfold of glory.

That intimate relationship is compared to the inseparable bond of life and fellowship between husband and wife, which holds until death doth them part. The bridegroom takes his wife to himself and says: "I claim you as my very own!" To which the bride responds: "And you are mine until death doth us part."

In that intimate communion of life God bestows on His bride all the blessings of salvation. He cares for her, provides for her in deep concern, and blesses her with every spiritual blessing in Christ. He speaks most intimately with her through His Word and by His Spirit in her heart. He

opens a direct line of communication through prayer. He urges her: "Seek ye my face"; and He gives her the confidence to respond: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek!"

The almighty, unchangeable, ever-faithful covenant Jehovah says: "I am your God! You are My people, whom I have chosen from among all the peoples of the earth! I devote all My divine perfections to you. All that is Mine is thine.

"When I created this world I had you in mind. I cause the sun to shine, the clouds to gather, and the rain to fall; I send seed time and harvest, fruitful and unfruitful years, for you, in My care and concern for you.

"Even prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, I plan for your welfare. I turn your present trials and enemies to your advantage. Fear not, I am with you when you go through rivers and fires. I will never leave you nor forsake you, for I carry out My wise counsel by taking you to Myself in heavenly perfection, where you will dwell with Me in My house forever."

\* \* \* \* \*

To those who fear Him. The love and intimacy between God and His people is not that of two equals. Even in our earthly relationships, the husband is the head of his wife, her provider and protector. So also God in Christ is the Head of His wife, His church.

He blesses her, provides for her, and protects her. On the other hand, she is submissive to Him. She fears Him, not in slavish fear, but in her great esteem and respect for Him. He is her husband. She is His personal possession. She is His helpmeet; she no longer lives for herself, but only for her Husband. She is devoted to Him. He is her one and only desire. His glory her chief concern. That is her life.

We were created, given our place in our families, in the church, and in the midst of the world, not for ourselves, but for God's sake. We live not unto ourselves, but unto God. It is our privilege to know Him as our God, to put all our trust in Him alone, and live in intimate communion of life before Him. As David says: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 86:8). Or as Asaph confesses: "I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:23, 24).

It is exactly when we love and serve Him in deep devotion that we experience the wonders of His grace, the mysteries of our salvation, the secrets of the Lord.

For the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him. □

## Editorials

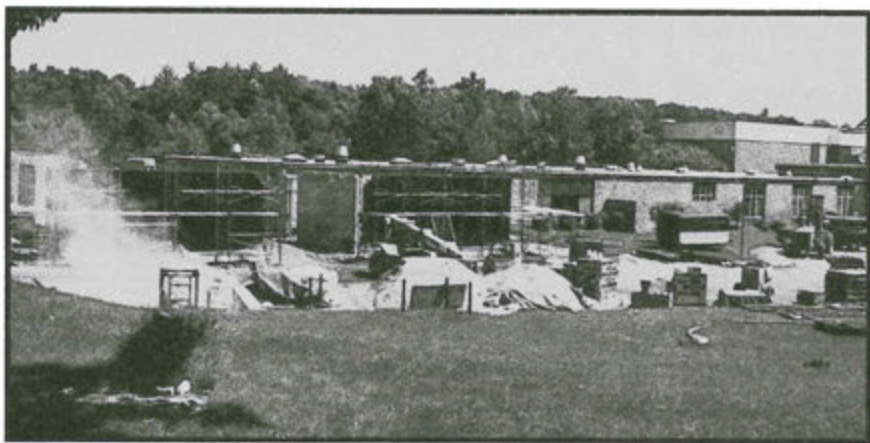
# Support of the Good Christian School

*(These brief remarks were given this summer at the ground-breaking ceremony of the building-addition of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They apply as well to the support of Protestant Reformed Christian education wherever these schools are found. Indeed, they encourage support of good Christian schools generally. It is fitting thus to mark the beginning of another school year.)*

My friends in the covenant of grace,

The most important thing that the founders and earliest members of the Protestant Reformed Churches ever did, after forming the churches





*Construction at Covenant Christian*

themselves, was to establish Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

Children and young people of the covenant, elected in eternity, redeemed in the fullness of time, and born again as a rule in infancy, can be taught all the knowledge necessary for earthly life. They can be taught this knowledge in the light of Holy Scripture as rightly set forth in the Reformed confessions. They can be taught the truth.

Your children can be taught in such schools.

The church's children can be taught in such schools.

God's children can be taught in such schools.

The founding fathers and mothers of the Protestant Reformed Churches set up these schools because God demanded it of them in the covenant. God requires these schools when He tells fathers in Ephesians 6:4: "Bring... up (your children) in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

We parents promise to maintain them in our vow at Baptism.

For we ourselves are incapable of teaching our children the learning they need for responsible life before the face of God in the West at the end of the 20th century. Therefore, we band together to do together what we cannot do separately. Even the rare couple who might be able to educate a child themselves cast their lot in with the covenant community, out of love for the common cause.

Our fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers have handed the schools down to us.

Are we thankful? for the sound, faithful Reformed instruction? for well-educated, competent, devoted, trustworthy teachers? for a student body to which we not only *dare* commit our child, but also *desire* to commit him or her for friendships?

Do we have a sense of our heavy responsibility?

Speaking personally, my wife and I would be afraid to stand in the judgment, if we allow to be lost what our fathers and mothers worked and prayed and sacrificed to build: these good Christian schools, our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

Now God gives us supporters of

Covenant Christian High School more reason for gladness: the school grows. At a time when many other Christian schools suffer decline in enrollment, because parents think children a curse or because they send their children to the state schools to save money, Covenant grows.

Praise God! This is visible evidence of God's blessing on our movement and of the presence with us of His Spirit.

With the blessing comes calling. Let this little ceremony of ground-breaking, which represents covenant blessing, be the occasion of resolve to carry out our calling.

Let us dedicate ourselves anew to covenant, Christian education in our schools.

Let us work together: parents; teachers; boards; every man, woman, and child in Western Michigan who loves the covenant of grace.

Let us give liberally. Widows, give your mite. Young people, especially graduates of Covenant, drop \$10's and \$20's in the collection plate, not \$1's. Rich, give thousands, or more. Parents, keep on giving sacrificially.

This is a great cause. It is next in worth only to the church herself.

God bless our Protestant Reformed Christian schools!

God bless Covenant Christian High! ■



*Future hallway in the making*



# The Need for Good Christian Schoolteachers

To refer specifically to our Protestant Reformed Christian schools, there is a need for good schoolteachers. The fact of this need is evident from the urgent calls for teachers in the church bulletins and in the *Standard Bearer* yet at a late date in the summer before the start of the school-year. A new school in Randolph, Wisconsin has been established. Existing schools are growing. More teachers are required. Besides, there is the normal rate of retirement in the ranks of the teachers. This calls for replacements.

The need is real and urgent.

Good Christian schools are a demand of the covenant, nothing less, as Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt stipulates. God requires that the covenant children be reared in the truth in the schools, as in the home and in the church. Essential to this covenant-task are good teachers, gifted and trained to carry out the difficult work of Christian education. The heart of the school is the body of competent teachers. Recognizing this long ago, the wisdom of the Reformed tradition formulated the original Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt as it did. The original formulation did not explicitly call for good Christian schools, but for good Christian "schoolmasters." If the Reformed, covenant community has good Christian schoolmasters, it has good Christian schools.

The reality of this need for good teachers is denied by the home-schooling movement. The movement is based on the erroneous notion that all Christian parents are capable themselves of teaching their children the subjects of the school curriculum simply by virtue of being Christian parents. Teachers are unnecessary.

This notion charges the thinking of the covenant community in the past with folly. We have always thought that Christian education required the special training of bright young people to be teachers by at least four years of college after high school. We have thought also that Christian education required instruction of our children by a body of several teachers who devoted themselves full-time to this work. The home-schooling movement would have us believe that one mother with only a high school education herself is able to teach all her children all the subjects at the same time as she does the work of keeping the home.

The thousands of dollars that our teachers have spent in getting a college education have been wasted!

The devotion of a staff of teachers full-time to the work of teaching has been an extravagance!

But, of course, the notion of the home-schooling movement is a mistake. Parents are no more capable of teaching their children math and history and literature simply by virtue of being Christian parents than they are capable of teaching them auto mechanics or dentistry. Nor do the husband and wife have time for educating their children. Both have full-time occupations, the husband outside of the home and the wife as homemaker. The result of this misguided movement, therefore, will be that the children are badly educated. This will have harmful consequences both for the children themselves and for the church, which should have a well-educated membership.

Our first and fundamental criticism of the home-schooling movement is that it cannot educate well. It lacks teachers.

The first and basic need of good Christian education is competent teachers.

Protestant Reformed parents ought to encourage their godly, studious sons and daughters to become schoolteachers.

Preacher and consistory should hold this before the young people of the congregation. The consistory has a significant responsibility for the support of the Christian school according to Article 21 of the Church Order. Seeing to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed includes the consistory's exerting itself to see to it that there are good schoolteachers.

Good schoolteachers are qualified schoolteachers.

They must be thoroughly trained in their field. No one can teach that of which he or she is ignorant.

They must be gifted with the ability to impart knowledge to children, as well as to work with children in the rearing of them.

They must be Reformed believers who live and love the covenant of grace.

They must have a wide and deep knowledge of the Reformed faith as this faith is set forth in the Reformed creeds and held in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is necessary so that they can apply the Reformed faith to all aspects of their instruction. The God of the covenant demands schools that do not merely give an education but that give a *Christian* education. This is a *Reformed* education.

In this connection, there is a lack in the training of the Protestant Reformed young people who will become teachers. There is no instruc-



tion in the distinctively Protestant Reformed principles of Christian education. I refer to such truths as the doctrine of the covenant itself; the sovereignty of the Triune God; the Lordship of the risen Christ; the spiritual kingdom of Christ in which parents, teachers, and students alike are citizens; particular grace; and the antithesis. The young people know these truths. But they are not taught how these truths apply specifically to the science of Christian education. Existing Reformed colleges do not show how these truths bear on Christian education to the satisfaction of Protestant Reformed Christians. The secular, state colleges where some of our

future teachers are being trained certainly do not concern themselves with these truths, except to reject them.

The natural agency to provide this important training of all our teachers is the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. It can draw on experienced, capable teachers to give special courses to would-be teachers in our system. It might arrange with certain colleges that these courses be accredited for the benefit of the students. It could advocate that these courses be required of all who desire to teach in our schools as part of our effort to have good Christian school teachers.

Has the Federation considered this matter?

Is the Federation doing anything about this weakness in our teacher-training?

However this may develop, as the new school year begins, bright with promise as regards the covenantal work of God among His people, we call our teachers to teach. Give yourselves to your vital labor with all your heart and energies.

On our part, let us honor and support our teachers.

And, of course, use them by sending our children to the schools. □

— DJE

### The Protestant Reformed School System Today

Adams St. Christian School  
1150 Adams St. S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Covenant Christian High School  
1401 Ferndale S.W.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Covenant Christian School  
9088 Northwood Road  
Lynden, WA 98264

Faith Christian School  
Randolph, WI 53956

Free Christian School  
Edgerton, MN 56128

Heritage Christian School  
4900 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426

Hope Christian School  
1307 E. Brockton Ave.  
Redlands, CA 92374

Hope PR Christian School  
1545 Wilson Ave. S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Hull PR Christian School  
218 2nd St.  
P.O. Box T  
Hull, IA 51239

Loveland PR Christian School  
705 E. 57th St.  
Loveland, CO 80537

Northwest Iowa PR Chr. School  
P.O. Box 195  
Doon, IA 51235

Prot. Ref. Special Education  
4900 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426

South Holland PR Chr. School  
16511 South Park Ave.  
South Holland, IL 60473

Theological School of the PRC  
4949 Ivanrest Ave.  
Grandville, MI 49418

## Letters

### ■ Some are Free in Prison

I want to write you in continued appreciation for keeping me on your mailing list and sending me the *Standard Bearer* free of charge. I want you to know that I truly look forward to

each issue and read it from cover to cover. Every word that is written is read and appreciated.

The recent articles on "The Nose of the Camel" have been most interesting and enlightening. I wish to thank the author for his articulate presentation on this provocative is-

sue of women in positions of authority in the church. I truly feel informed and blessed by the knowledge I have received.

In the last issue, the article, "Kelong and Net," was superb. Two different ways to fish and both successful. Yes, the glory is always God's!



I could cite something learned in each article in this latest issue but I think you get my point, so I won't. I truly enjoy the *SB* and hope you will consider continuing sending it to me.

I also want the *SB* to know the articles about watching television have done their job on this humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any time temptation gets great enough for me to flip my cellmate's television on, which is infrequent except to watch the news, these words ring in my mind, "Why would I, a servant of the most High God, want to watch sinful people play the parts of sinners acting out their sinfulness?" Bang! Off goes the television! I am convicted. The time I would normally waste watching this sinfulness is now being used to read additional books about the Reformation. A wonderful, Reformed, Spirit-filled couple recently sent me two volumes by d'Aubigne, *The Reformation in England*, and instead of watching television I am learning about some of the less-known Reformers. It is wonderful, and I owe a big thanks to the *SB*, and in particular to the writer of the article, for the extra time I have to devote myself to the reading of good literature.

I just can't say enough good things about the *SB* and the growth it has caused in my spiritual life. Thank you again and may our wonderful Father continue to pour out His blessings on you and your staff. ■

Peter J. Favre  
Corcoran, CA

## ■ Importance of the Creeds

The article "No Creed But Christ?" by the Rev. Rodney G. Miersma in the May 15, 1994, issue of the *Standard Bearer* cannot go unchallenged.

Miersma identifies the "Church of Jesus Christ" with "particularly the Church of the Reformation," and more specifically with the Protestant Reformed Church. To achieve this lofty goal he writes, "Ever it is our calling to develop the truth. But we do that

on the basis of the Confessions." These statements of faith, major as well as "Minor or Lesser" Creeds, have come into being in the process of the "historic-organic development of the church in the world."

Honesty requires however that from the outset we distinguish between the church as an organism and the church as an institution. It is a mistake to think that the church becomes visible only in the offices, the number of Creeds or Confessions, the ordinances, and in a certain form of church government. "Even if all these things were absent, the church would still be visible in the communal life and profession of the believers, and in their joint opposition to the world" (Louis Berkhof, p. 567).

The overemphasis on the importance of creeds in the article leads to such erroneous statements as "the authority of the creeds is the authority of Scripture," and "the creeds ... are the means, the way, by which we go to the Word of God." The Roman Catholic approaches the Word via the priest; have the creeds now become our "priests" to unlock the treasures of Holy Writ?

This "historic-organic" development in the church he equates with the "development of the truth." Since when stands the truth in need of development? Jesus says, "I am ... the truth...." Quoting this single text reduces me in Miersma's estimate to "the heretic, who appeals to isolated passages of Scripture in support of his own pet doctrine." It is "a method which is contrary to the Reformed Faith."

Miersma acknowledges that in writing this article he made use of the notes of Herman Hoeksema who "taught in the seminary of our churches." We wonder if the quotes from his article were Miersma's or Hoeksema's? Although our brother makes much of the authority of the confessions, he most positively contradicts the authority of Article VII of the Belgic Confession of Faith where Guido deBrès states: "Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have

been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures ... for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself."

Besides, way back in 1910 the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland took note of the "unbiblical teaching" of parts of Article XXXVI. This was later confirmed by the Synod of 1938! And when, e.g., Article XXXIV states, "what circumcision was to the Jews, baptism is to our children," then any observant reader would like to know where Scripture warrants the notion of replacing this aspect of the Ceremonial Law?

When Guido deBrès wrote in Article VII, "For all men are of themselves liars....," he was most probably mindful of his intense hatred of those who reject infant-baptism as shown in Articles XVIII, XXXIV, XXXVI.

Yes, we must earnestly contend for the Faith. The Confessions however do not set forth this "faith" quite as eloquently as Miersma would have us believe.

A. vanEchten  
Palmerston-North  
New Zealand

## RESPONSE:

In response to the letter of A. vanEchten I can only express my amazement as to how some people come to the conclusions that they do. The writer speaks of "honesty." Yes, I think that a good deal of honesty is needed on the part of Mr. vanEchten.

Honesty requires that one quote someone faithfully and in context, not in the "cut and paste" manner of the above letter. For example, when quoting from Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*, p. 567, concerning the distinction between the church as organism and as institute, he should have included the preceding two sentences. A complete and honest quote would be, "It is a distinction that applies to the *visible* church and that directs attention to two different aspects of the church considered as a visible body. It is a mistake to think that the church becomes visible only



in the offices, in the administration of the Word and the sacraments, and in a certain form of church government. Even if all these things were absent, the church would still be visible in the communal life and profession of the believers, and in their joint opposition to the world." Mr. vanEchten cuts out the reference to the Word and sacraments and pastes in his own fabrication of "the number of Creeds or Confessions, the ordinances," which substitution contradicts the quote itself and thus defeats his purpose in quoting that passage to begin with.

This he has done not only with Berkhof, but with the entire article which I wrote. That "the authority of the creeds is the authority of Scripture" is not an erroneous statement by itself and especially not so when one reads how that is explained in the context, and which is really the thread of truth running through the entire article. The authority of the creeds is derivative of the Scriptures which is why the creeds can be and are authoritative.

One could go on and answer every point one by one. But that is not necessary. The latter part of the letter really tells the story as to where the above correspondent is coming from. He really has no quarrel with the creeds themselves, but with the Scriptures. He inveighs against the importance and value of the creeds because he does not want the truth of the Scriptures which the creeds set forth. To be "honest," Mr. vanEchten should say so. He clearly does not want infant baptism, and one wonders whether he wants baptism at all, and would insist on circumcision instead. Circumcision was indeed part of the ceremonial law, and he would like to know the Scriptural warrant for replacing circumcision with baptism. I think that "any observant reader" knows the answer to that one.

I am thankful for Guido deBrès and men which God has raised up like him. I am thankful that I can stand on his shoulders rather than on the shoulders of the Anabaptists who "deny that Christ assumed human

flesh of his mother" (Belgic Conf., XVIII). I am thankful for our confessions as they indeed set forth the truth of the Word of God in a most eloquent way. And, yes, I will earnestly contend for the faith, and in doing so I will find the confessions to be a most invaluable tool. ■

— Rev. Rod Miersma

## ■ The Pentecostal Baptism

I thoroughly enjoyed the excellent article "A Critique of Modern Church-Growth (2)" by Rev. Charles Terpstra that appeared in the May 15, 1994 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. His clear thinking and sensible criticisms of this highly questionable trend in evangelicalism are much needed.

As an Assemblies of God (Pentecostal) ordained minister, I would like to address a slight misconception Rev. Terpstra propagates concerning Pentecostalism.

He writes, "... a Pentecostal gospel, proclaiming the need for the 'second blessing' (baptism) of the Spirit in order for a conversion to be authentic." In classical Pentecostalism, and certainly in the Assemblies of God, this is just simply not true. In no way do classic Pentecostals believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is somehow necessary for conversion to be authentic, genuine, or real. The Statement of Fundamental Truths (our creed or confession, if you will) makes this clear in paragraph 5, "The Salvation of Man":

Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God, according to the hope of eternal life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Rom. 10:13-15; Eph. 2:8; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7). (Emphasis added.)

We Pentecostals heartily affirm, along with our evangelical and Re-

formed brethren, the revelation of God in His Holy Word that we are justified by faith alone. We believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit, among other things, endues the believer with power to proclaim the gospel effectively by the grace of God and for His glory. Although oftentimes we fail miserably in our service to God, we pray, along with all true believers, "that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, with ourselves and others brought into and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may come quickly" (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Modern English*, Q. 102).

Thank you for your magazine. May God continue to bless your labors for Him.

(Rev.) James Cimko  
Oneonta, NY

## RESPONSE:

I thank Pastor Cimko for taking the time to write and express his appreciation for the *Standard Bearer* and for my article in the May 15th issue, as well as to offer some criticism of it. The brother points to a misconception I have when I state in that article that Pentecostalism proclaims the necessity of the baptism with (or in) the Holy Spirit in order for a conversion to be authentic. He claims that this is not the case in "classical Pentecostalism" which the Assemblies of God represent. He shows from their statement of faith that a person can be truly converted and saved without being baptized in the Spirit.

After hearing what the brother has to say on this and doing some further reading, it is clear to me that the statement I made was incorrect. And I thank the brother for clarifying this for me and perhaps for others.

However, I still have a couple of serious concerns which I would like to raise with the brother in this connection. First, it must be stated that by its teaching that the baptism of the Spirit is a blessing and experience distinct from and usually subsequent to salvation (conversion), Pen-



tecostalism has made a fundamental departure from the historic Reformed-Protestant faith concerning salvation and the Christian life. The baptism in the Spirit is an essential aspect of true conversion which every elect sinner partakes of. I do not have to demonstrate this in this response, since it has been done by many others in various books. (Our editor has also written an excellent critique of Pentecostal teaching and set forth the historic Reformed view in his booklet "Try the Spirits: A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism." We are sending Pastor Cimko a copy of this.) No doubt Pastor Cimko has seen the arguments. I do wish that he would be convinced that the "classic

Pentecostal" position is not that of "classic Christianity" and that he would embrace a true Reformed position on the nature of salvation and the Christian life.

Secondly, I wonder whether in actual practice in Pentecostal circles (though perhaps not in their doctrinal statements) the impression is left with their church members that in order for them to reveal a true conversion they must also be baptized in the Spirit. My reason for saying this is chiefly that in Pentecostal circles it is the baptism in the Spirit which gets all the attention and which members are exhorted to attain. With the teaching being promoted that this baptism is

far greater than the "normal" Christian experience, indeed that it is the highest blessing one could receive, would not Pentecostal church members conclude that they are not truly saved unless they have this blessing? My concern is that in the minds of sincere Christians there is real lack of assurance of salvation because of this view. Perhaps Pastor Cimko has faced this in his work and would care to comment on it.

Again, I thank the brother for writing and pray that he will receive this response in the spirit in which it is given, that of genuine Christian love and concern. □

— (Rev.) Charles J. Terpstra

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers*

# The Reformed Family: Continuing in Learning

*(for children and young people)*

*"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...."*

II Timothy 3:14

Paul is writing to Timothy.

Preachers are admonishing parishioners.

Parents are talking to their children.

Pupils are being encouraged by teachers.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...."

Not all children do, you know. Many infants carried to the baptism

font later turn their backs on what they have learned. The tears of parents drop continually for the children who have despised their spiritual birthright.

Already in the first pages of Genesis we read of two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain was raised in the same home as his brother Abel. Adam and Eve taught both boys about the wonder of creation, their own fall into sin, and the promise of Jesus the Savior. But Cain despised his instruction.

Esau, as a boy, was trained with his twin brother Jacob in all the ways of Jehovah. You can be sure that Isaac and Rebekah told both their boys the thrilling stories of God's power and of His faithfulness to His people. You know the story well, how, for a bowl

of soup, Esau sold his birthright. He rejected God to His face.

At the time of the Great Flood, only eight souls — out of millions of people — treasured their spiritual heritage, continuing in the things they had learned.

Many more examples from the Bible's record could be given. There is the history of Eli's two sons, profane men whose responsibility for caring for the holy things of the tabernacle had to be turned over to the little lad Samuel. And then, later, Samuel's own two sons carelessly tossed aside the things which they had learned.

Hundreds of Hebrew boys were taken into captivity in Babylon, but the Bible records the faithfulness only

*Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.*



of Daniel and his three friends in this wicked land. Only these four children, far from the eyes of their parents and teachers, refused the king's meat and wine, continuing in the things which they had learned. And when Daniel's three friends refused to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, where were all these other Hebrew boys? Well, they had their knees bent low to the ground in obeisance to the unholy image.

So, the warning and the encouragement to continue in the things which you have learned is always urgent, ever necessary. The Bible tells us that when Christ comes again, only a few souls will be found who have remained faithful to the learning which they received. This is sobering news. The days of Noah are swiftly coming upon us again. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Christ asks (Luke 18:8). Who will continue in the things which they have learned?

Paul is talking to his spiritual son, Timothy. In some places Paul even calls Timothy his child, although Timothy was already a young ordained minister. Timothy is Paul's son in Christ. And that is what you boys and girls are, too. You are Paul's sons and daughters in Christ. That is why this Scripture lesson is also for you. And what does Paul desire that Timothy (and you) continue in? What are these things of which Timothy has learned and been assured? If we are learning wicked things, does Paul want us to continue in learning that?

I think you already know that you must never continue in things in which you have been wrongly instructed. Rather, the apostle Paul is telling young Timothy to continue in all that he knows to be true as told him from the Holy Scriptures. Continuing implies previous instruction. You must stand firm in all that you have learned from your parents, ministers, and school teachers from earliest childhood in accordance with the Holy Bible.

The learning which Timothy received from his mother and grandmother was the foundation upon

which all his later learning was based. And, evidently, it was a solid foundation. During those impressionable early years, the groundwork was laid for the future structure of Timothy's Christian character. Timothy was taught to embrace and love all the truth of Scripture as revealed from God Himself. Timothy's mother was the teacher-builder, but God was the Architect of all those things that Timothy was taught. Nor did Paul tell Timothy to change one block in that foundation. Everything that his mother and grandmother taught him that was in harmony with God's Word was a basis for his learning. He had to continue building upon that early instruction.

Timothy's early instruction must have been similar to yours. Timothy had learned to pray and to speak the truth in love. His "yes" meant "yes," and his "no" meant "no." He didn't have to add "cross my heart" or "I promise on a stack of Bibles." He had learned to use godly language and speech which is becoming to the name of Jesus. He worked to keep his thoughts and gestures pure and clean. He kept the Sabbath Day holy, and respected his neighbor and his neighbor's property. He didn't have to be threatened with a rattan cane for vandalism. He chose Christian friends and shunned evil companions. He honored his parents and all those in authority over him. This meant that he was obedient to his parents, which was probably not always easy for young Timothy, since his father was not even a Christian. Nevertheless, he was obedient.

Obedience is the pearl of great price for children and young people. You may be dressed in the finest clothes, your hair shampooed and silky, but if you slam your bedroom door or stamp your foot in defiance of your mother and father, suddenly there is nothing lovely about you. All the ugliness of a big mouth or a rebel-

lious spirit contradicts your spiffy clothes and nice appearance.

Jehovah deemed obedience of such importance that He also attached a reward to it. Children respond well to rewards. Rewards often spur children to do their very best. Teachers use stickers on charts, special privileges, and inexpensive gifts for tasks completed well in school. Parents also use rewards to encourage their children to meet goals. So, too, does the Lord. His reward for faithful children, in fact, was the first commandment with promise: Honor your father and mother that you may live long in the land. Children who continue to the very end in the

things which they have learned will inherit heaven.

Above all, Timothy learned to go to God again and again to ask forgiveness. There was no way Timothy could keep the law of God perfectly, so he learned to lean hard on God. That is exactly what you have learned as well. Do you go to God in prayer? Do you set aside time for personal devotions and the regular reading of God's Word? Knowing God's Word, especially at an early age, is the chief foundation of faith. Reading the Scripture as young boys and girls is a powerful incentive to faithfulness. John Calvin says that this long established habit — reading the Scripture — can make a man better prepared to meet any kind of deception (lie). He urges children to drink deeply of the sacred writings, and he observes that those who acquire knowledge of the Scriptures in their youth should count it a special blessing of God.

A new school year is beginning; a new catechism season is starting. Are you resolved to be diligent? Are you serious about spiritual matters? Do you want to be truly wise? Then, abide in the things which you have learned. Your parents, ministers, and school teachers are required to see to it that you are properly instructed,

*All the ugliness  
of a big mouth  
or a  
rebellious spirit  
contradicts  
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spiffy clothes  
and nice  
appearance.*



but you, yourself, are responsible for learning it. In II Timothy 1:5, Paul praises Timothy — not his mother or grandmother — for the faith in which he had been reared from childhood. The way in which Timothy lived his life and followed after Christ estab-

lished the truth that he had learned the Holy Scriptures thoroughly from these two devout women. This will be the indicator for you, too — living what you have learned.

Receive the instruction of your

parents, ministers, and school teachers willingly and eagerly. Soak it up like a sponge.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...."

Not all children do, you know. By grace, you will. □

*Day of Shadows*

*Homer Hoeksema*

### Chapter 3

# The First Three Days of Creation (cont.)

## God's Creation of Plant-life (Gen. 1:11-13)

In one of his typically homely comments, Martin Luther observes concerning the second phase of the creative work of the third day: "On the third day, He filled our kitchens and cellars." This is undoubtedly true. But we would add to this: on the third day God acted as the divine interior decorator. He not only prepared for man, the chief inhabitant for whom all the world is designed, a well-stocked kitchen; but He who is in Himself the implication of all beauty furnished for man a beautiful living room, or parlor, in which all things are designed to serve Him, in order that he may serve his God.

For we must remember that it is with a view to man, the chief inhabitant, that all the earth is adapted. All the creatures the Lord creates in it are related to man, point to him, and are designed to serve him, in order that he may serve his God. It is this latter truth that leads blind unbelievers to the conclusion that man evolved from these creatures, rather than having

been created as their earthly lord and king, to have dominion over them and rule over them in God's Name.

To the work of the third day belongs the creation of the plants, described for us by God Himself in Genesis 1:11-13: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."

Notice, first of all, that by the Word of God the earth brings forth the grass, the herbs, and the trees. This is plainly told us in the text. The text informs us: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth...." Then it tells us: "And the earth brought forth..." in harmony with that Word of God.

We must remember, in this connection, that this has nothing to do with any form of evolution. Quite the contrary is true. Evolution implies that somehow the earth generated and contained the germs of every creature, and that by a concurrence of entirely natural causes these germs brought forth and developed into some low form of the plant, and that from this lower form the higher and more developed and complex forms appear under various influences from without and from within. All this simply shows that unbelief would

rather believe anything than believe God. Do not overlook the fact that evolution offers no explanation of the first origin of this life. How did inorganic matter develop into the living plant, or even produce the germ of it? Under what demonstrable influence did this take place? And how did the so-called lower forms of the plant develop into the higher and complex forms? By what demonstrable process did this take place? And whence were these natural causes, and what brought about the peculiar concurrence of natural causes that was necessary for the evolution of plant life? Do all these processes take place under any known conditions at the present time? To all these questions evolution offers mere words.

Rather, through the Spirit and Word of God the earth was caused to bring forth the entire realm of plant-life. God by His almighty will so spoke His Word and so operated by His Spirit within the earth, brooding and engendering that form of life which is characteristic of the plant, that He called forth from the earth the organism of the plant, separating species from species and kind from kind, giving to every kind its form and shape and purpose, and its own peculiar nature and name. The result of

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



this creative work of God was not a gradual evolution, nor even that all kinds of seeds began to sprout forth and to grow, but that at the end of the third day the earth was richly and beautifully decorated with full-grown and productive grass and herbs and trees of all kinds. God said, "Let the earth bring forth." And He Himself informs us, "And it was so." There was no necessity of waiting for years before the vegetation created was ready to blossom and bear fruit. While it is certainly true that the earth was a medium in the creation of the plants now native to it, those plants were the product of God's omnipotent will, by which the plants came into existence before their seed, and their fruit was produced in full development without gradually growing and developing under the influence of sunshine and rain. Such, briefly, is the creative work of the third day.

Next, we may face the question: what did God create on the third day?

First of all, we may note that God created plant-life.

The plant is the first and lowest form of life. Although the Scriptures do not call the plant here in Genesis a living creature, or living soul, nevertheless, when elsewhere the Scriptures speak of the plant and the seed as dying, it is implying that the plant is a form of life. But it is the lowest form. The plant has no soul. It has no breath of life; it has no consciousness, no memory, no hearing, no sight. It is, therefore, quite different from the animal, and from man. The plant also has no freedom. Of all the living beings which God created, the plant is in the most direct sense earthy. It is literally bound to the earth. It is brought forth out of the earth, but so that it is rooted in the earth. It does not move. And yet the plant lives. It uses the elements of air, of light, of heat, and of the earth's substance, and of water; and it transforms these into its own body, assimilates them. Moreover, the plant reproduces itself; it multiplies after its own kind, as the text also makes plain. It grows organically from its own seed.

In the second place, it is to be

noted that God created various species of plants. The Scriptures mention here the three large families of plants, namely: the green grass, the herbs and small plants, and the fruit trees. These are the three large families of plants. And these families include all the different fixed species: these species were also created on the third day. We are told that the various herbs and trees bring forth seed after their kind. This very definitely places the various representatives of the plant-world in fixed and closed species and separates them from one another. In fact, it is almost as though the Scriptures wanted to forestall the unbelieving claims of future evolutionists, so clearly it pictures to us the creation of the fixed species.

Evolutionism, of course, cannot believe this. In fact, it must be puzzled at the great and almost endless variety of plants. To be sure, if one rules out the creative work of the third day, this is indeed puzzling. How is it that from the same earth, under essentially the same conditions, grows the mighty redwood and the tender blade of grass, the majestic cedar and the delicate rose, the towering oak and the lily of the field? The evolutionist wants to assert that all these different forms and varieties of plant-life developed from a few, or perhaps one, original species. Truly, he carries the foolishness of unbelief to its climax here. And he is altogether without proof even from his science. But when you ask for proof of such an unbelievable claim, he will show you that certain minor changes take place sometimes and under certain conditions, and that, too, in certain varieties within certain species.

To us, however, this is proof of the foolishness of the natural mind, that is enmity against God. That natural mind will resort to all kinds of

wonderful guesses and to what are indeed unbelievable hypotheses, all because it does not believe in God. God is not in all the thoughts of the natural man. With his natural mind, with the light that is in him but which is darkness, the natural man enters creation; and he proposes fool-theories, and calls them science.

To faith, on the other hand, this grand variety of plant-life is clear proof of the riches of God. When man makes things, his ingenuity is soon exhausted. But when God creates, He produces manifold variety. Not one thing looks like the others. God is great in power; and He is infinite in His riches of wisdom!

We must also consider in this connection the purpose of this creative work.

In the first place, we must emphasize that this purpose is God's own glory. Also of the world of plants it is true that they serve the purpose of the revelation of His glory directly. God is good and rich and beautiful. In all the manifold variety and the riches of beauty that is manifest in the plant-life which God created there is displayed the riches of His glory. God saw them, that they were good. This

means that God glorifies Himself in the work of His own hand. Though the plants have no speech, nor give forth any sound, it is true of them also that they declare the glory of God and show forth His handiwork.

In the second place, that purpose of God's glory is attained in connection with the world of plant-life indirectly through man. It was, remember, with a view to man that the plants were created. For man was made after the image of God. As such, he was able to see these works of

God's hand. He could understand them. He could read the Word of God in them and know their names. In all the rich variety of form and color and

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believe in God.*



life he could behold the beauty of the Lord. He could express this, to the glory of the Creator of all.

This was marred through sin. Sin brought separation between man and his God, and also between man and the creation round about him. Because of sin, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven. Hence, we are no more able to read the thoughts of God in all things; and we no more know the real names of things. It is only in and through our Lord Jesus Christ that we are able to exclaim in wonderment over the marvelous works of God and to extol the praises of Him who made all these things.

But as we remarked earlier, the purpose of this creative work is to be found in the fact that God was finishing a habitation for man. In the plant-world God prepares a habitation for man. In this respect, the plant-world serves to bring the earth nearer to man. Imagine, if you can, that the entire world of vegetation was not. There would be absolutely no point of contact between man and the earth. In fact, on the bare earth man could not possibly live.

This is true from a threefold point of view. In the first place, the world of plants must provide man with food. This is also according to God's ordinance in Genesis 1:29-30. The fruit tree and the herb draw their strength from the soil. Under the influence of sunshine and rain they transform the strength of the earth into nourishing and luscious fruit, bread, and wine and oil, to feed man and to gladden his heart and to make his face to shine. They stand as with outstretched arm, as man's servants, offering him the fruit of their life and labor. In the second place, the world of vegetation serves to make of this earth a habitable place, a home. It covers the earth for him with a velvety carpet of grass and moss. It provides him shelter and an attractive place to dwell in. In the

third place, the plants serve to beautify the home of man. The Lord does not simply provide man with what is strictly necessary. In flower and fern and shrub, in lily and rose and violet, the Lord provides beauty for man's home.

All this, of course, was changed through sin. Man's calling was to care for his servants, to dress and to keep them, to be their husbandman. He was to guard them against the inroads of Satan and of sin, to the end that in and with all these things he might serve his God. But he fell away from God and refused to serve Him. He did not keep the earth against the inroads of the devil. And today the curse is on all things, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, being made subject to vanity. Hence, there is disharmony in the very world of plants. There is the thorn and the thistle. There is the weed, choking the good seed. There is the parasite, sucking the life of the plant. Moreover, there is disharmony between the plant and man. Man does not know the plant anymore. He commercializes it and enslaves it to his greed. The plant opposes man with its weeds and with its deadly poison. There is disharmony between the plant and the elements of nature.

There is scorching heat and drenching rain and hail and storm to make the plant suffer and die. There is disharmony between the plant and the animal, so that trees and herbs are devastated by all sorts of pests.

Nevertheless, we must also remember that the natural is the image of the spiritual. It was created as such according to God's immutable purpose, which purpose

was not to finish and to unite all things in Adam, but to unite them in Christ Jesus our Lord. To that purpose all things are adapted. Creation points forward to redemption. Also in the world of plants we have that language. The natural is the image of

the spiritual, the earthy of the heavenly.

This also explains the fact that many of the parables are derived from the world of plants. It was not thus, that they were not parables, but that Jesus simply used them as figures. But it is thus, that the things concerning the kingdom happen in parables, according to God's purpose. These parables and figures were created.

Thus, in the light of the Scriptures, the world of plants speaks to us of things spiritual and eternal.

In general, the plant points us to heaven. It loudly proclaims: "Seek not the things below. I rise and stand awhile and disappear, rooted as I am in the earth. All the things of the earth pass away. The grass withers. The flower fades. The tree dies." Moreover, the plant points heavenward, as if to preach: "There, above, is the better and abiding light."

In particular, we may mention just a few Scriptural instances of this truth. The seed, falling into the soil, is an image of the seed of the Word of God, falling into the regenerated heart, sprouting and bearing fruit and good works. It is also the image of the seed of sin, which bears fruit unto death and hell. That seed is also the image of the final resurrection, when we shall receive our glorified bodies, sown, as it were, in the grave. The tree also bears clear and loud testimony in its imagery. The tree, as man's servant, is an image of man, as God's servant. As the tree labors and brings forth good fruit for man, so man must bring forth good fruit unto God. As the tree must be good in order to bring forth good fruit, so man must be good in order to bring forth that which is pleasing to God. Or again, Christ is the vine, and His people are the branches, organically connected with Him by faith, in order to bear fruit unto life eternal.

All of these things stand connected with the creation of plant-life on the third day, even as that creation was adapted from the beginning to God's purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord. □

*It is only in  
and through  
our Lord Jesus  
Christ  
that we are  
able to extol  
the praises  
of Him  
who made  
all these things.*



# The Gospel According to John:

## Introduction and Overview

### 1. A Comparison of John with the Other Gospel Narratives

Each one of the four inspired accounts of the life and ministry of Christ has its own particular emphasis and theme. The four gospel narratives are not simply four carbon copies, but each one was written with a particular *purpose* in mind, and each one stresses a particular *truth* about the Person and work of our Lord. Together they give the complete revelation of our Savior and the salvation He accomplished. "He (God) therefore so dictated to the four Evangelists what they should write that, while each had their own part, the whole formed one complete body" (John Calvin).

In general, we may say that the *Synoptics* (a term meaning "viewed together," used to refer to Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are identical in that they emphasize the *deeds* of the Lord's ministry, while John emphasizes the *Person* of our Lord as the Divine Son of God made flesh (John 1:14). "...I am accustomed to say that this gospel is the key to open the door to the understanding of the others. For whoever grasps the power of Christ as it is here graphically portrayed, will afterwards read with advantage what the others relate about the manifested Redeemer" (John Calvin).

Rev. Haak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.

A comparative chart of the four Gospel Narratives:

	<i>Written by:</i>	<i>Written to:</i>	<i>Written why:</i>
Matthew A.D. 65-70	Disciple, Levi former publican	The Jews	To show that Jesus is the Christ, the fulfillment of O.T. promises
Mark A.D. 55-60	Son of Mary Co-worker with Paul	The Roman Christians	To show that Jesus is the Servant of Jehovah who does the work of God
Luke A.D. 65-70	"The Beloved Physician"	Those who could read Greek	To show the real humanity of Christ, "the Son of man"
John A.D. 90	"The Disciple whom Jesus Loved"	The general N.T. church	To show the Divinity of Christ, "The Son of God"

### 2. The Theme and Purpose of the Book of John.

John's gospel emphasizes throughout the *essential divinity of Christ*. It may be called the *Gospel of the Son of God*. John himself states his purpose for writing, namely, to encourage faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. (See ch. 20:30, 31.) This book, along with John's epistles, supplies abundant scriptural evidence that Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity, God of God, now made flesh for our salvation (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:11-13; 17:21; 20:28). "The theme of John's gospel is the Deity of the Savior. Here, as nowhere else in Scripture so fully, the Godhead of

Christ is presented to our view. That which is outstanding in this fourth gospel is the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus. In this book we are shown that the One Who walked the earth for thirty-three years, Who was crucified at Calvary, Who rose in triumph from the grave, and Who forty days later departed from these scenes, was none other than the Lord of Glory. The evidence for this is overwhelming, the proofs almost without number, and the effect of contemplating them must be to bow our hearts in worship before the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Arthur Pink).

Closely connected to this is the immediate purpose John had in writing. John writes against the false



doctrines which were already beginning to trouble the early New Testament church: Docetism and Arianism. There was the error of denying the full humanity of Christ (Docetism: that Christ only seemed to be a man, but was not flesh of our flesh. See John 6:51). And there was the error of denying the full Deity of Christ (Arianism: Christ was God-like, but He was not the same as God and was a created Son. See John 1:14).

### 3. The Distinctive Features of the Book of John.

A. Of the 1,000 days of Christ's ministry, John writes of only 20 of them. And one-third of the book deals with one 24-hour period (chapters 13-18). John omits the narratives of Christ's birth, baptism, transfiguration, and parables.

B. John shows us the personal and intimate ministry of Jesus to individuals (Nicodemus, the Samaritan

woman, the apostles — chapters 13-17).

C. John gives us the marvelous declarations of the Deity of Christ in the "I Am's" (I am the Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Door; the Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the True Vine).

D. John writes in the simplest vocabulary and most concise sentences. Yet, he sets forth the most profound truths of the Scriptures.

E. The Gospel of John makes more references to Christ's ministry in Jerusalem and Judea than do the Synoptics. The ministry of Christ is explained in relation to His appearances at the Temple for the Passover and the yearly feasts.

F. The biblical doctrines of Calvinism (TULIP) are plainly and repeatedly set forth in the book of John.

### Questions for Discussion and Further Study:

1. What do we know about the author (the human instrument employed by the Spirit), and can we show why God chose him to write this book?

2. Discuss the relationship of the four Gospel narratives to each other. What is their peculiar characteristic, purpose, and viewpoint?

3. Why is the theme of John's Gospel so important to the church of all ages? What confessional statements set forth the truth of the deity of Christ? What are the modern-day denials of this truth? How does the deity of Christ relate to the doctrine of the Atonement?

4. Read through the book of John with your eye open for the truths of sovereign grace. What clear proofs do you find for the truth of Calvinism? □

### *Farewell to a Pastor and Wife*

God's Word has taught us preachers come and go,  
And yet His Word will always run forth free.  
It's the loss of pastor, but more of dearest friends,  
That's left us sad, with bruised and heavy hearts.

When we thought our hearts were full to overflowing,  
Our heavenly Father shows we've more to learn.  
Our tears, our sorrows, and our sighs,  
Are but the flames in our Refiner's fire.

As you go to wear the mantle of His calling,  
Remember us with fondness and affection.  
As friends who bore the yoke and toiled with you,  
All used of God to dress His glorious bride.

We pray now with the church of all the ages,  
Each tear that He has caused His saints to shed,  
Might come together as a stream within the desert,  
And bring us by and by to peaceful rest.

— Anonymous Member of Bethel PRC,  
Elk Grove Village, IL



# Our Salvation's Most Precious Gift

That which is preached in some churches, is written in some books or magazines, and is sung in church services and programs, may be scriptural, comforting, and encouraging. But the fact is that a very important element of our salvation, which is clearly and repeatedly presented in Scripture, is very seldom preached in the sermon, and is rarely written in books or sung in church services or programs.

Salvation brings us some wonderful blessings. Thus, for example, in Romans 8 we read of many blessings which God has prepared for us, through His Son. Paul in this chapter begins with the comforting truth that there is for us no condemnation, for we are free from the law of sin and death. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. All things work together for our good, so that in all things we are more than conquerors. And neither death nor life, angels nor principalities or powers, things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is upon us, and realized by Christ Jesus our Lord.

Take note also of the fact that Psalms 145 through 150, the last five Psalms, begin with the words, "Praise ye the Lord." These Psalms give us reasons why we can and should praise God.

However, what we must not

brush aside into the background, and fail to rejoice in and to thank God for, is presented in Scripture throughout, from Genesis through Revelation, namely, that God blesses us by causing us to love Him. That is a basic and very important element of our salvation. Let us take note then of what our God Himself taught already the day when Adam and Eve committed their first and awful sin. What our God said to Satan was: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Now that God will put enmity between Satan and Eve means that He is going to begin salvation in her, and will do that in all His elect. Eve will hate Satan, because God will restore in her a love of Himself. When Eve and her elect seed received that gift of love of God, they began to hate Satan. We cannot love both and serve both. With our old man of sin we will love Satan and all that which he presents to us. But according to our new man in Christ, which He begins in us, we will love God. That is a most important element of our salvation. That is the fundamental gift of God's grace unto His people.

Salvation is not merely, or in the first place, deliverance from our physical pain and suffering. Our God will cause that to happen, so that we can walk in love toward Him. But if all we want, and all that interests us, is deliverance from physical pain and suffering, we really do not want the salvation that God promises His elect, and has prepared for them through

His Son and His cross. Remember once again that the unbeliever who commits suicide because he wants deliverance from pain and disappointment, rather than being saved from the misery or grief, enters instead into a far more terrible and everlasting pain in hell! He has in his life turned away from God, and behaved as though he himself is a god.

Take note also of the fact that Christ Jesus our Savior taught us in Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Now to hunger after righteousness is to desire to become deeply and spiritually right in God's sight. We must not merely hunger and thirst after freedom from the punishment for which our sin calls. The deepest and most important element of our salvation is that of being caused and made able to love God, and to serve Him in that love. If we merely want deliverance from punishment, then we actually do not want the salvation which God has prepared for us through His Son in our flesh.

Now, that God will put enmity between Satan and Eve means that God is going to begin salvation in Eve. She will hate Satan, because God will return His love of Himself to her. And when Eve is by God's grace brought back to that love of God, Satan is going to hate her. It always is either-or. We love God or we hate Him. We love Satan or we hate him. By a spiritual love of God we hate Satan, because that love comes by the rebirth which God realizes in His grace. We, as the elected seed of the



reborn Eve, have that blessed, fundamental gift of love from God and for Him. In that love we will be very interested in thankfulness for that gift of love from God, and for Him.

The question is, then, whether we believe that God is good, and that we want to serve Him in love, and do not simply want escape from punishment which God sends upon those who hate Him. It reveals that He does love us, and has begun salvation in us. Can we every day ask ourselves, "What does God want me to do?" Can we with David say what our God wrote through him in Psalm 27:4? There we have that awesome statement: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." And what about what we find in Psalm 34:8? There we read this statement: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." He who believes that God is good will love Him and trust in Him, and make no complaint for what He caused to take place. He will not blame God for

what happens and hurts physically. Trusting in God he will say that all is well, and due to a good work of God.

So beautiful was the grace of God, when he caused David to be sorry for his adultery and murder, as pointed out in II Samuel 11. Our God not only made David sorry for his sins, but also moved him to write in Psalm 139:14, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Yes, we need Christ as our Savior, so that we may have our sins forgiven, and their punishment banished. But these sins are forgiven by Christ's cross, so that we may become lovers of God. The undeniable evidence of this is that God sent His Son through His cross, resurrection, and ascension up into heaven as our Savior, and brings us there as members of His body. All this is the work of God's grace, and is realized in us because of His eternal decision to cause us to love Him. He saved us so that we might and would love Him and serve Him with body and soul. And, as pointed out a moment ago, He causes us to have enmity against Satan, and

to have love for Him as our God and Savior.

Loving God, we have the evidence of His love of us. That love, which He eternally had of us, made it possible by His Son's cross to save us from the punishment which we deserve, and made us to be His children who love Him.

Salvation is God's gracious gift. And we must not brush aside that wonderful element of our salvation. Let us then hold constantly before our hearts and minds the spiritual gift of love of God. In the measure that we do love God, we have the undeniable evidence of God's love for us.

Enjoying that gift of God's grace, whereby He causes us to love Him, we sing what we find in our *Psalter* number 397, the first stanza, which is based on Psalm 145. There we find this grateful and comforting song:

O Lord, Thou art my God and King,  
And I will ever bless Thy name;  
I will extol Thee every day,  
And evermore Thy praise proclaim. □

*Bring the Books*

*Abraham Kuyper*

## ***"She Suffered Many Things of Many Physicians"***

### **Our Physicians**

Taken from *In the Shadow of Death*, by Abraham Kuyper, reprinted in 1994 by Old Paths Publications. Published with permission.

THE physician has in the lives of many an all but too large a place, to which sometimes cleave sad remembrances, yea, which sometimes gave rise to bitter conflict of faith.

And this also Scripture intends,

that you should consider, and therefore puts before us ever and again those tragic words from the narrative of the woman who had an issue of blood: "There was a woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years,



and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grown worse" (Mark 5, 25).

Cutting words, and which to this day find their sad application. There are still those in all lands, who, going about with an hidden or incurable disease, have tried now one and again another physician, ever and again hoping that he would heal them, and who every time again were disappointed. They often suffered much, and underwent all sorts of artificial treatments and subjected themselves to all sorts of rules of life, and swallowed all sorts of medicine. And yet in the end their case was no different from that of this woman: much pay, no betterment, and not infrequently a further decline.

Herein you should not exaggerate. For over against these sad cases there are a thousand others, in which the medical profession succeeded, in bringing about wonderful recoveries. Especially in our times medical science accomplishes great results. And healing of diseases, reports of which are frequently abroad, fill you with amazement.

The fact however remains none the less true, that also the medical science all too frequently proves to be a *broken reed*. And the bitter complaint and disappointment with respect to many physicians, is by no means always unfounded.

It is true, that the poor, not infrequently, are treated more hastily and carelessly, than the man of money. It cannot be denied that more than one woman died in childbed from an infection, communicated to her by the doctor. It is, alas, so, that many a doctor falls short in a proper investigation of the real character of the disease, and thereby applies a wrong medication. The list of complaints against doctors might be lengthened considerably.

But he who stands right in his faith, raises no objection against medical science, neither does he find fault with God, for allowing medical science to render us such imperfect service.

All relief and recovery, and this is incredibly much, which medical science brings us, is pure grace, that comes to us from the compassion of God.

By our sin we have appointed unto ourselves nothing save sickness and death.

And that which breaks that power of sickness and death for a time, or at least in part, is a free gift of your God, a balsam which he drops into the wound, which you yourself inflicted.

We must be *governed* by men, and how loud the complaint about all sorts of mistakes on the part of the Government. By men the *Gospel* must be ministered unto us, and what suffering Christ's church has endured through all ages by reason of the heresies and highnesses and slovenlinesses of preachers. So must medical science be applied by men, by sinful men like our rulers and preachers, and is it then to be wondered at, that they also, who practice medicine among us fall short in all sorts of ways, and time and again disappoint you?

Has not God ordained, that of every one hundred men in any calling only very few are excellent, very many mediocre, and not a few beneath the same? Is not this true of all callings and positions? Why then should your doctors be an exception to this rule?

And as regards all sorts of *sinful* practices with your physicians, surely they are there. But with your mayors, lawyers, preachers, house-mothers and dependents are there no sundry sins of overestimation of self-importance, of careless dealings, of selfish motives and so much more?

And, if so, why then should your physicians make an exception to this general human rule?

We grant you, they are no better, but they are certainly no worse than other people. There can only a few among them be brilliant, and to all sorts of sins they are subject even as you.

And the fact remains which cannot be denied: God has given you medical science as a gift of His com-

passion, but He lets it be ministered unto you by imperfect and always sinful men.

Thus the snag for the faith consists in this alone, that again and again we separate the Lord our God and His gift, and sometimes place them one over against the other.

With diseases of known and less serious character, it is trust in the doctor alone, and there is no calling upon God. When it assumes more serious aspects, and the art of the physician falls short, refuge is sought in prayer and others are asked to intercede.

And this antithesis God's child must not maintain.

That was the sin of King Asa, of whom it is written so sharply: Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians (II Chron. 16, 12).

And this must not be. This is godless. So doing you slight your Father Who is in heaven.

No, His is every medicament, which He created, and which He allowed man to discover, and His likewise the art and the science, the discretion and the insight, wherewith He has enriched the physician.

Medical science is no human, and far less an evil, demoniacal art, but a means given of God in His compassion to man to fight against sickness and death.

It is therefore a spiritual mistake to think: "I will call no physician and swallow no medicine, but I will pray, and without means God can heal me." For to keep you in life, God the Lord has no need of food. So you might just as well say: "I will buy no food, and refrain from nourishment. God can keep me in life." And so He can, but He does not do so, because He Himself has ordained it otherwise, and has said: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread."

And even as God makes bread grow, so He created that multitude of herbs and drugs, which stop all sorts of disease in your body, and it is He, Who in that domain also endows His Aholiabs with knowledge.



Only, woe to you, if you use medical science apart from God, and do not pray that He bless it to your good, and do not give thanks, when He has so blessed it.

And woe likewise to the physician, who instead of ministering this gift of God as a priest of mercy, counts without God, and proudly boasts, that his power and cunningness of his hand has wrought it.

THEREFORE let the people, that fear God, be not too impatient with the sometimes brutal unbelief of many doctors. God's children themselves in this matter have all too often set doctors the pace in unbelief.

Forget not, to our physicians, the temptation to fall away from God, is very great. Their study is almost altogether material. The school, in which they are trained, has no knowledge of God. And, also, a very great power is put into their hand.

And what has the church of Christ, what have believing people done, to

cause our doctors to be humble before God?

Is it not almost nothing? Worse yet, by smallness of faith and by unbelief on the part of many a child of God on his sick-bed, many a doctor has lost all reverence for the faith.

This can and shall become different.

Also upon medical science before long the breath of the Christian life shall go forth. Christ and the physician shall not always remain separated.

But even if it comes to this, do not think that therefore sin shall be brought to nought in our doctors, nor that therefore their imperfection shall be ended.

Even then many a physician will make mistakes. Even then carelessness and neglect will occur. Even then many a patient will not be healed of the doctor. And even then many a sick person will die, who, spoken humanly, with better treatment might have been spared.

But though this compels you, in

the choice of your physician not to go to work too light-heartedly, yet let this not shake your faith, neither let it embitter you.

For you know, that the gift of God, which you call medical science, cannot be ministered unto you by angels, and that, since it must be ministered to you by men, you find your own human imperfection and sin back again also in your physicians.

But above all, by calling in a doctor, you do not fall beyond the reach of God's providence.

Whatever the doctor may do, it is His hidden will, that becomes evident, and His counsel that shall stand.

No physician, whoever he be, can take an ell from the length of any one's life or add to it.

And therefore do not embitter your heart by such troublous thoughts and poison not your soul.

The Lord reigns, and it is He alone, Who cuts off the thread of our life and the thread of the life of our loved one. □

## Book Reviews

*In the Shadow of Death: Meditations for the Sick-Room and at the Death-Bed*, by Abraham Kuyper. Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, repr. 1994. 317 pp. \$14.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by the Editor)

Old Paths Publications has done us very good service in reprinting these meditations on sickness and dying, long out of print, by Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper. We need biblical instruction on sickness and death; "meditations" move the soul; and Abraham Kuyper was a gifted teacher of the Word of God.

The book consists of 48 brief meditations on various aspects of the believer's encounter with sickness and

death. Meditations as Kuyper wrote them are, according to Dr. P. Y. DeJong in his foreword, "pointed, personal, practical" exposition and application of "one passage (of Scripture) with one central and all-controlling thought." In them, Kuyper speaks "from heart to heart." Topics include "healing by means"; "sudden death"; "the sick child"; "Satan in our suffering"; "around our deathbed"; and many more.

The issues addressed are as urgent for us at the end of the 20th century as they were for Kuyper's readership at the end of the 19th century (the book was originally published in 1893). These issues include the necessity of informing one who is dying of his condition; the utter incomprehensibility of God's ways in the suffering and dying of His people; the "terrible sin" of suicide; miserable

(Christian) comforters in one's illness; the sacredness of caring for the sick; the surprising lack of spiritual strength often on one's deathbed; making arrangements concerning property and burial before death; addressing one's children from the deathbed; and the necessity (and possibility) of living in full assurance of faith in order to die in comfort.

Although the meditations are simple—Kuyper was speaking to his beloved ordinary people—they show Kuyper's profound understanding of spiritual things in the light of the Word of God. This is Kuyper on the sting of death:

Dying itself is not the worst. That only comes afterward, when you have died, and they lay you out in your death garment, and carry you to God's-acre. Dying itself is merely going through the gate of death; but



then you arrive in the valley of the shadows of death, and then in his fortress; and there dread and terror shall take hold of you; with no other prospect than to wait age upon age, until Christ returns upon the clouds, and then yourself to go into judgment, and then with everything demoniac to be driven out into still greater terror. Into that horror, of which Jesus said: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ... If once that sting, that poisonous sting of death is broken, then death has become something altogether different. So long as a wasp has her sting, you flee from her; but when the sting is removed, you play with the wasp as with a fly. Death *without* sting, *without* poisonous sting is a messenger of God, who comes to fetch you away; who in the Name of the Lord divests you of your body; admits you as a liberated soul through the gate of Eternity, to be nearer to your God and your Savior, than ever you were able to be here, and, without sorrow and without sin, to tarry in that spiritual separation, till the light dawns of the eternal morning, and Christ comes upon the clouds, and clothes you with a more glorious body, and deluges you with everlasting glory. Death *with* his sting is terrible. Then you are gone. Then in death there are bands of hell and of eternal torment. But if death *has lost* his sting, then at once all terror is gone. Then there are those who have longed for death, because death alone was able to bring them to be eternally with their God (pp. 206, 207).

This is the book to read in time of sickness and dying, whether your own or a loved one's. This is the book to read *in preparation* for sickness and dying. There is comfort. There is also healthy rebuke:

In dying you shall not be merely passive, but in holier sense be active. In dying, too, you have a *task*, a *calling*, a *sacred duty* to fulfill. Your last piece of work on earth. But a task, at your account; for which all your life long you have to prepare yourself; and of which you shall give account to the Judge of your heart and your thoughts (pp. 223, 224).

Adding to the book's worth is a

foreword by Dr. Peter Y. DeJong on the godly activity of meditating, and a biographical sketch of Abraham Kuyper by Prof. Herman Hanko.

This is the reading that instructs and nourishes the Reformed soul. ■

*I Believe: Understanding and Applying the Apostles' Creed*, by Alister E. McGrath. Zondervan Publishing House, 1991. 152pp., no price given (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Although the Heidelberg Catechism develops the doctrines of our comfort from the viewpoint of the Apostles' Creed, there is a need for a brief commentary on this beautiful summary of the Christian faith which could be used as a study guide for individuals or Bible-study groups. I had hoped that this small booklet by a noted Anglican theologian would serve the purpose. Sad to say it does not.

This is not to say that there are not some nice points which the author makes. For example, in discussing that part of the creed which speaks of Jesus Christ as "our Lord," McGrath talks about Philippians 2:10, 11. He writes:

... Paul has felt it entirely appropriate, in the light of the Resurrection, to take great Old Testament prophecy referring to the Lord God and apply it to the Lord Jesus.

Many other illustrations of this could be given.... This practice of transferring from one Lord (God) to another (Jesus) is known to have infuriated Jews at the time. Thus in the second-century dialogue between Trypho the Jew and Justin Martyr, Trypho complains that Christians have "hijacked" passages referring to God and applied them to Christ. There was, of course, no suggestion that there were two "Lords" (in other words, two Gods) — simply that Jesus had to be regarded as having a status equal to that of God, which demanded that he be addressed and worshiped as God (57).

However, the book is, while indicating that the author holds to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, thoroughly Arminian. He writes, e.g., in connection with the forgiveness of sins:

If forgiveness is offered but not accepted, the relationship remains unaltered. If, and only if, both parties agree to restore the relationship will forgiveness be achieved. There must be a decision on our part to accept God's forgiveness (136).

McGrath always finds social implications in the teachings of the Apostles' Creed. Without mentioning the burning controversy between evolutionists and creationists, McGrath finds the doctrine of creation leading us to ecology and environmental stewardship. Christ's sufferings for us must bring us to alleviate the suffering in the world, etc.

Although I do not know what McGrath means, I find disturbing his reference to some doctrines (the forgiveness of sins, e.g.) as images.

*Forgiveness of sins.* It is no accident that the Creed selects this image to summarize the work of Christ. It is perhaps the most powerful and familiar image used to explain the significance of Christ's death and resurrection for believers (135).

In what sense of the word is the forgiveness of sins an image of the work of Christ? If it is an image, is it real? This is a crucial question which involves our very salvation. The Bible teaches that Christ's atoning sacrifice took place on Calvary in the year A.D. 33 as a historical fact. In that historical fact rests the equally historical fact that all the sins of all the elect are so completely forgiven that they exist no longer for time or for eternity. How can that fact be spoken of as an image?

Finally, it is interesting that McGrath explains the expression, "descended into hell" as meaning, "descended to the dead." ■



*Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, by Morton H. Smith. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962; reissued 1987. 367 pp. \$11.95 (paper). (Reviewed by the Editor)

Southern Presbyterian theologian Morton H. Smith surveys 300 years of the theological thought in the Presbyterian church in the South. He examines 27 Presbyterian theologians. He pays special attention to the giants, James Henley Thornwell and Robert Lewis Dabney.

The two doctrines on which Smith concentrates in every case are the inspiration of Scripture and election, although other doctrines also come up for consideration. Smith demonstrates that the tradition of the southern church has always been the confession of the verbal inspiration and, therefore, inerrancy of Scripture and the confession of God's eternal, sovereign election of definite persons to salvation. This has been due in no small measure to the strict subscription to the Westminster Confession that has prevailed in the southern Presbyterian church.

An especially well thought out, compelling, and lively defense of Scripture's inspiration is that by the little-known Givens Brown Strickler (pp. 298-305).

Although Smith defends it as orthodox, Dabney's doctrine of the death of Christ was serious departure from the Confession's doctrine of limited, particular atonement. In a report to the general assembly in 1864, Dabney

said of the atonement that it was "full and sufficient for the guilt of the whole world; and is to be freely and sincerely offered to every creature, inasmuch as it leaves no other obstacle to the pardon of all men under the Gospel, save the enmity and unbelief of those who voluntarily reject it" (p. 200).

Dabney's colleague, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, attacked Dabney's doctrine of the atonement in this report as taking a "stand for a general atonement instead of a definite atonement, as the Confession teaches" (p. 199). In his response to this attack, Dabney made his fundamental error even clearer:

I am asked whether I believe that "Christ bore the guilt of his elect only." I reply, Christ *designed* by his sufferings to deliver the elect *only* from their guilt. In that sense he "bore" the guilt of the elect *only*. But if they wish to make me say that Christ had no more to do with the guilt of the non-elect than of the fallen angels, I shall not say it. For Christ's work has actually procured for them great temporary benefits, which their guilt would personally have made them unworthy to enjoy—a suspension of just doom, social, material good, common operations of H(oly) G(host) and an offer of salv.(ation) from God, who is "serious" (p. 201).

Smith thinks that "when carefully examined, the doctrinal statement does not appear to have really been in the least unorthodox" (p. 201). Smith is mistaken. Dabney taught that Christ's death, as regards its very

"nature," in distinction from its "design," was in important respects a death for the reprobate, indeed for the *guilt* of the reprobate. The most important respect was that it grounded "an offer of salvation from God, who is 'serious.'" Since the "offer of salvation" in the thinking of Dabney consists of the divine will, or desire, that a man be saved and of saving grace extended to a man, the death of Christ for the non-elect is the expression of a will in God that the non-elect be saved and the source of a saving grace sincerely directed by God toward all the non-elect to whom the gospel comes. Not only is this grievously "unorthodox" as regards the Reformed confession of the atonement (to say nothing of the Reformed doctrines of the sovereignty of God's will and of the irresistibility of grace), but also it infallibly proves to be fatal to the Reformed confession of election.

The "well-meant offer," in the sense of a desire of God that all be saved and of a grace to all in the preaching, necessarily implies universal atonement and essentially is the death of confessional Reformed orthodoxy regarding the "five points of Calvinism."

The book is a valuable overview of Southern Presbyterianism from its beginning in the early 1700s until almost the present, particularly in the important areas of Scripture and the decrees. Adding to the value is an appendix listing the known publications of the theologians treated in the book. □

## Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 1994 at the First PRC of Holland, Michigan. Each church was represented by two delegates. The newly-organized congregation of Georgetown PRC was also represented by two delegates.

The business of classis was routine. Reports from the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee were re-

ceived. A report from Hudsonville PRC regarding the organization of Georgetown was received.

Prof. R. Decker was appointed to serve as moderator for Georgetown; Rev. Bruinsma was appointed to serve as moderator for Hudsonville. As a matter of policy, Classis East decided that future moderator appointments will be made from those ministers

whose credentials reside in Classis East.

Classical appointments were granted to Georgetown and Hudsonville. The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,103.30. Classis will meet next on September 14, 1994 at Hope PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk



### **Congregational Activities**

We begin this latest issue of the "News" with some very encouraging news from our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Results of a recent New Church-Building Survey indicate that Immanuel is getting very close to being financially ready to consider seriously the construction of their own sanctuary. By congregational decision, it was decided that Immanuel would not proceed with construction until \$200,000.00 had been collected toward their building project. Well, from survey responses received, it now appears quite possible that Immanuel will reach this \$200,000 plateau some time next year. So quite possibly construction could begin toward the end of next year, D.V. Certainly good news for our congregation of Immanuel.

Since its organization over ten years ago, our Byron Center, MI PRC has concluded its fiscal year at the end of June. This also means that new officebearers take office the first of July. Then, usually soon after this, there is an annual summer consistory meeting, where the full Council meets for an evening to discuss the overall needs of the congregation, that focuses on the direction that Byron Center is taking. This meeting is followed by dinner for the Council and their wives.

### **Evangelism Activities**

The Church Extension Committee of our Lynden, WA PRC decided recently to purchase a new cassette tape duplicator to replace their old duplicator which has recorded nearly 25,000 tapes. Lynden continues to see a steady increase in tape requests,

reportedly up over 300% the last five years. They are currently looking at a machine that will duplicate seven tapes at a time.

Also concerning tapes ... the Evangelism Committee of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe recently made an offer to their congregation to good to pass up. Until October all tapes of sermons or lectures in Immanuel will be free of charge. In addition, their Evangelism Committee is making available free of charge any tapes they may have of different PR ministers. If someone in the congregation has never heard Rev. Herman Hoeksema, or his son, Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, or Prof. Hanko, or Prof. Engelsma, or whomever, now is the time to get a tape of one of these gospel preachers, or others, and have a listen.

This offer was made in part to encourage Immanuel's members to make better use of their tape library, and to make these tapes available to others as well.

Pastor Mahtani reported to his congregation, the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, about the Sindhi Christian Conference in Columbia, SC. Rev. Mahtani was able to bring the Word of God there twice. He spoke before 40 to 50 people on the sovereignty of God, and the central place of Scripture in the Christian's life. This group, which calls themselves S.W.A.M.I. (Sindis With A Mission International) has also shown a keen interest in holding one of their annual conferences in Houston, TX. Let us give thanks for this open door to proclaim the gospel of our Savior to all peoples.

### **School Activities**

With all of our Christian Schools starting about this time, it might be appropriate to echo comments taken from a bulletin sent from our Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada. Perhaps you have even had some of these same thoughts yourself. "Over the past several months our bulletins

have been full of requests from various PR schools for teachers of all grades and subjects. The news that there is a great need ought to encourage those who are interested in Christian school teaching to pursue their calling with zeal!"

### **Minister Activities**

As many of our readers know, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop accepted the call he had been considering to serve as the first pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Bauer, MI. Rev. VanOverloop will preach his farewell at the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL on August 21; and his installation as Georgetown's new pastor is scheduled for September 1 in our Hudsonville, MI PRC. Our Hudsonville congregation has also assisted Georgetown by giving them temporary use of their vacant parsonage for Rev. VanOverloop and his family.

In connection with this parsonage problem, Georgetown also called a special congregational meeting for August 15 to seek approval of the building of a new house to serve as their parsonage. More about this next time.

After the evening service on August 7, the congregation of our Bethel PRC met and decided to send out a call, "to come over and help us," to Rev. C. Haak. With him on the trio were the Revs. W. Bruinsma and C. Terpstra.

Finally, Rev. B. Gritters received the call to serve as pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC.

### **Food For Thought**

"I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures are not paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

Martin Luther □

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



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NOTICE!!

The annual Eastern Men's and Ladies' League Meeting will be held on September 27, 1994 in our Holland church. Our speaker, Prof. David Engelsma, will address us on the subject: "The Church in the World." Everyone is cordially invited to attend.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith Church would like to express its Christian sympathy to Clare and Sandy Tinklenberg and family in the death of their son and brother,

**KEVIN.**

May they find comfort in our Lord (who giveth and who taketh) that they may yet confess, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Rev. Koole, President  
Jan Talsma, Secretary

### NOTICE!!!

Annual RFPA Meeting  
September 22, 1994, 8:00 P.M.  
Faith PR Church

Three new board members will be elected from a nomination consisting of Vern Casemier, Ed Hoekstra, Harve Holstege, Leon Kamps, Sr., Ken Rietema, Sr., and Bob Vermeer.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 7, 1994, the Lord willing, our parents,

**JOEL and STASIA SUGG,**  
will celebrate 40 years of marriage.

We rejoice with them in this time of celebration of God's faithfulness and His care of them. We give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for giving us God-fearing parents and we thank our parents for their love and their commitment to rearing us in godliness. May God continue to bless them in His tender care.

"But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- Pepe and Carissa Romero
- Alan and Cassy Carter
- John and Elisa Hickernell
- John and Terry Sugg
- Paul Sugg
- Mark and Christiana Nutter
- Monica Sugg  
and their grandchildren

Houston, Texas

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 26, 1994, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. ROBERT W. PASTOOR,**  
celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us godly parents. We thank God for the years they have shared and for all the love, the covenant instruction, and the guidance they have given us through the years. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations" (Psalm 79:13).

- Doug and JoAnn Pastoor  
Nicole, Eric, Stacy, Tracy
- Jim and Jane Pastoor  
David, Kevin, Steven
- Dan and Lori Pastoor  
Brad, Nathan, Bryan, Jonathan
- Larry and Pam VanPutten  
Laura, Lisa, Scott
- Steve and Dawn Pastoor
- Tom and Brenda Pastoor

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## REMINDER TO PARENTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS:

We would like to send our college students, free of charge,  
a copy of the *Standard Bearer*  
while they are away from home.

Please let us know your student's college address  
as soon as possible.