



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

When the moment comes, perhaps in A. D. 1995, that we must be absent from the body (strange and unsatisfactory condition!), we will be present to the Lord. And, if truth be told, we can find in ourselves to prefer this (II Cor. 4:14-5:10).

See "A Hope of the Saints" — p. 149

**Vol. 71, No. 7
January 1, 1995**

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In This Issue ...

Herman Hoeksema's meditation sets a theme for this new year's issue of the *Standard Bearer*: seeking the city of God that is not yet, but is to come. The meditation originally appeared in the January 1, 1926 issue of the *SB*.

Among his many other gifts, Hoeksema had the gift of devotional writing — the unction of applying the Word of God to the heart of the believer in the written word. Over some 70 years, the message comes home to the godly reader, searching, rebuking, encouraging, moving:

It always starts outside of the gate. There is, outside of the gate, erected on a little hill, a cross, an accursed tree. And on the tree there is the Man of sorrows. The world would Him not. Jerusalem loved Him not.... On that accursed tree this Man of sorrows shed His life-blood, that you might have properly washed garments to enter the city of eternal light and joy. Over that hill and by that cross, outside of the gate, leads the way. One cannot miss it. Go out of the gate, therefore.... And bear His reproach. For this you cannot escape on the way to the eternal city....

He himself practiced what he preached. He knew the reproach of Christ. He wrote these very words in 1926.

"Happy new year," we say.

The genuine blessing for the new year, by the Spirit of Christ, is that we seek the coming city in the Day of Christ. This will mean reproach both for the churches and for the believers and their children.

"For this you cannot escape on the way to the eternal city."

—DJE



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The Pilgrim's Goal

*For here have we no continuing city,
but we seek one to come.*

Hebrews 13:14

Christian, press on!

There is, at the end of your way,
a city to come.

The city that hath foundations,
prepared for you from before the
foundations of the world by your
God.

It is your goal.

Till it is reached and you have
entered into its pearly gates, you may
not, you cannot, you must not tarry.
Onward you must go, ever onward
you must press, never once tarrying
or abiding, nor ever fearfully or hesi-
tantly clinging to the things you
might meet on your pilgrim's jour-
ney.

Does not the pilgrim dwell in a
tent?

He has no city.

In a city one abides, digs foun-
dations, builds firmly to erect a last-
ing and permanent dwelling-place,
a continuing home. There are the
ties that bind, the treasures one
loves, the joys one seeks. There is
one's life. In a tent, however, one
tarries but for a night, to rest and
recuperate, in order to pull up the
stakes at daybreak and press for-
ward and travel onward, till the fi-
nal goal is reached.

The Christian's life is not like the
continuing citizen, but like the pass-

ing stranger, pitching his tent by the
wayside to tarry but for a night. On-
ward, ever onward points the way,
now rugged and steep, now for a
while on the level and even, but
mostly narrow and rough. At sun-
dry stations you may stop long
enough to put up your Ebenezers
and pray over them, gratefully ac-
knowledging the Lord Jehovah's
help in the past and hopefully im-
ploring His care and guidance and
protection all the rest of the way.
Sometimes the way may lead you
through the midst of a city, fair and
beautiful, stealing the love of your
heart and tempting you to abide and
bid farewell to the pilgrim's life.

But you cannot stay. You must
not tarry.

No city here has foundations.

No dwelling-place here is con-
tinuing.

The goal lies yonder, at the very
end of your earthly way, where time
is no more and the heavenly light of
eternity's morn beckons you.

The light of the heavenly Jerusa-
lem.

Thither you must press.

On, Christian, on!

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Oh, Zion eternal!

Glorious city of God!

How thou art the chief joy, in-
deed, of all that have their garments
washed in the blood of the Lamb
and that love the light!

Surely, I know that I know but
little of the glory and beauty and
heavenly joy and eternal pleasures
of that city. But even the little I know

of the final goal is abundant com-
fort in the narrow way.

I know that of its heavenly
beauty I can but stammer in earthly
language, and of its glorious reality
I can but conceive in earthly images.
But even the partial and earthly im-
age of that eternal city so sets my
heart aglow with joy and hope, and
so fills it with earnest expectation
and yearning, that for the glory of it
I am gladly willing to sacrifice ev-
ery earthly joy and pass outside of
the gate of every earthly city.

For I do know that it is the city
of God!

God is the chief joy of the heav-
enly Jerusalem. His presence fills
the city. His blessed covenant-friend-
ship perfected is the very essence of
all its bliss and rejoicing. For, un-
like the earthly Jerusalem built of
wood and stone, it has no temple.
If you were to have entered the gates
of Jerusalem that once was, and
would inquire as to the dwelling-
place of the Most High, men would
point you to a building made with
hands. And if, approaching the
temple and entering through its
outer gate, you would repeat your
query, they would direct your gaze
to the Sanctuary proper, at the same
time warning you that you could not
enter there to see the face of God. It
was all so imperfect, earthly, pro-
phetic of things to come! But when
you enter the heavenly city through
its pearly gates, you need not in-
quire, for there is no temple there.
God Himself and the Lamb are the
temple of that city, and its preemi-
nent joy and glory is that there the

*Herman Hoeksema was the first editor
of the Standard Bearer.*

tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God!

He fills the city!

I know that it is the city of all the saints perfected, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And they walk there in garments white, for they had them washed in the blood of their Redeemer, the mighty Lamb of God. There shall be no sin there, no corruption, no stain of defilement and pollution left on the robes of its elect inhabitants. And wreaths of victory they wear on their heads, for the battle is ended and won through Him that loved them even unto death. I know that there shall be no enemy there to harass and attack and inspire with fear, for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and all sorcerers and idolaters and liars and dogs — these shall not enter in any wise into that city, but shall have their part with the old serpent in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

I know that there shall be no shadow of death there, no pain or sorrow, no trouble and affliction, no fear or distress, for God shall Himself dry the tear-stained faces of His weary pilgrim-children and fill their hearts with everlasting joy.

I know that there shall be neither hunger nor thirst, for the inhabitants shall drink of the fountain of eternal life and eat of the fruit of the tree of life and be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of their God.

His face they shall see.

And in His light they shall walk.

His name shall be in their foreheads.

And they shall have put off all imperfection and all that is of the earth earthy, and they shall know as they are known and forever and ever behold the beauty of the Lord their God.

There shall be no night there.

All the weary night shall be past, to be changed into eternal day!

And there shall be perfect peace there.

Glorious city of God!

Chief joy of all God's children!



Press forward, Christian, you must!

For here we have no continuing city.

Not only because here there is nothing that abides, though this is also true.

Nothing is permanent in this world. There is no city here that can boast of lasting fame. For the world is a child of time, and chance and change are busy ever. We are like the grass that flourisheth in the morning and withereth before the sun goes down. Like the delicate flower of the field that blooms but for a moment and soon dies and is past, even so that its place knoweth her no more, are we. And the life of generation after generation is like a passing show, a pageant, always coming, always moving, always disappearing behind the veil of death. And as we are, so are all things. Nothing is stable, all things move. A stream is life, and all things drift along with it. For the world passeth away and the lust thereof, and there is in all that world nothing to which our soul can cling.

In this sense it is true for all men: we have no continuing city here. And all things loudly preach: Prepare thy house, for thou shalt die!

The man of the world, the inhabitant of proud Babylon, may dig deep and make his foundations firm, and raise his dwelling-place in the midst of this world proud and beautiful. He may close his eyes for the reality of fleeting things and say to his soul, "My house shall stand for aye!"

But he is a fool.

Yet a little while and the world shall be no more. And every home, every city, and every proud structure that is built upon the foundation of this world shall perish with the world.

But for the Christian this is not all.

In still another sense he has no continuing city here, namely, in the sense that wherever he looks, and in whichever direction he may turn his seeking gaze, nowhere in the world does he find a place that his soul can satisfy and where he would build his permanent home. He is a pilgrim, not only because all things pass away, but because of the very state and condition of his own heart and soul.

He is a stranger here.

For he was born from above. By nature he is from below and an inhabitant of this world, seeking the things below. But he received new life, through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And that new life is from above, not from below. That new life is the life of the city that hath foundations, whose builder and artificer is God. That new life stands antithetically against the old, for the old was of darkness, the new is of the light; the old was of the father, the devil, the new is of God through Christ; the old loved that which was evil, the new loves that which is good and pleasing to God; the old life was of the earth earthy, the new life is of the Lord from heaven.

He has become a citizen of that new city, and he walks here with the life of that city in his breast.

He can find no continuing city here, no place where he would care to build and to abide forever.

He longs and hopes and yearns and presses forward.

Till through the gate he will enter into the city.

Christian, here you have no continuing city.

Press forward you must.



Seek that city!

Seek if you must, not as one that gropes in darkness and knows not the way, neither is certain whether he will ever enter.

The way is certain.

And you need not doubt as to the direction.

It always starts outside of the gate.

There is, outside of the gate, erected on a little hill, a cross, an accursed tree. And on the tree there is the Man of sorrows. The world would Him not. Jerusalem loved Him not. As a thing abominable and a reproach He was cast out to suffer without the camp. Neither will that world ever let Him in again. The sign of that cross remains the symbol of His relation to the world, and of the attitude of Jerusalem, whose spiritual name is Sodom and Gomorrah. But on that accursed tree this Man of sorrows shed His life-blood, that you might have properly washed garments to enter the city of eternal light and joy.

Over that hill and by that cross, outside of the gate, leads the way.

One cannot miss it.

Go out of the gate, therefore.

Have your garments washed in His blood.

And bear His reproach. For this you cannot escape on the way to the eternal city. Washed by Him you are one with Him, and one with Him you will share His reproach. For the servant is not greater than his master. If they have hated Him, they will also hate you. The way, then, is unmistakably certain.

But seek the city. Know that it is more precious than all the pleasures and treasures of the world. Set your heart on it. Long for it. Hope for it. Strive for it. Fight for it. Suffer for it. Bear the cross and the reproach of Him that suffered outside of the gate for it. Press on and on, till you may enter into its gates and have the victory forever.

It is to come!

It is not yet. Its glory is not yet revealed. For we are saved in hope, and hope that is seen is not hope.

But it is certain in its coming. God prepared it for you in His eternal and immutable counsel. It cannot fail. The end of the pilgrim's journey that starts outside of the gate and on the which you are called to bear the reproach of the Sufferer of Golgotha is the beautiful city of God.

And it is about to come.

Yet a little patience and a little suffering, yet a little struggle and a little battle, and the end of your journey shall have been reached.

A very light affliction, quickly passing.

And then eternal joy!

Seek that city!

Press on! □

Editorial

A Hope of the Saints

Not *the* hope of the saints.

The hope of the saints is the resurrection of their body in the day of Christ. To this future good the Holy Scriptures insistently direct the expectation of believers: "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible" (I Cor. 15:52).

But *a* hope of the saints.

It is, to be sure, a lesser good than the resurrection of the body, but it is a real good for all that. Admittedly, it is not the ultimate longing of the child of God, but it is a definite longing nevertheless.

This is the hope of conscious life and glory with Christ in heaven at the moment of death. In the words of the Reformed confession, "my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its head" (Heid. Cat., Q. 57).

Theology calls this saving work of Him who is the resurrection and the life upon each one of His dying people the "intermediate state," or "individual eschatology." Being with Christ in one's soul is the home-life of the elect saint after death and before resurrection. It is the beginning for each believer personally of the glorious future that is rushing toward the church and the whole creation in the coming of Jesus Christ the Lord.

In the body, we die. In the body, we are laid in the grave. In the body, we sleep until the voice of our Savior and Lord awakens us, raising our body.

In the soul, however, we live. In the soul, we are with Christ in heaven. In the soul, we are wide awake to the love of God in Christ and to the splendors of heaven.

Although not our primary hope, the expectation of blissful life with Christ at death is a distinct, secondary hope. It is as urgent to us as death is a real possibility for us. This new year will bring death to some of us. It will bring many of us to the grave of one whom we love. Some who read the January 1, 1994 issue of this magazine were not to read this issue. It was comfort to them in their dying that they would be with Christ, as it was strength to their loved ones and fellow saints.

The Roman Catholic Church has always recognized the importance of this aspect of the hope afforded by the Protestant gospel of grace. Rome, therefore, curses all those who teach "that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in purgatory, before the

entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened to him" (Canon 30, "On Justification," in "The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent").

The explanation of the hope of being with Christ at death is not the natural goodness and inherent immortality of the human soul. It is certainly not the natural goodness and life of the soul in distinction from an intrinsic vileness and corruptibility of the body. The evidence is that the soul of the reprobate unbeliever does by no means live after death. Spiritually depraved and dead during the earthly life of the unbeliever, that soul dies eternally in the torments of hell immediately upon physical death (Luke 16:19-31). It exists everlastingly, but it is not immortal.

Even the soul of the believer does not naturally fly away to heaven at the moment of death, as if released now from the prison of an evil body. For one thing, the soul of the believer strains to maintain its mysteriously close connection with the body right up to the instant of death. God created man a unity of soul and body. The violent wrenching apart of man is the aspect of death from which all shrink. Even the apostle who could write in Philippians 1:23 that he preferred departing in death to abiding in the flesh admitted, "not for that we would be unclothed" (II Cor. 5:4). No one likes death. "Sweet death" is a lie. To the soul of the Christian, the body is not a miserable prison to be escaped, but a dear, familiar house to be clung to. No, souls of saints do not naturally and easily fly away.

Besides, the soul, though it knows the new life of the regenerated heart, is adapted for earthly life.

There is, in addition, the fact that the soul of the Christian is sinful. Of soul as of body is it true that there is in this life only a small beginning of the new obedience. Sinful souls do not naturally fly away to heaven.

The explanation of the

Christian's being with Christ in his or her soul immediately upon dying is resurrection. Christ Jesus raises the one who falls asleep in Him, raises him or her *in his or her soul*. At the instant of the death of the believer, Christ by His Spirit perfectly cleanses the soul, which, like the body, was defiled with sin, from its pollution. The Heidelberg Catechism describes this as the "abolishing of sin" (Q. 42). Also, the Spirit of Christ renews the soul, which is thoroughly earthy, so that it is now adapted to live the heavenly life. Christ transforms the soul so that it is made like His glorious soul. He translates the believer, in his soul, into sinless, heavenly life and glory.

The Heidelberg Catechism expresses that the intermediate state is the beginning, the first stage, of the final resurrection of the Christian when, under the rubric of resurrection, it teaches that "my soul ... shall be immediately *taken up* to Christ its head" (Q. 57). My soul will not naturally fly away to "worlds unknown." It will be "taken up." It will be taken up by Christ. It will be taken up in a work of resurrection. The transporting angels will play a definitely minor role.

I believe the resurrection of the soul, just as I believe the resurrection of the body.

Scripture explicitly describes the salvation of the believer in his soul at death as resurrection. Concerning the living and reigning with Christ in heaven of the souls of the martyrs, it is said that this is the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4, 5). The second resurrection will be the raising of their bodies at the time of the final judgment.

This is the legitimate, if secondary, hope of the believer.

It is not a foolish and false notion that has intruded itself into the faith of the Reformed churches from Greek philosophy. This is the charge that is being made. There is presently a campaign within Reformed circles to discredit the hope, the creedal hope, of the intermediate state in this way. Dutch Reformed

preacher B. Telder wrote that the belief that God's children go to heaven when they die is completely mistaken. This belief comes from the dualism of Greek philosophy which viewed man as composed of two parts, an immortal soul and its vile prison, the body. The truth, said Telder, speaking for a movement, is that death is total for the Christian. The entire man or woman is completely in the grave. There is no life with Christ whatever immediately after this life. The resurrection of the body is the *sole* hope of the believer (see B. Telder, *Sterven ... en Dan? Gaan de Kinderen Gods, wanneer Zij Sterven, naar de Hemel?*, Kampen, Kok, 1960; the English translation would be, *Death ... and Then What? Do the Children of God Go to Heaven When They Die?*).

The belief that God's children go to heaven when they die does not derive from Greek philosophy.

On the contrary, the unbelief in Reformed circles regarding the believer's hope to be with Christ after death derives from unbiblical Dutch philosophy, the deadly dangerous philosophy of the Reformed thinkers, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.

Whoever challenges this description of this philosophy will be invited to discuss with me the doctrines and goings-on at the headquarters of Dooyeweerdian philosophy, the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. We will begin with Professor H. Hart's glowing introduction to homosexual Pim Pronk's recent book, *Against Nature? Types of Moral Argumentation regarding Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

The hope of going to heaven when we die comes from Christ and His apostles. Christ said to the dying evildoer who trusted in Him in the last moments of his otherwise totally wicked life, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43)

The apostle of Christ wrote to every one of us who, in present affliction, is looking at the things that

are unseen and eternal, that if our earthly house is dissolved we have, at that instant, a house in the heavens. Now at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. When the moment comes, perhaps in A. D. 1995, that we must be absent from the body (strange and unsatisfactory condition!), we will be present to the Lord. And, if truth be told, we can find in ourselves to prefer this (II Cor. 4:14-5:10).

This message of hope is clear, incontrovertible, compelling. The interpretation that finds it necessary to explain this comforting message away is grotesque, whether Roman Catholic exegesis that wants the souls of the saints in the fires of purgatory or Dutch Reformed exegesis that wants the souls of the saints in the darkness and death of the grave.

Being with Christ immediately after this life is a message of hope

that is grounded in the resurrection of the crucified Christ.

Death has been overcome for those who are in Christ.

In the body, we merely sleep.

In the soul, we begin to live immortal life.

Nothing in the year of the Lord 1995 will be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

Not even death. □

— DJE

Letters

■ "Grammatical-Historical-Spiritual Exegesis"

In the October 1, 1994 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Prof. Engelsma called Mr. Harold Camping back to the grammatical-historical-spiritual method of Bible interpretation. Would you please explain more fully what this is, for those of us who would want to tread carefully on the "holy ground" of Jehovah's Word? Is the grammatical-historical-covenantal (method) something different? Are there books or literature that you can recommend on this topic? I and others will be eagerly awaiting your response.

D. Scott Connerley
Bloomington, IN

Thank you for your article, "Lessons from the Recent False Prophecy of the Date of the End of the World" (*SB*, Oct. 1, 1994), which I read with great interest. You mentioned "Camping's repudiation, or ignorance, of sober grammatical-historical-spiritual exegesis." Thus far in my seminary training, I have only been taught grammatical-historical exegesis. I would like to find out and be enlightened on what you mean by grammatical-historical-spiritual exegesis. If the Protestant Reformed Seminary has any published materials or notes on hermeneutics and exegesis which fol-

low the grammatical-historical-spiritual principle, I would appreciate your sending them to me.

Bernard B. L. Low
Singapore

Response:

By the grammatical-historical method of exegesis is meant a certain method of discovering the one sense, or meaning, of a particular passage of the Bible. The grammatical-historical method seeks to arrive at the meaning of the text by means of the right understanding of the words themselves in their connections and by means of the right understanding of the historical setting of the text (when, where, and why the words were spoken, or the event took place).

If the words "grammatical-historical," as describing the method of interpreting the Bible, are taken strictly and exclusively, this method of interpreting the Bible is inadequate. Indeed, it is a bad method. For it leaves the exegete — the one who interprets the Bible — and the people whom he teaches without any Word of God in the passage. A strict use of this method ignores that the Bible is the inspired Word of God in Jesus Christ to the church and believer.

The right method of interpreting inspired Scripture, the method required by the Scripture itself, seeks also, and above all, to discover the

doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the text — the Spirit's (spiritual) Word to the church. Good exegesis is spiritual (I Cor. 2:10-16). Since the Spirit always testifies to Jesus Christ, in the section on the old covenant as in that of the new covenant, sound exegesis seeks and finds Christ in the passage (John 5:39; Luke 24:44-49; I Pet. 1:10-12). Spiritual exegesis is Christological exegesis. But Christ is mediator and head of the one covenant of grace. Therefore, good, spiritual, Christological exegesis will be covenantal exegesis. Rightly are the Holy Scriptures known as the Old and New Testaments, that is, the book of the old and new covenants. The ultimate purpose of the covenant Christ is the glory of the triune God (John 17:1; Rom. 11:36). The glory of God is the "canon within the canon." Accordingly, we could call spiritual exegesis "theological exegesis."

As a method, spiritual exegesis operates by means of sound, sober analysis of the words, grammar, syntax, and historical setting. It does not bypass these elements. It does not minimize these aspects of the task of interpretation. But it is not content with them. It cannot stop with these elements and with these aspects of the task. Words, grammar, syntax, and historical setting stand in the service of the Word of God in the passage and express the Word of God. This, this is what exegesis is after.

Herman Hoeksema advocated the "grammatical-historical-spiritual" method of exegesis. He wrote:

The grammatical-historical interpretation is not adequate to give us the sense of Scripture.

Scripture is a unity, and ... we must not rest before we have discovered the one meaning of the ... author of Holy Writ. The grammatical, logical, historical interpretation of Scripture is not sufficient. Words and sentences are, after all, but vehicles that convey the one, central significance, the Word of God, which must be discovered by the spiritual interpretation.

The grammatical-historical method ... is undoubtedly sound in as far as it purposes to ascertain the precise meaning of the so-called secondary authors. It aims to arrive at the sense of the authors according to grammatical and historical rules. But although this method is effective in so far, it is nevertheless not sufficient. For Scripture is more than the mere aggregate of its books. It is an organic whole. Its one Author is the Holy Spirit. To the grammatical-historical interpretation, by which we may enter into the meaning of the human instruments, must be added the spiritual interpretation of faith, by which we may enter into the meaning of the Holy Spirit (unpublished

seminary notes on "Hermeneutics," pp. 9, 10, 60).

Louis Berkhof had the same thing in mind when he recommended, in addition to the grammatical and historical interpretation, a "theological interpretation": "It is not only perfectly warranted, but absolutely necessary, to complement the usual grammatical and historical interpretation with a third. The name 'Theological Interpretation' deserves the preference" (*Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Baker, repr. 1983, pp. 133ff.).

More recently, Old Testament scholar Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. has been urging what he calls the "syntactical-theological method of exegesis." He does not fault the traditional "grammatico-historical exegesis" except that it fails to go far enough in describing the main job of exegesis." According to Kaiser, it fails to discover the one Word of God in the text. Kaiser describes the failure this way:

Nothing could be more frustrating and discouraging to the interpreter than to have a message fall flat and lifeless on an audience after the interpreter has met all the requirements of investigating the grammar, syntax, literary structure, and

history of a given text. After the exegete has invested all those hours conscientiously translating the text, parsing the verbs, investigating the historical backgrounds, and tracing the syntactical relationships, there is a feeling of betrayal when all that labor fails to deliver a credible message that will speak to modern men and women. Clearly, something further is needed. But what is it? The missing ingredient in most sermon preparation is theological exegesis.

Kaiser wants the exegete to find the theology in the passage. He even suggests what the "center" of this theology is: "God's word of *blessing* ... or *promise* ... to be Israel's God and to do something for Israel and through them something for all the nations on the face of the earth." That Kaiser, committed to "biblical theology," restricts the exegete to a consideration of the theology revealed in Scripture prior to the time of the text with which he is working is not our concern here. Kaiser, like Hoeksema and Berkhof, pleads for a spiritual, or theological, method of exegesis, and for the same reason (see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*, Baker, 1981, especially, chapters 4 and 6).

— Ed. □

The New Year — Our Times in God's Hand

I take my pilgrim staff anew,
Life's path, untrodden, to pursue,
Thy guiding eye, my Lord, I view;
My times are in Thy hand.

Throughout the year, my heavenly Friend,
On Thy blest guidance I depend;
From its commencement to its end
My times are in Thy hand.

Should comfort, health, and peace be mine,
Should hours of gladness on me shine;
Then let me trace Thy love divine;
My times are in Thy hand.

But shouldest Thou visit me again
With languor, sorrow, sickness, pain,
Still let this thought my hope sustain,
My times are in Thy hand.

Thy smile alone makes moments bright;
That smile turns darkness into light;
This thought will soothe grief's saddest night,
My times are in Thy hand.

Should those this year be called away
Who lent to life its brightest ray,
Teach me in that dark hour to say,
My times are in Thy hand.

Standard Bearer
January 1, 1935

■ NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL

This Council (NAPARC) has six member denominations: the Christian Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Korean American Presbyterian Church, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (Covenanters). In addition, several other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations send observers to its annual meeting. Our churches have had observers at several recent meetings of NAPARC, though not this year.

Meeting in Philadelphia last November, NAPARC for the third year in a row debated whether or not to admit the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS, German Reformed) to full membership in NAPARC. The Interim Committee recommended that the RCUS be admitted to full membership. At its plenary session the next day, NAPARC voted to approve the recommendation. If two-thirds of the synods or general assemblies of the NAPARC denominations agree, the RCUS will join NAPARC as a full member in 1995. All this, however, was not without lengthy and sometimes heated debate at the interim committee meeting and, we assume (reporters were barred from this part of the meeting), at the plenary session as well.

"The constitution says that 'those churches shall be eligible for membership which profess and maintain the basis for fellowship expressed in section 2 and that maintain the marks of the true church,'" noted Rev. Donald Duff, secretary of NAPARC and stated clerk of the

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. "Nobody has ever brought any evidence that the RCUS does not meet these standards," said Duff. "Unless someone can show that they do not meet those qualifications in the constitution, I think they should be approved."

Noting that the RCUS has since 1991 been sending observers to the meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), made up largely of a sizable group of independent churches which have recently seceded from the CRC, Dr. David Engelhard, General Secretary of the CRC, objected to admitting the RCUS. "Some of you know that these churches (the ones in ARC) are not exactly in a blessed relationship with the Christian Reformed Church at this point," said Engelhard. "The constitution gives what is essential, but not all that is important. In the absence of disavowal of this kind of activity I'm afraid we have either to abstain or vote against this (admitting the RCUS)," said Engelhard.

The Rev. Ric Perrin, delegate from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), also objected to admitting the RCUS. He too cited their involvement with ARC. Perrin introduced a motion to require the RCUS to disassociate itself from ARC as a condition of admission. Perrin's motion failed. Finally the recommendation passed. The CRC voted against admitting the RCUS and the PCA recorded its abstention from the vote.

It will be interesting to see if the synods and general assemblies of the NAPARC churches approve.

In other actions, NAPARC rejected a proposal for weighted voting. Both the CRC and the PCA had been advocating this system whereby the larger denominations would be accorded more votes than the smaller denominations. The CRC and the PCA account for over 85% of the total membership of the NAPARC churches. After a brief

discussion the plenary session voted to change the current system in which the larger denominations pay more money to support NAPARC. Dues from now on will be divided equally among all the member denominations.

The OPC proposed that NAPARC send a letter to the CRC containing the following statement, "that this meeting of NAPARC express to the Christian Reformed Church in North America its deep thanks to God for the decision in which He led the CRC Synod 1994 to disapprove the ordination of women to ruling and teaching office in the Church and to express the devout hope that that position will not change and that the Church will apply the disciplinary work of the Church to those who are in violation of this principle as stated in the Church Order of the CRC." When the final vote came, the CRC and PCA stood alone in voting against sending the letter to the CRC. However, even the PCA's support of the CRC was qualified. "The PCA hopes passionately that you stay on the course you have set, but we vote no on sending the letter," Perrin told the CRC delegates as he cast his denomination's vote against the letter.

*Christian Observer
Christian Renewal
Reformed Believer's Press Service*

■ PCA PUBLISHES PSALTER

The Presbyterian Church in America has joined more traditional bodies by issuing a denominational psalter. *The Trinity Psalter* is a complete words-only psalter issued with a tune reference list and two styles of cover. Nearly half of the 18,000 first printing sold early in the year.

Unlike the popular *Book of Psalms for Singing*, the *Trinity Psalter* has only one set of words per psalm and there is verse-by-

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verse correspondence to Scripture. PCA pastor Terry Johnson compiled the book in consultation with Crown and Covenant Publications and in cooperation with Charles Burney, editor of the *Book of Psalms for Singing*. In addition to contemporary books, some tunes come from the 1871 psalter and the Irish psalter. The 130-page volume sells for \$5.00, or less in quantity. The PCA does not sing psalms exclusively, but uses as well the *Trinity Hymnal* in worship. Nevertheless we are pleased to see this denomination publish a psalter, committed as the Protestant Reformed Churches are to exclusive psalmody in worship.

Christian Observer

■ POPULATION AND THE WORLD'S FUTURE

Recently at the United Nations sponsored International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo it was estimated that the world's population (currently 5.7 bil-

lion) is almost certain to double by the end of the next century. Despite repeated predictions of disaster from most population activists, however, recent scientific studies indicate that world food production continues to outstrip population growth, and, rather than rising, food prices have declined over the last half century. According to some experts the planet's "gross productive potential" (measured by the available land, climate, and sunlight) could support a trillion people. One of the policies for slowing population growth highlighted in the Conference was enhancing the educational, political, and economic opportunities of women, often over the objections of religious critics. "I think this conference can be seen as ending 2000 years of ecclesiastical authority or jurisdiction over marriage and women's lives," asserted Ellen Chesler, biographer of birth control advocate Margaret Sanger. "Medicine and science, not religion and be-

lief, will govern family planning," Chesler went on to say.

While no one knows the day or the hour of our Lord's return, we do know from Scripture the signs that indicate its nearness. These signs, as recorded in Matthew 24 and other passages, are occurring in our world with increasing rapidity and intensity. It would seem, therefore, that the world will not last another century. However that may be, one thing is certain, and that is that it is going to be increasingly difficult for the church and God's people to maintain and live the biblical truth concerning marriage, child-bearing, and the place of women in the church in the days to come.

May God grant to us and all His saints in the world the grace to hold the traditions we have been taught from His Word on these matters too (II Thess. 2:15). And, may our prayer be, Come, Lord Jesus, yes, come quickly!

Pulse □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

The Beginning of Miracles

John 2:1-11

These verses describe the first miracle which Jesus did while He was on the earth (v. 11). It is characteristic of the gospel according to John that, although it does not include as many of the miracles of Christ as do the synoptics, yet the ones John does relate he describes with great care.

As to the occasion for this miracle, we are not given much

background information. Who the married couple is, their relationship to Jesus and the disciples, how Jesus and His disciples came to be included in the invitations, what role Mary played in the marriage celebration (plainly she had some role in it) — to all of these questions we are given no answers. These things are in the background, in order that our attention might be focused upon the power and the glory of Christ.

We are informed that it was three days after Philip and Nathanael had started following Jesus (1:43 and 2:1), and that Jesus and the disciples

are in attendance at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. A shortage of wine occurs and Mary comes to Jesus with the obvious hint that it would be a nice opportunity for Him to display His power. Jesus rebukes her in love (Rev. 3:19). His answer indicates a number of things. First, that the relationship between Mary and Jesus was much more than just mother and son (John 19:25-27). Second, that the counsel of God with respect to how He would be revealed as the Christ had been carefully laid down by God ("My hour is not yet come"). Hendricksen puts it well when he

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states: "Christ is conscious of the fact that he would accomplish a task intrusted to him by the Father, every detail of which had been marked out in eternal decree, so that for each act there was a stipulated moment." Finally, all of our Lord's miracles and work were directed toward the central "hour," which was the cross. (For "my hour" see John 7:8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1.)

The miracle itself shows both the power of Christ to change by His will water to wine, and the abundance or lavishness of Christ to provide, in excess of 100 gallons, the best wine for the marriage feast. John concludes by telling us that the purpose for this miracle was to reveal Christ's glory. But this is so only for the disciples, to whom it serves as a sign to confirm their faith.

There are a number of lessons that we should learn in this first miracle.

1. *It shows that Christ honors marriage.* Christ's presence at this marriage is indeed a high honor paid to the married life. "For this reason the Lord Jesus Christ did also highly honor it with his presence, gifts, and miracles in Cana of Galilee, to show thereby that this holy state ought to be kept honorably by all, and that he will aid and protect married per-

sons, even when they are the least deserving of it" (Form for the Confirmation of Marriage).

2. *It shows that the Christian may engage in legitimate times of rejoicing and happiness* (Eccl. 10:9). Jesus was no ascetic who denied Himself times of lawful happiness and the enjoyment of food, wine, and communion (Matt. 11:19). "Here too Christ indicates that he is not displeased with a marriage feast, nor with the things that belong to a wedding such as adornments, cheerfulness, eating, and drinking, according to the usage and custom of the country ... only so far as these things are used in moderation and in keeping with a marriage" (Martin Luther).

Outline of John 2:1-11

1. The setting for the miracle (vv. 1, 2).
2. Mary's informing Jesus of the lack of wine and the Lord's instructive rebuke (vv. 3-5).
3. The miracle itself (vv. 6-8).
4. The governor's commending of the excellence of the wine (vv. 9, 10).
5. The notice that this is Christ's first miracle, the purpose for it, and the effect of it in the disciples (v. 11).

Questions:

1. What is the "third day" referred to in verse 1?
2. What can be drawn from the passage as to the details of Mary's role in this marriage; the reason Jesus is invited; and the relation between the married party and either Jesus or His disciples?
3. Discuss what Mary must have been thinking when she informed Jesus that there was no wine. Give other scriptural references which demonstrate what might be called Mary's "motherly concern for the success of her son."
4. What is meant by the Lord's response to Mary in verse 4?
5. Explain the significance of the Lord's "hour."
6. Of what is wine a sign in the Bible? references? Discuss the difference between the legitimate use of wine and food and the sin of drunkenness and over-indulgence.
7. Discuss the comfort that Jesus' presence at this marriage gives to married people (see I Tim. 4:1-3).
8. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles? What result or fruit do they have on the believer? on the unbeliever?
9. What are the central lessons to be learned from this miracle? □

Victory in Christ

One moment on earth, the next in heaven,
O what a change it must be!
To close one's eyes in this troubled world,
In heaven, the Savior to see.

One moment on earth, the next in heaven,
All pain and discomfort are past;
No sorrow for sin, no battles to win,
True vict'ry has now come at last.

One moment on earth, the next in heaven,
Love's family tie is no more;
Our loved one has gone, but we must go on
Till we meet on that beautiful shore.

"Lord, help us each day as we go our way
Till the time when our moment will come;
Then our work will be done, our race will be won —
And we'll enter our heavenly home."

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan

Oregon Voters Adopt Nation's First Physician-Assisted Suicide Law

Those of us who wrote Oregon's Death with Dignity Act are ... terminally ill people who believe it is our right — not the government's — to decide when and how our lives should end.

— Geoff Sugarman,
Oregon Right to Die (1994)

The Oregon Death with Dignity Act, a ballot initiative ostensibly enhancing the freedom of dying patients, is in fact a frightful license for physicians to prescribe death, free from outside scrutiny and immune from possible prosecution — all in the name of a humane and dignified death. Relief of suffering becomes the elimination of the sufferer.

— Dr. Leon Kass,
The Hastings Center (1994)

Apparently oblivious to Dylan Thomas' poetic plea ("Do not go gentle into that good night/Rage, rage against the dying of the light"), Oregon voters recently legalized suicide for adults suffering from a terminal illness. The election-day ballot initiative passed by a slim margin (52% to 48%), and the nation's first physician-assisted suicide law was to take effect on December 8, 1994.

The so-called Death with Dig-

nity Law allows physicians to prescribe and furnish lethal drugs to a patient who wishes to die a "humane and dignified" death. Although the physician is not authorized actually to administer the lethal dosage, he may be present at the time the suicide act is committed.

Under the new law, the legal suicide process begins when the patient makes at least two oral and one written request to end his life. The attending physician must then determine whether the patient has a "terminal disease," which is defined as an "incurable and irreversible disease which will produce death within six months."

Safeguards

A second physician must then confirm the diagnosis and also determine that the patient is acting "voluntarily" and not suffering from a "psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgment." Additional "safeguards" in the law require a fifteen-day waiting period after the patient makes his required two oral and one written request (see box, next page) for the lethal drug, allowing the physician to "offer the patient an opportunity to rescind his request." Notification of family or spouse is not required, so that a patient could ingest the lethal dosage and die without his spouse's or family's knowledge or consent.

The Oregon law declares that physicians who prescribe and furnish the lethal drugs in good faith compliance with the act are "im-

mune" from civil and criminal liability. The law also declares that any benefits under a life, health, or accident insurance policy shall not be affected by such a suicide.

The Right to Choose

The Oregon initiative is the culmination of years of lobbying efforts by the Hemlock Society and other so-called right-to-die groups who contend that each individual ought to have the right to choose how and when to end his life. The Oregon "victory" gives the suicide-rights movement new impetus. Euthanasia initiatives are now under consideration in Connecticut and New Hampshire. Similar euthanasia laws were defeated in California in 1992 and in Washington state in 1991.

Euthanasia zealots are led by Derek Humphry, the author of *Final Exit*, a how-to manual describing alternative methods for committing suicide. Another proponent, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a retired Michigan pathologist who has earned the grisly title "Dr. Death" for his assistance in some 21 deaths, is presently leading a ballot drive for a state constitutional amendment to secure a "right-to-die" in Michigan.

Many observers of the suicide-rights crusade are noting its close relationship to the abortion rights movement. In fact, when asked during a recent interview why the euthanasia movement has gained such momentum in recent years, Derek Humphry replied that the turning point was the Supreme Court case

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

Oregon's Ominous Death Wish

On election day last November, Oregon voters approved the Oregon "Death with Dignity" law. (See text.) The law permits a physician to prescribe a lethal drug when requested by a patient suffering from an illness which physicians predict will result in death within 6 months. The new Oregon legislation, which was to go into effect December 8, 1994, requires the patient desiring suicide to sign the following ominous written request:

Request for Medication to end my life in a humane and dignified manner

I, _____, am an adult of sound mind.

I am suffering from _____, which my attending physician has determined is a terminal disease and which has been medically confirmed by a consulting physician.

I have been fully informed of my diagnosis, prognosis, the nature of medication to be prescribed and potential associated risks, the expected result, and the feasible alternatives, including comfort care, hospice care and pain control.

I request that my attending physician prescribe medication that will end my life in a humane and dignified manner.

Initial one:

___ I have informed my family of my decision and taken their opinions into consideration.

___ I have decided not to inform my family of my decision.

___ I have no family to inform of my decision.

I understand that I have the right to rescind this request at any time.

I understand the full impact of this request and I expect to die when I take the medication to be prescribed.

I make this request voluntarily and without reservation, and I accept full moral responsibility for my actions.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

of *Roe v. Wade*, a decision which invented a new right "to choose one's own destiny." And now that Oregon has blazed the trail, several other states will undoubtedly adopt similar legislation in the near future.

Death as a Therapeutic Option

Although suicide proponents were elated over the Oregon triumph, many physicians and medical ethicists are distressed and troubled by the Oregon law which arguably transforms doctors into agents of death. Dr. C. Everett Koop, the former United States Surgeon General, vehemently and pub-

licly opposed the Oregon legislation. He argued that the law would create an environment where suicide would become the first line of defense against terminal disease. Dr. Koop also maintained that the Oregon measure is ripe for abuse because of inadequate safeguards and reporting requirements. Moreover, because of recent concerns about health care cost containment, the poor, elderly, frail and disabled persons will, in his opinion, inevitably become unwilling victims.

Dr. Leon Kass, a physician and medical ethicist at the University of Chicago, published an article in a

recent issue of the Wall Street Journal entitled "Death by Ballot in Oregon" stating:

And physician-assisted suicide, once legal, will not stay confined to those who freely elect it — and its boosters do not really want it thus. Why? Because most people who "merit" a humane and dignified death — persons with senility, mental illness, or Alzheimer's disease; deformed infants; and retarded or dying children — are incapable of requesting death for themselves. But lawyers, encouraged by the cost-containers, will sue to rectify this inequity. Why, they will argue, should the comatose or demented be denied the right to assisted suicide? Court-appointed proxy consenters will quickly erase the distinction between the right to choose one's own death and the right to request someone else's.

The Dutch Experience

Many critics of the Oregon law also allude to the current state of affairs in the Netherlands, where assisted suicide is technically illegal though nonetheless widely practiced by Dutch physicians in accordance with certain "guidelines." A recent official Dutch government study of the practice of euthanasia in that country provided some distressing statistics. The study showed that more than 40% of Dutch physicians have performed *involuntary* euthanasia — i.e., administration of lethal drugs to patients without their knowledge and consent. This occurs even though that country's euthanasia guidelines are more stringent than the Oregon law and require that the choice of death must be informed and voluntary. The report also alarmingly indicated that there are about 1,000 cases per year of such involuntary euthanasia, half of which are performed without family consultation.

It appears that the new Oregon law has commenced a new era in this country where physicians are now licensed to kill those who wish to "exit" this world with a "humane and dignified" death, and if the

Dutch experience is any indicator, the only question that now remains is whether the elderly, the senile, the mentally ill, and retarded or dying children are next, victims to involuntary euthanasia, when, in the physician's judgment, induced death would be more "humane and dignified."

Lost in all of this debate in the

national press is the additional horror that our nation (or at least a majority of citizens) is now insensible to the notion of the sanctity of life and the biblical truth that the Holy Spirit alone is the author, giver, and taker of life. Reformed Christian families will continue to agonize over sometimes difficult medical decisions encountered when a loved

one is suffering from a painful terminal illness, but we would hope that pain medications coupled with loving consolation is the virtuous way to face that last enemy, death. To submit obediently to God's providence and will, even in the face of pain and suffering, is, after all, the only way to die with true Christian dignity. □

Contribution

Rev. Arie denHartog

Is There a Basis for Unity Between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals?

Recently a group of prominent evangelical leaders and conservative Roman Catholic scholars spent some eight months drafting a document which sets forth their views on unity and cooperation between Catholics and Evangelicals for the 21st century. The title of this document is "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." It was signed by a long list of notable evangelicals, including, among others, Mr. Charles Colson of the Prison Fellowship, Dr. J.I. Packer of Regent College, Os Guinness from the Trinity Forum, Bill Bright, head of Campus Crusade, televangelist Pat Robertson, Richard Mouw of Fuller Seminary, Mark Noll of Wheaton College, and John White of Geneva College. Many of these are leading and respected evangelicals of our time who have authored numerous books and gained wide popularity as conference speakers.

This venture has created quite a stir in the evangelical world and deeply shocked some of the more conservative evangelicals in North America. We believe that this document represents a shameful and evil compromise of the Christian faith and indicates how far some Protestant leaders of our day are willing to go to join with the Roman Church and forget about the great Reformation of the 16th century. Space limitation prevents us from quoting the entire eight pages of this document. We will in this article give only a brief summary of some of the main tenets proposed and our critique of them.

The subtitle of this statement is "The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium." The expressed purpose of this effort is somehow to bring together the two major branches of Christianity, namely Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, divided by the Reformation. The noble objective for doing this is to present to the world a united Christian front to face the great challenges of the third millennium. We quote

the introduction:

We are Evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics who have been led through prayer, study, and discussion to common convictions about Christian faith and mission. This statement cannot speak officially for our communities. It does intend to speak responsibly from our communities and to our communities. In this statement we address what we have discovered both about our unity and about our differences. We are aware that our experience reflects the distinctive circumstances and opportunities of Evangelicals and Catholics living together in North America. At the same time we believe that what we have discovered and resolved is pertinent to the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics in other parts of the world. We therefore commend this statement to their prayerful consideration.

Further opening statements of the document stress the urgency for Christian unity. Included is the noble sounding statement: "As Christ is one, so the Christian mis-

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sion is one." Reference is made to the great High Priestly prayer of our Lord in which He prayed for the unity of the church.

Included in this document is a brief statement of faith which Roman Catholics and Protestants supposedly have in common. Several passages of Scripture are quoted to give the appearance of legitimacy to this statement of faith. The final basis for unity between Catholics and Evangelicals is to be the Apostles' Creed, which is to be the only common confession.

It is declared that evangelicals ought to recognize that Roman Catholics and Protestants are brothers and sisters in Christ. In several places Protestants and Catholics are called upon to repent of the evil judgments they have in the past made of one another's doctrines and accept each other in the spirit of Christian love. While it is recognized that there are long-standing differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants, these are not to be considered of such magnitude that they preclude working together to face the challenges of our times. By all means these two camps in Christendom should not look at each other as enemies, neither should they engage in "sheep stealing" in each other's communions. In the language of the statement: "in view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of our resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community."

What this is saying is that Protestants ought to cease and desist from seeking to convert Roman Catholics to Protestantism since both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are equally legitimate expressions of the true Christian religion. One can be saved either by believing Protestant doctrine and practice or Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. Catholics and Evangelicals

should at least not imagine that their differences are very major and they should unite together in the love of Christ. After all, the great mark of the disciples of Christ is that they love each other. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals must demonstrate this love by joining together in a united witness to the world.

Most of the wording of this statement focuses on what its proponents believe to be the great challenges of the third millennium. The greatest challenge of all is massive worldwide missions to seek to bring to conversion the millions of people in the world that still are not Christians. The two greatest communities in world Christianity "that are most evangelistically assertive and most rapidly growing are Evangelicals and Catholics." It is to be deplored that in many parts of the world these two communities are living in conflict and animosity when they should be cooperating with each other. The division between these two is called "the scandal of the cross." The urgency of the challenge of world missions is increased by the rapid growth and spread of the Moslem religion, a religion hostile to Christianity and actively seeking to prevent the preaching of the gospel in Moslem countries. In connection with this latter, "encouraging" words are spoken about open and friendly dialogue between Moslems and Christians initiated recently by Pope John Paul II.

Catholics and Evangelicals must contend together for religious freedom which is called "the source and shield of all freedoms." Pope John Paul is cited as the great champion of our times of religious freedom.

The other great challenges mentioned are, largely, seeking a remedy for the great moral and social issues of our modern world. Included are issues such as the exclusion of religion from the schools of our land; abortion; the continued exploitation of women in many societies; the rising tide of voices to legitimize euthanasia; concerns about public education; growing im-

morality among today's youth; and the widespread promotion of pornography and the celebration of sex and violence by the modern-day media. A plea is made for mutual acceptance among the races of the world and equality across sexes and classes of peoples in the world. Statements are made about promoting free and vibrant market economies for the equal distribution of the world's wealth. An appeal is even made for renewed appreciation of Western culture and for the realistic and responsible understanding of the role of America in world affairs. One wonders how the church, so busy with all these social and political issues, will ever have any time to preach the gospel and take care of the people of God. In the lengthy section describing all the social ills of our times, much language is borrowed from American political philosophy and ideology.

In the concluding paragraphs of this statement a fervent appeal is once again made for Catholics and Evangelicals to recognize that both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism are legitimate expressions of the Christian faith. Though there is to be appreciation for long-standing differences of expression of Christianity, we ought to unite as brothers and sisters in Christ in promoting the cause of the kingdom of Christ Jesus. It is suggested that there is little hope of ever determining with finality the right interpretation of the Bible in regards to the great doctrines of Scripture. Therefore we ought to tolerate widely different interpretations, realizing that no one really has the final answer to what truth is anyway.

What must we say about all of this? First of all, any true Protestant ought to be alarmed that now, almost five hundred years after the Reformation, it is being strongly suggested that the Reformation was largely a mistake, an evil blot on the history of Christianity. The doctrinal differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism that were so valiantly contended for in

the Reformation were really of very little moment. One can be saved, after all, either as a Roman Catholic or as a Protestant. The thousands of martyrs who gave their lives for the cause of the precious truth of the gospel were seriously mistaken in their zeal and really died in vain. There was no need for all of this. In fact, the above mentioned document even suggests that the judgment of Roman Catholic doctrine by the great Reformers was an evil that the modern-day church ought to repent of.

In the interest of unity between Catholics and Protestants, doctrinal differences should at least be deemphasized. The statement of faith presented by the proponents mentioned above suggests a minimizing of doctrine to a few lowest common denominators, vague statements of truth. Everyone who "accepts Jesus as Lord" in a very general way is to be recognized as a legitimate Christian. The Apostles' Creed is to be the only statement of doctrinal agreement. The result of this, however, is that almost all the great and distinctive doctrines of the Reformed faith are relegated to a place of minor importance or at least are stated in such a vague and general way that everyone can agree. This is a very great evil. The doctrines of the Reformed faith restored by God to His beloved church in the Reformation were not minor points of truth, but they constitute the very heart of the gospel.

Not only is the statement of faith of this document to be criticized for its generalities and vagueness, it is to be criticized most severely for leaving out the central tenets of the gospel. The most shocking example of this is that the truth of justification by faith alone and by grace alone, the truth which everyone ought to know was the very heart of the Reformation, is considered by the supposedly Protestant Evangelical signers of this statement no longer an essential of the gospel. It is true that this statement of faith claims to believe that we "are saved by grace and through faith and be-

cause of Christ." But no Roman Catholic has ever disagreed with that. No Roman Catholic at the time of the Reformation would have disagreed with that statement. The great battle of the Reformers, the truth for which they were willing to give their very lives, was the truth that we are saved by faith *alone* and by grace *alone*, and through Christ *alone*. Really the one word *alone* was the issue of the whole Reformation. That word stood against the great evil of Roman Catholic doctrine which teaches that we are saved in part by Christ and in part by our own good works.

The whole system of Roman Catholicism is based on this dreadful Christ-denying and God-dishonoring error. The Roman Catholic Church today has done nothing about repenting from this error. It continues by its official confessions and teaching today to deny the great doctrine of salvation by faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone. This is not a minor matter, simply a matter of difference in perspective, but a simple and plain denial of the essentials of the gospel. The statement mentioned above is guilty of selling the truth of the Reformation down the river.

Furthermore, it is not at all true that the great doctrines of salvation are so obscure in the Scriptures that centuries of theologians have not been able to discover with finality their true meaning. One of the great truths of the Reformation is the truth of the clarity of Scripture with regard to all that is necessary to know unto salvation. The true doctrine of salvation is so clearly written in the Scriptures that it can be known by every Spirit-filled child of God and must be distinctly and steadfastly maintained by the church.

What about the noble objective to preach the gospel to the world?

The cause of the preaching of the gospel is not advanced by the church when she compromises the gospel so seriously that she is left with little or no gospel to preach.

We certainly believe that the great commission of our Lord stands until the day of His glorious return on the clouds at the end of the world. The true church of Jesus Christ must be zealous to preach the gospel wherever the Lord sends and opens the door. She must be ready to make all the necessary sacrifices, face the great challenges, fearlessly confront the dangers and hardships to be obedient unto the Lord's commission. The preachers of the gospel must be ready to die for this cause if the Lord so calls them to.

However, the cause of the preaching of the gospel is not advanced by the church when she compromises the gospel so seriously that she is left with little or no gospel to preach. The church of Jesus Christ is faithful to the great commission when she preaches the full-orbed gospel and steadfastly maintains without compromise all the glorious doctrines of the gospel, which we believe are all doctrines of the sovereign grace of God. God is glorified by that doctrine and denied when that doctrine is compromised.

Love for God and His Son Jesus Christ must be manifest in our love for the truth of God. We do not manifest this love by minimizing the gospel and reducing all its great doctrines to issues of little consequence for the faith and life and practice of the church. Love for God is manifest in receiving with humble gratitude the heritage of the truth that He has given to His church and seeking to lead the church into a deeper understanding and development of this truth, not in reducing it all to insignificant doctrine.

Yes, we must seek the true unity of the church and that in the love of Christ. But neither unity nor true love is possible when the truth of God and of Christ is ignored and compromised. We do not genuinely

care for the souls of God's elect who must be saved when we do this sort of thing.

May the Protestant church today minimize the fact that Roman Catholicism continues to maintain the gross errors that were rightly condemned by the Reformers? The Reformers condemned the Pope for claiming to be the vicar of Christ. The Pope still makes that claim today. The Reformers condemned the Pope for his claim of being able to speak *ex cathedra*. He still makes that claim today. The Reformers condemned the Pope as being a manifestation of the antichrist. Today so-called Protestants will have friendly dialogue with him and praise him for his great achievements. The Reformers called the mass of the Roman Catholic Church "cursed idolatry" because of its claim of being a re-offering of Christ. The Reformers condemned the worship of Mary as Mariolatry. The Reformers condemned the worship of saints and of images in the church as a gross violation of the second command-

ment of the law of God. Not any of these things are changed in the modern-day church of Rome. What about all of this? Are these not serious errors anymore when judged by the unchangeable and infallible standard of the Word of God? Yet the above mentioned statement makes no mention of all these things.

The Reformers considered the errors of the Roman Church to be so serious that God's people within this church had to be warned and called to come out of her for the salvation of their own soul and for the sake of the glory of God. Will the Protestant church today then agree that it is theologically illegitimate to proselytize Roman Catholics? Rather, true preachers of the gospel who love the souls of God's elect will continue with utmost urgency to call any saint of God left in these churches out of the apostate Roman Church.

What about a united front to face the moral and social evils of our modern-day world? The true gospel has much to say about these

great moral and social evils. It does not address these problems with a mixture of political humanistic philosophy and a semblance of the gospel as the document mentioned above does. The answer, the only true answer, to all these problems is genuine repentance and conversion to God worked by the sovereign power of the grace of God in the hearts of men through the true preaching of the gospel.

The Reformation must be continued, not by forgetting about its great and glorious doctrines but by constant reaffirmation of these doctrines and the faithful distinctive preaching of these doctrines by the true church of Jesus Christ. Never will the true Protestant church compromise these doctrines in a false show of the love of Christ before the world. She shows the love for Christ when she insists that these doctrines are of such momentous significance that she is ready to die in defending and maintaining them. □

Decency and Order

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Minutes and Archives

It shall be the duty of the church in which the classis and likewise the (particular) synod or general synod meets to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.

Church Order, Article 45.

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan

Furnishing Previous Minutes

The main concern of this article is making available the minutes and decisions of the broader assemblies. In Article 34 the Church Order stipulated that "in all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters." That article provides for the transcription of the minutes. The present article requires the church in which the assembly convened to see to it that the minutes are preserved and fur-

nished at the next meeting of the broader assembly.

In the earlier history of the Reformed churches this was necessary. Printing and postal costs were exceedingly high. Bulk printing and general distribution of synodical and classical minutes was prohibitively expensive. Consequently, the provision of Article 45 was necessary.

Today the provision of Article 45 is outdated. In our churches we have instituted the position of stated clerk, both at the classical and the synodical level. Besides performing

the duties of corresponding secretary and compiling the agendas, the stated clerk acts as the custodian of the minutes and archives. He transcribes the script minutes into the permanent record. He sees to the printing and distribution of the minutes (*Acts*). And he takes care of the archives.

The minutes of our broader assemblies are readily accessible today. Each consistory receives a copy of the classical minutes to be filed with its own archives. Individuals can borrow the consistory's copy of the classical minutes, or obtain their own copy by requesting it from the classical stated clerks. Our Acts of Synod are made available to all the members in the denomination free of charge.

Today too we see to it that the Acts or minutes of previous assemblies are available at our broader assemblies. This belongs to the duty of the stated clerk, and is one reason why the stated clerk, although he may not be delegated to the assembly, must be present for its deliberations. As a rule the Acts or minutes of the assemblies for the past several years are on hand.

Why do these previous minutes need to be at hand? For several reasons. First, they must be at hand so that the assembly can ascertain whether decisions previously taken were implemented and whether work assigned was carried out. Second, so that previous decisions on a matter can be consulted. Third, so as to prevent matters which were dealt with in the past from being raised again without substantial and new grounds. (Cf. *Church Order*, Article 46.) And finally, so that no new decision be taken which conflicts with a past decision.

In order to make the previous minutes not merely available but accessible, past decisions ought to be indexed. This is tedious but important work. A synodically-appointed committee has been working on indexing the past decisions of our synods, as well as the combined classes. This project should be completed in

the near future. Such a tool will prove of invaluable service to ministers, classical and synodical committees, and anyone seeking information on past synodical decisions.

Care of Ecclesiastical Archives

Implied in Article 45 is the importance of the preservation of the archives of our ecclesiastical assemblies.

This importance is not always realized. How many consistories could produce all the minute books that were filled from the day of the church's organization, as well as all the supplements to the minutes? Are the past supplements organized and filed? In many instances there are gaps, with minute books and supplements missing, having disappeared through negligence or forgetfulness. One of the "Questions for Church Visitation" is "Are the archives in order?"

There are good reasons why a church and why the broader assemblies should take care to preserve their archives. In the first place, the purpose is the preservation of the official decisions of the body. Secondly, the purpose is to make the work of the assemblies of value to future generations. And third, the purpose is to preserve a record of the history of the church, for to a great extent the history of the church is connected to the work of the church's assemblies.

What should be preserved and included in the archives? It is impossible and unnecessary to include in the archives everything that is addressed to a body. Consistories receive whole stacks of mail which do not even deserve to be taken to the consistory meetings, not to speak of being included in the permanent archives. Notes of thanks, invitations to certain functions, various notices, etc. would only clutter the archives.

The following should be included in the archives of the local congregation:

2. A complete and updated membership file, including records of baptism, confessions of faith, transfers, and dismissals.
3. All important correspondence.
4. All committee reports, especially those dealing with matters of the exercise of Christian discipline.
5. Classical and synodical agendas, minutes, and Acts.
6. All legal papers relating to the church's incorporation, deeds of property, and proofs of possession.
7. All documents that bear on the church's origin and history.
8. Some suggest all weekly bulletins.

With a view to the orderly filing of and safe preservation of the local archives, every church should have a fireproof file cabinet or vault of some kind. Usually the duty of updating and preserving the archives falls to the clerk of the consistory. But consistories may also appoint some other consistory member besides the clerk to act as archivist. This may especially be wise in larger congregations.

Classical and synodical archives are cared for by the stated clerks of these assemblies. The annual report of the stated clerks should include a report on the status of the archives. The archives should be safely stored and not just kept in the personal possession of the stated clerk, probably tucked away in his attic or basement. If necessary safe and adequate storage space should be rented. One reason for the addition that is being built to our seminary is to provide a suitable place for storage of denominational archives. The archives then will be kept under one roof and under controlled conditions, thus making the archives more accessible than they have been in the past and at the same time assuring their preservation for future generations. □

1. All minute books.

The Reformed Family: Resolved

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way....

Psalm 101:2

R — to read the Scriptures faithfully each day, for in them is found eternal life. The Bible is water to my parched soul and food for my hungry heart. The truly hungry man does not pick at his meal, but attacks it ravenously. So will I devour the Word of God. "Take up and read," said Augustine. Come apart from the storms and stresses of life and rest a while. Read this inspired, most elegant Book. Believe all that is written on its pages.

E — to edify others with words of encouragement and comfort, building up the languishing or distressed saint. By my words of kindness and charity, may others be strengthened in their commitment to the Reformed faith. By my rebukes, may the wise take heed to his ways. To admonish, or to be admonished, is painful. Its cost may be friendships and social standing. "... teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs..." (Col. 3).

S — to seek the Kingdom and its righteousness first — that is, to seek it exclusively. To seek the Kingdom by my godly walk and words, promoting the advantage of my neighbor. For everything else in this world, all that appeals to my whims and desires, all that I lust after and covet that is not of God will soon and surely pass away. Seeking the

kingdom of heaven has always been an either/or choice: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

O — to obey all of God's commandments. It is not for me to pick and choose: I will keep my hands from thievery, but flaying my neighbor with my tongue just happens to be a pet vice of mine. Obey is a frowned-upon four-letter word today. Wives are co-partners with husbands. Even in the marriage form, *to obey* is frequently left out altogether or compromised. And children certainly cannot be expected to obey. They have fragile egos and should be reasoned with and coaxed to compliance. Nevertheless, "To obey is better than sacrifice...."

L — to love God and my neighbor more and more purely. This will take great effort. Loving God is difficult enough. Loving my neighbor is an impossibility. When he is next door, I move him far away; it is easier to love a remote man. When I do try to love him, he is either disagreeable or unworthy of it. "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people," writes G.K. Chesterton.

V — to be vigilant. To be watchful that the wick in my candle is not extinguished. For he shall come like a thief. "You will not, I most solemnly assure you, see Him approaching. If the householder had known at which time the burglar would arrive, he would have been ready for him. If the servant had known when his absent employer would come home, he would not have been found drunk in the kitchen. But they did not. Nor will you. Therefore, you must be ready

at all times" (*The Business of Heaven*, C.S. Lewis). Ordinarily, a sentry keeps his eyes open all the time. Paradoxically, this kind of vigilance requires us to have our eyes closed — to be constant in prayer. We are living in the last frame in God's camera. Pray without ceasing.

E — to exercise myself unto godliness. In our society, there is an excessive amount of attention paid to bodily fitness. The body must be lean, strong, well-toned, and tanned. The health club has become the modern-day Fountain of Youth. Earlier and ever more early children are enrolled in sports programs and gymnastic classes. "Bodily exercise profiteth little," says the apostle to Timothy. Would that we put our intellect, energy, and enthusiasm into spiritual gymnastics. For whenever the apostle Paul urges us to run, to spar, or to wrestle it is always for a spiritual race, a spiritual boxing match, or a spiritual wrestling tournament towards a heavenly goal to receive a laurel of righteousness. We must work out — it is true — our salvation with fear and trembling.

D — to do His will, not theorize or talk about it. My life must be the Ten Commandments written in large, bold letters. I must feed the hungry, house the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick, encourage the prisoner. It is in offering a cup of cold water, in the Name of Christ, that I myself drink deeply of the Water of Life. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25). C.H. Spurgeon writes in *Barbed Arrows*: "A bushful of resolutions is of small value; a single grain of practice is worth the whole." □

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

Chapter 4

The Last Four Days of Creation-Week (cont.)

God's Creation of the Living Creatures (Gen. 1:20-25)

In this connection let us pay attention to the following facets of the creation of the animals which we have not yet considered.

In the first place, we call attention to the creative act as such, whereby the fish and fowl were brought into being on the fifth day, and the animals on the sixth day. Concerning the fish and fowl we read, first of all, in Genesis 1:20: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Again in verse 21 we read: "And God created great whales (or sea monsters, the larger creatures of the sea), and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind." Concerning the animals we read in Genesis 1:24: "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so." Again in verse 25 it is emphasized: "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind." Once more, we note in Genesis 2:19: "And out of the ground the Lord God

formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air."

There are several elements worthy of note here.

1. The text teaches that each of these different kinds of creatures is brought into being in its own sphere, and is by virtue of its creation and according to its increased nature adapted to the sphere in which it lives. There was no process of evolution and adaptation of various creatures to the spheres in which they lived. But they were created as they are and with the kind of nature they possess, and adapted to live according to the particular divine ordinance for the existence of each. The ordinance for the fish is that it shall live in the water. It did not have to become adapted to that mode of existence. On the contrary, that ordinance is created in its very being, and its entire existence is wonderfully adapted to that end. Thus we read that God said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." Or, more literally: "Let the waters swarm swarms of living souls."

The same idea is emphasized concerning the fowl. The ordinance of God for the existence of the fowl is that, while they are earth-bound creatures, they shall fly about freely in the air. Hence, on the one hand, according to Genesis 2:19, they are like the animals, formed from the ground. For there we read that the Lord God "formed from the ground every beast of the field and every fowl of the heavens." Though they

fly in the air, and though some of the fowl are amphibious, their abode is the earth. Yet they are created to fly in the open firmament of heaven. The fowl were not brought forth by the waters, as our King James Version would seem to indicate. Nor were they produced by the firmament; nor, in fact, do they fly in the firmament, as also the King James Version suggests. But God ordained them by their very creation to be creatures of the earth which were peculiarly adapted to fly in the air. Thus we read literally in verse 20 that God also said on the fifth day, "Let fowl fly upon the earth, upon the face of the firmament of the heavens." This presents the birds exactly as we see them and from the viewpoint of our earth. They fly upon, that is, over the earth. As we view them, we see them in the air against the background of the blue firmament of the heavens, that is, not flying in that firmament as such, but upon the face of the firmament. If thus we understand the creation of the fowl, there is a realistic picture of the nature of these creatures as we behold them from the earth; and at the same time there is clear harmony between the record in Genesis 1:20 and Genesis 2:19. Also the fowl, therefore, are adapted, fit, in their increased nature for the kind of existence they are to lead.

The same is true, in the third place, of the various animals. The animals are not brought forth by the waters; nor do they drop out of the air; but God calls them forth from

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the earth that is to be their abode and to which, as their habitat, their very natures are adapted by virtue of the creative Word of God. The earth is the sphere of their movement and their life; and they are brought forth in that sphere, belonging to it, fitting in it, as strictly earthy and material living souls.

2. We may note that Scripture emphasizes that these creatures were made after their kind. There are those who attempt to cater to evolution here even as far as the literal text is concerned. They have sought to explain the text as meaning, for example, that animal-life developed somehow from the plants. The plants, then, are the living earth; and from that living earth the animals were brought forth by a process of development. This, of course, is only one of various attempts to vitiate the plain teaching of Scripture. But notice that Scripture here speaks of the three different main kinds of creatures: fish, fowl, and animals. Then it emphasizes repeatedly, with respect to each of these, that it was created after its kind: the living souls of the waters, all after their kind; the winged fowl, after his kind; and the land animals, each after his kind. This does not exclude the fact that there are various classes and families of animals, and that there are within these families many different varieties. But all these varieties are limited to their own species. The Bible here plants a barrier which cannot be and is not transgressed, evolution to the contrary notwithstanding. Clearer language it could not speak in this regard.

3. Note that these fish and fowl and animals are all the product of God's work of creation. All three words for "create" are employed at one point or another in the biblical record. God *made* them — that is, they are His workmanship. God *formed* them — that is, He gave to each creature its peculiar form and nature, after its kind. He *created* them, separating the one from the other, and giving to these creatures being outside of and in distinction

from His own Being, separating them, as it were, out of His counsel. There is no process of development and growth, no evolutionary process. But, as the text also informs us, this making and forming and creating took place by God's speech. God said, "Let the waters swarm ... let fowl fly ... let the earth bring forth." Through His almighty Word, that which He spoke came into existence, the vast variety of living creatures representing, as it were, so many individual words of God. Moreover, with that same creative Word God blessed them. God addressed these living souls and by His creative Word gave them the power to reproduce themselves and the power to fulfill their calling and place in His creation to multiply and to fill the waters and the earth.

In the second place, as we have already suggested, the creation of all these living creatures also has its purpose, its goal, in the creation of man, who was to have dominion over all the works of God's hands. Only, we must remember also that while man in the state of rectitude was the immediate goal, and the crown, of God's creative work, this was not His only purpose. God had in view some better thing. All things were made in the beginning with a view to that ultimate purpose of God in Christ, and therefore also with a view to the course of history through which all things are to pass. It is because of this relationship also that it can be said that part of the purpose of the creation of the animals is seen in their symbolical and typical function, which they serve in order to teach us concerning the spiritual and heavenly realities.

We must bear in mind, therefore, that also the animal-world was destined to pass through a history, and it was created with that history and the consummation of that history in view. In this connection we may note the following three phases:

1. We must remember that, as they were created, all things stood at first in their original and perfect state. One may raise many ques-

tions in this connection. If sin had not come, what would have been the course of development in the animal-realm? Would there have been death in the animal-world? Would there have been the feeding of one animal upon another? Would the animals have reached some kind of higher state? And such questions can be multiplied. How must we view all these things in their original state?

We must be careful with regard to such questions. If questions of this kind arise out of a genuine desire to understand God's Word, they deserve to be faced, surely. But there are many such questions raised nowadays in a critical spirit, and out of a desire to show that the Bible draws a foolish and impossible picture of things. In the latter case, of course, there is no point in attempting an answer. Questions of that kind have always been raised over against Scripture. Men of God like Augustine and Luther and Calvin already faced such questions. When, for example, Calvin and Luther faced the question as to what God was doing before the beginning, they replied by quoting Augustine to the effect that God was busy preparing hell for people with nosy questions. That is a case of answering a fool according to his folly. We must not, as fools, ask critical questions.

Certainly, there could have been no death originally. Of course, we must remember that sin is a fact, and that it is indeed a fact also according to God's determinate counsel: it was for God no unforeseen circumstance. Moreover, we may also well remember that in terms of our present experience in this world of sin and the curse we cannot begin to imagine how things must have been in the earthly creation prior to the fall. All that we know from experience is a world subject to the curse and vanity, also as far as the animal-world is concerned. While things, therefore, were created with the reality of sin and death in view, we must remember that originally all things were perfectly good.

Death as a historical fact is the result of sin; and it did not enter the world before sin entered.

That also means that there could have been no war and no conflict originally. True, the animal has been so created that, as today, he can be nourished by another animal. In fact, we cannot even conceive of the whole existence of the animal-world without the reality of one animal feeding upon another and with animals feeding only upon plants. But before sin and death there was no such warfare. This is in harmony, too, with the notice in Genesis 1:30 that God gave to the animals the green herb for meat. There was harmony originally: harmony between God and man, between man and the animal, between animal and animal. The creation was marked by peace, rooted in peace with God.

2. But that creation has fallen

into the bondage of corruption. Man, created to be the head and king of creation as God's friend, is at war with God. The king became God's enemy. This war causes separation. It is the root of the separation between man and the animal. The animal does to man what man does to God. He rebels. There is separation among the animals. The animal does to the animal what man does to man. There is suffering and death in the animal-realm also, due to the entrance of death and due to God's curse. The creature is made subject to vanity. The higher the animal, the keener the suffering that it evinces.

3. But also that bondage of corruption is not the end. For Christ is appointed God's King from eternity, to deliver His church and the entire creation from the corruption of sin and death, and to raise them to the

level of the heavenly and the glorious in the new heavens and the new earth. From Christ as the Friend-servant of Jehovah He sends peace.

Even the whole creation, including the animals, recognizes this Christ. That is why you read in Romans 8 of the whole creation earnestly expecting and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know not what shall be the plan of that delivered creature, nor what form it shall take. Certainly we must not think earthly in this regard. But the animal kingdom shall certainly be delivered, along with the whole creation, and under the King and His people shall participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God. □

Book Reviews

"Good Morning Alice," by Gise J. VanBaren. Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1994. 157 pp. \$11.50 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

We quote from the jacket of the book: "Alice (the author's sister, RDD) was dying from Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, RDD). During the last stages of her illness, notes from an anonymous friend arrived daily to comfort and encourage Alice. Each note reflected on a Scripture passage. These reflections helped Alice come to terms with her suffering and brought her to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in His way for her.

"The author skillfully weaves these letters into his account of and commentary on Alice's illness and death. In these pages the reader also can find comfort and strength to endure the sufferings, discouragements, and tragedies which come to

each child of God and can find the joy and peace of trusting God in all His works and ways."

God's children who struggle with terminal illness, or those who have loved ones struggling with serious or terminal illness, will want to read this moving account. Any believer who wrestles with the question of how a good God can cause His beloved saints to suffer will benefit from the book and from the preface which was written by Prof. Herman Hanko.

Gise J. Van Baren is a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. He at present serves the Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

The RFPA is to be commended for making this moving story available to the reading public. ■

Studies in I Thessalonians, by Cornelius Hanko. Grand Rapids:

Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1994. 29 pp. \$3.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

Studies in II Thessalonians, by Cornelius Hanko. Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1994. 22 pp. \$3.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

These are two excellent study guides on the epistles to the Thessalonians written by the Rev. Cornelius Hanko, a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Rev. Hanko divides I Thessalonians into nine sections or lessons, the first of which is introductory in nature and provides an overview of the entire epistle. Each lesson begins with a brief introduction. This is followed by a series of questions and/or comments in outline form. There are numerous references to other Scripture passages which help

the reader compare Scripture with Scripture. The author uses the same format in the six lessons or sections of the booklet on II Thessalonians.

These two booklets could profitably be used by Bible study societies in the churches. They would be helpful to God's people in their personal study of the Scriptures as well.

We highly recommend them. ■

Scent From Heaven, by Timothy Cross. Ambassador Productions Limited. 16 Hillview Ave., Belfast BT5 6JR, Northern Ireland, 1994. 95 pp. No price (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

I came to know the author of this little booklet at the Conference in Galashiels, Scotland in the summer of 1994. I found him a man deeply devoted to the Reformed faith and interested in learning as much of it as he could. The books I have seen from him are predominantly devotional. *Scent From Heaven* falls into this category.

The title of the book is intended to impart the author's main thesis: Just as, in the world of plants, some plants will release their aroma only if they are crushed, so is the "crushing" or "bruising" of Christ on Calvary the way in which the sweet aroma of the blessings of salvation

become our possession.

The author sinks the roots of his thinking deeply into the typology of the Old Testament, beginning with the perfumed oil which was used to anoint those who held special offices in the Old Testament church. From that starting point, he applies the figure to various aspects of Old Testament typology and different aspects of the believer's life in the world.

The book is clearly written and easily understood. It has short chapters which are particularly conducive to personal devotions. It will give the reader much on which to reflect as the reader is led to ponder different truths in Scripture. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregational Activities

The Council of the Georgetown PRC (now of Hudsonville, MI) was able to report to their congregation that the Heritage Christian School Board granted their request to allow the use of Heritage's facilities for their worship services. The first service held at Heritage Christian School, 4900 40th Ave. in Hudsonville, was November 27. This move was made necessary for two reasons: Bauer Elementary School is scheduled to undergo a major face-lift beginning this winter, which means that their gymnasium would no longer be available, and, second, after Georgetown's organization back in March of 1994, their membership has swelled to over 60 families, making larger facilities a necessity.

We can also report that Georgetown's parsonage is near completion. Since construction be-

gan in late August, the parsonage, located in Georgetown Estates in Hudsonville, MI, has been steadily moving toward completion. If all goes as planned, Rev. VanOverloop and his family could be moved in by the middle of this month.

Georgetown's Building Committee is also busy searching for a suitable piece of property for a future church building. However, it has proved very difficult to find five or more acres of land in the Bauer, MI area.

In a follow-up to our last church news, we received word that the city of Lansing, IL reviewed the re-submitted building plans and returned them to our Peace PRC in Lansing. The plans of Peace Church for correcting the soil problems on their proposed building site have been approved. But no permit was given to begin building. There appear to be about ten small items which have yet to be changed before final approval can be given.

The Council of our First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI held an open house on Saturday, December 10 in honor of Rev. George Lubbers and his wife, Rena. In September of 1994,

Rev. Lubbers celebrated 60 years in the office of pastor. A quick check of our churches' yearbook reveals that during those 60 years, Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers served our churches in six different congregations, once as home missionary, and once as missionary in Jamaica.

Rev. Tom Miersma preached his farewell to his congregation at First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada on November 27.

The Miersmas expressed their thanks to the congregation in Edmonton for the kindness and love shown to them, not only at the farewell evening given on their behalf on November 18, but also for the twelve years that the Lord privileged them to serve among the church there.

Rev. George Lanting, another of our churches' retired ministers, was this year's speaker for the annual Reformation Day Lecture at the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. He spoke on the topic, "The Reformation: Liberty for the Believer." In addition, Rev. Wayne Bekkering, pastor of the Pella, IA PRC, spoke a day earlier at the First PRC in Edmonton. He spoke on the

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

theme, "Our Reformational Responsibility."

The choir of the Loveland, CO PRC gave their annual Thanksgiving concert for their congregation on November 20.

The choirs of Byron Center, MI PRC and Hope PRC in Walker, MI gave the first of their two combined concerts on December 4 at Hope Church. Plans called for the concert to be repeated again on January 1 at Byron Center.

Mission Activities

The tentative date of Rev. Tom Miersma's installation as home missionary for our churches was set for December 18, the Lord willing. More about Loveland PRC's plans for this as they become available.

Collections taken by the

Hudsonville, MI PRC, calling church for our mission field in Northern Ireland, have made it possible to purchase a new washer and dryer for the Hanco family. Their present machines are both very old and very small.

Hudsonville's Council also appointed a committee to plan the upcoming furlough of the Hanco family this summer, D.V. They want especially to schedule speaking engagements by Rev. Hanco throughout the States, for the promotion of the field.

Evangelism Activities

On October 23 the Evangelism Committee, along with the congregation of the First PRC of Holland, MI, sponsored a special church service in which a special invitation was

extended to the Holland community.

Rev. W. Bruinsma preached on the Word of God found in II Timothy 3:16, 17 under the theme, "The Profit of Holy Scripture."

Minister Activities

Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, declined the call he had been considering to serve as the next pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC.

Food for Thought

In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength; let us trust in Him for ever. Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God.

— Charles H. Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The faculty, student body, and members of the Theological School Committee of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary express their sympathy to Don and Judi Doezeema, co-workers, on the death of Judi's mother,

MRS. HELEN BYLSMA.

May these words of the gospel comfort them: "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" at the coming of the Lord Jesus (I Thess. 4:13-18).

Prof. David J. Engelsma, Rector
Protestant Reformed
Theological Seminary
Grandville, MI



RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of a faithful member,

MR. GERALD KORHORN.

May the Lord comfort the family. "But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Mrs. Mary Kaiser, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's/Ladies' Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church wish to extend Christian sympathy to Don and Judi Doezeema in the loss of her mother,

MRS. HELEN BYLSMA.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Phil Lotterman, President
Jean Driesenga, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's/Ladies' Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church wish to extend Christian sympathy to Gerry Kuiper and Clarence and Grace Kuiper in the death of their husband and brother,

MR. HENRY KUIPER II.

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

Phil Lotterman, President
Jean Driesenga, Secretary