



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The call of God in the gospel, like election whence it originates and the cross on which it is based, is particular grace, but the external aspect of the call — the summons to repentance and faith — may, and must, be addressed to all hearers, in dead earnest .

See "Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism: the Alternatives?"
— p. 317

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Meditation — <i>Rev. Michael J. DeVries</i>	
Coming to the Throne of Grace	315
Editorials — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	
Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism: the Alternatives?	317
A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism	
5. Matthew 24 (cont.)	319
Letters	321
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i>	322
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — <i>Rev. Steven R. Key</i>	
Man: God's Unique Creation	324
When Thou Sittest In Thine House — <i>Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers</i>	
The Reformed Family: Houses	326
Strength of Youth — <i>Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma</i>	
A Lover of God ... or a Liar?	328
Bring the Books — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	
John Gill: Hyper-Calvinist?	331
Book Review	333
Report of Classis West — <i>Rev. Steven R. Key</i>	334
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	335

In This Issue ...

Who of us tempted people of God is not touched by the gospel's assurance of a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? See "Coming to the Throne of Grace."

Who has no stake in the issue whether the earthly future for the true church is tribulation or a "Christianized" world? See "A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism."

Which Reformed churchman or churchwoman has no interest in developments in the Reformed Church of America (RCA) concerning the preacher (with his numerous supporters) who affirms homosexuality, questions Scripture, and denies that Jesus Christ is the only Savior? See "What is 'Reformed'?" in "All Around Us."

Is there a distinctive Reformed, indeed Christian, view of a house? And does our generation in North America have it? See "The Reformed Family: Houses."

What about love for God among the young people of the covenant? What does it have to do with this love for God that you, a young person, "deliberately try to walk fast enough to leave someone else out of the group"? See "A Lover of God ... or a Liar."

What reader, in our age of charismatic worship and of a Christian life that is all feeling, will not be struck by the statement, and principle, "The work of the Holy Spirit is not manifested in the earthquakes of religious frenzy, but in the still, small voice of daily regeneration"? See the review of the book, *Seasons of Refreshing*.

Will any Protestant Reformed reader want to overlook news about efforts on behalf of new Protestant Reformed high schools, about developments regarding land and a minister in the newest congregation, and about calls? See "News From Our Churches."

— DJE

Coming to the Throne of Grace

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Hebrews 4:15, 16

What a High Priest we have! Our risen and exalted Savior, Jesus Christ, is our great High Priest. In the old dispensation the high priest would pass once a year, from the altar that was outside the tabernacle, through the Holy Place, into the Holy of Holies, behind the veil, to appear briefly in the presence of the Thrice Holy God. But our great High Priest, in an infinitely more exalted manner, has proceeded through the heavens into the very presence of the God of our salvation! There He is exalted at the right hand of God in highest glory. All power and authority in heaven and upon earth have been given unto Him.

Having this great High Priest, we are exhorted to hold fast our profession. We are to cling tenaciously to the truth, the gospel of Christ, our great High Priest. But that is much easier said than done. We face many temptations in holding fast our profession. We are tempted on every side to deny our

profession, to cast it away, to hold fast unto the lie rather than the Truth.

Who among us can stand in his own strength in the face of such temptations? Do we not face a virtual barrage of temptations from that great tempter, Satan? As we stand alone, the broad way of sin is very attractive and appealing. We need grace and mercy to stand, to hold fast our profession! Hence the exhortation, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace...."

Come to the throne!

As a figure of speech in Scripture, the word "throne" refers to one who holds dominion and exercises authority. A throne is the symbol of royal sovereignty and majesty and of the supreme power of judgment. Thus, the throne here signifies God in His absolute sovereignty and power, God in His perfect righteousness and holiness, and God in His glorious beauty and majesty.

But, notice, it is a gracious throne. Grace is the power of God to save and deliver us from the bondage of sin. It is the power of God which sustains us in the midst of temptations. It is the power of God which enables us to hold fast our profession. Thus, grace to deliver us from temptation, to give us the victory over temptations, is to be found only at the throne! The throne of grace refers to God as our Sovereign Friend who by His grace delivers us and pre-

serves us as His covenant children.

"Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace"! This bespeaks our approach to God in prayer and worship. As we read in Hebrews 10:22, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Coming to the throne of grace, we enter into the fellowship of our God. We draw near to worship and adore Him, to taste and see that He is good. This implies that we are conscious of our need for God's grace and mercy.

Let us come with "boldness," with confidence, and with freedom in speaking! No, this is not a lack of awe and reverence such as is so often seen in our day in prayer and worship. Neither is this boldness a proud and haughty confidence. We are not to come before God with the attitude of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable, who thanked God that he was not as other, sinful men or even as the publican (Luke 18:11). But the idea is that we come with a boldness or confidence that is rooted in faith. We are to approach the throne of grace with an attitude of confidence that our God will hear us and grant our petitions. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We must come unto the throne with a boldness that is rooted in the faith

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which unites us with our great High Priest.

Seeking mercy and grace!

We approach the throne of grace with the purpose of obtaining mercy. God's mercy is His desire to have His people share in His own divine blessedness, His desire to deliver us from misery and fill us with life and joy. We come to the throne with the purpose of finding grace, God's saving power which upholds us in the midst of the strife. We are saved by grace alone. We are also preserved by the grace of our God. More specifically, we seek mercy and grace "to help in time of need." The phrase "in time of need" is really one word which refers to the proper time.

But when is this time of need? Of course, we need mercy and grace constantly! Not for a moment can we stand apart from God's mercy and grace. "To help in time of need" does not promote a "fox-hole theology," the notion that we need come to God only when we find ourselves in danger or trouble. We must constantly be coming to the throne! That must be our life; we ought to live in the consciousness of our dependence upon God's mercy and grace. Oh, it is certainly true that sometimes we feel the need of approaching the throne of grace much more strongly than other times, but the need is always there!

But this Word of God emphasizes that the need is especially there in time of temptation. Temptations always have the character of presenting the way of sin and disobedience as being preferable to the way of faithfulness. The temptation is always to leave the straight and narrow way, to cease holding fast our profession, and to walk down that broad way which leadeth to destruction.

As God's people in the midst of this world, we face many temptations in striving to hold fast our profession. That is true for us as

young people: we are tempted to rebel, to conform to the world of sin, and to compromise our convictions. That is true for our children: they are tempted to disobey, to lie, to cheat, and to be cruel. And that is true for us, as men and women, for daily we are tempted. Satan would point out that if we hold fast our profession we will face hardships, mockeries, sufferings, and maybe even death. We cannot possibly stand and gain the victory over temptation in our own strength. In time of temptation we must "come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace"!

Encouraged by our High Priest!

We see the urgency of coming to the throne of grace, do we not? But there may be many doubts and fears that assail us. How can we approach unto this throne? Are we not grievous sinners? Approach with boldness? Dare we appear before the sovereign God? Can we possibly stand before His face? Do you dare?

Oh, you may say, "But we can come to the throne through our great High Priest who has passed into the heavens." But can we? Would such a great High Priest have an interest in us? Is He not so far above us that it is impossible for Him to conceive of our needs? Could such a great High Priest possibly understand the temptations we face in holding fast our profession? Is He not the very Son of God? Is He not highly exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on High? Dare we go unto Him? Do you dare?

This glorious gospel gives us encouragement to come unto the throne: "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Clearly the great glory of the exalted Christ does not create a barrier between Him and His people! There is no need for us to imagine that our great High Priest will have no feeling for us, poor sin-

ners. In fact, the negative form of this statement indicates that the inspired writer has anticipated the objections we might raise concerning the possibility of coming to the throne of grace.

We have not a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our infirmities. The phrase "to be touched with the feeling of" does not simply express the idea of the compassion of one who regards suffering from afar. On the contrary, it emphasizes the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own.

Our High Priest is touched with the feeling of, is able to sympathize with, our infirmities. Our "infirmities" are all of our weaknesses, those of both body and soul. They include our physical sufferings and afflictions, all our sorrows, all our anxieties, all our doubts, all our fears, and the weakness of our faith as we strive to hold fast our profession. We need not fear or despair! Our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, endured all our sufferings! He sympathizes with us; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities!

But still more, He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He is a tempted High Priest; He has been tempted according to the likeness of our temptations. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18). Our High Priest "suffered being tempted"! We recall, of course, Christ being tempted in the wilderness by the devil. And throughout His ministry the temptation was there to forsake the way that led to the cross! These temptations were very real!

But even though Christ was in

all points tempted like as we are, there was one fundamental difference: "yet without sin." Christ did not stumble and fall into sin. As the only begotten Son of God in our flesh, He could not sin! But our High Priest always walked the way of perfect obedience before His Father, yea, all the way to the cross! Do we realize what this means? Our High Priest knows all our temptations; He knows all our infirmities; He knows all our burdens; He knows all our sufferings; for He experienced it all, but never once sinned!

That is the High Priest we have! What an encouragement! He sympathizes with our infirmities as no earthly high priest ever could. The earthly high priests of Aaron's line had the highest privilege of passing once a year through the inner veil into the Holy of Holies to appear for a few minutes before God on behalf of the people. Christ Jesus is our Advocate and Intercessor before the face of the Father constantly! He knows the great temptations we face as we strive to hold fast our profession. He was in all points tempted like

as we are, yet without sin. He knows exactly how we feel! We are never without someone who understands!

Seeing we have such a High Priest, "let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace"! Be diligent to seek the means of grace! Live a prayerful life! For we shall find there in the sanctuary our High Priest, our sympathetic High Priest, our High Priest who has suffered being tempted. There we shall certainly obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need! □

Editorials

Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism: the Alternatives?

The influential Banner of Truth Trust in Scotland has just published Iain H. Murray's *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism: The Battle for Gospel Preaching*. The Trust intends the book to be major artillery in its war against the dread foe of hyper-Calvinism in Great Britain.

Why in an England overrun with liberalism, the mysticism of the charismatic movement, and Arminianism, Murray and the Trust fix almost obsessively on the error of hyper-Calvinism is puzzling. Spurgeon himself, the champion whom Murray wheels out to fight for him in this new book, said of one of the leading hyper-Calvinists of his time, "Gill is the Coryphaeus (leader — DJE) of hyper-Calvinism, but if his followers never went beyond their master, they would not go very far astray" (cited in George M. Ella,

John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth, Go Publications, 1995, p. 134).

The willingness of The Banner of Truth Trust to pitch battle against hyper-Calvinism is all the more striking in light of its policy of avoiding controversy. The Trust steadfastly refuses, e.g., to defend the fundamental Reformed and Presbyterian doctrine and practice of infant baptism and the intimately related truth of the covenant against their detractors in Great Britain. The rejection of infant baptism and, with it, the one covenant of grace is not a whit less serious an error than hyper-Calvinism. Spurgeon himself was guilty of this grievous departure from the Reformed faith. In addition, rejection of infant baptism is far more widespread in Calvinistic circles in the British Isles than is hyper-Calvinism.

Is there no champion of cov-

enantal theology in the hoary past of Scottish or English Calvinism whom The Banner of Truth Trust could resurrect in order to drive the Baptist error from the Reformed field in Great Britain?

Be that as it may, *Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism* is, in the main, right in both its positive and negative theses. The positive thesis is that the preaching of the gospel includes the call, or summons, to all hearers to repent of their sins with true repentance and to believe on the Savior with genuine faith. This, regardless of their spiritual condition and of their eternal destiny by divine appointment. The negative thesis is that the rejection of what Reformed theology has always held as the "external call of the gospel" constitutes hyper-Calvinism.

Hyper-Calvinism, a relatively rare error in church history and by no means one of the most press-

ing threats to the faith today, except, evidently, in the British Isles, is a teaching that so exaggerates and distorts an important aspect of Calvinism as to mar the whole. Whereas the prevailing tendency is to come short of full, robust Calvinism, hyper-Calvinism goes beyond it ("hyper" means 'beyond'). The error of denying that the gospel commands all to repent and believe may with good right be described as hyper-Calvinism because those who hold the error defend it in terms of historic Calvinism. Since the unregenerated sinner is by virtue of his total depravity unable to repent and believe, he may not be exhorted to repent and believe. On the other hand, so they argue, to call the unregenerated sinner to believe would be to imply his natural ability to do so, thus contradicting the biblical testimony to the sinner's natural condition of spiritual death.

Charles H. Spurgeon was correct to oppose this hyper-Calvinism in his time, as is Iain Murray today. The Protestant Reformed Churches in America also reject this hyper-Calvinism. In their synodically adopted "Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches: A Brief Exposition of the Confessions regarding Certain Points of Doctrine as Maintained by the Protestant Reformed Churches" (1951), they said this: "We maintain ... that the preaching comes to all; and that God seriously commands to faith and repentance, and that to all those who come and believe He promises life and peace." This is the official stand of the Reformed churches in the Canons of Dordt: "This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel" (II/5).

The motive of Spurgeon in opposing hyper-Calvinism was also

right. Hyper-Calvinism, refusing to call all who hear, seriously cripples the mission activity of the church. Thus, contrary to its own intentions, it places an obstacle in the way of Christ's gathering of His elect church out of the nations.

But in the grounds attributed to Spurgeon by Iain Murray for his — Spurgeon's — rejection of hyper-Calvinism, Spurgeon fell into error that is worse than that which he opposed. This is the error, fully shared by Murray, that God loves every sinner who hears the gospel with a love revealed in the crucified Christ and, in this love, desires the salvation of every sinner (see pp. 88-97, "Hyper-Calvinism and the Love of God"). The preaching of the gospel to all, particularly the command to all to repent and believe, is now conceived as grace to all. There is gospel-grace, that is, the grace of God in the crucified Jesus Christ, to every sinner without exception who hears the preaching.

This is Arminianism. This is Arminianism in its rawest, most objectionable features: a universal, ineffectual love of God in Jesus Christ; a universal will to salvation that is frustrated by the contrary will of sinners; grace in the blessed gospel that is resisted in that a sinner to whom God directs this grace remains unsaved; and, by good and necessary implication, salvation dependent in the end upon the decision of man.

The alternative to hyper-Calvinism is Arminianism!

So, Spurgeon!

So, also, Iain Murray and The Banner of Truth Trust!

If this was the basis that was proposed in the 1700s for calling all to repent and believe, it is no wonder that the English hyper-Calvinists said no to the external call of the gospel. Such a doctrine of the external call flatly contradicts and, thus, destroys the entire system of sovereign, particular grace.

Murray is too Reformed not instinctively to feel that his (and

Spurgeon's) universal gospel-grace is devastating to the very essence of historic, confessional Calvinism. His response, however, is to create completely ungrounded distinctions which, while failing to redeem his teaching of universal grace in the gospel from the Arminian heresy, hopelessly compromise his doctrine and, in fact, render it vulnerable to the charge of sheer duplicity.

First, he invents a distinction between "special electing love which secures" salvation for some persons and a universal, non-electing love which fails to secure the salvation of anybody. *But both kinds of love are expressed and revealed in the gospel! Both are preached as desiring the salvation of sinners!*

All references to divine love in Scripture are not to be interpreted as universal (Arminianism), neither are they *all* to be made particular (Hyper-Calvinism). There is a differentiation observable in Scripture. In speaking to *Christians* Spurgeon would often make the difference clear: "Beloved, the benevolent love of Jesus is more extended than the lines of his electing love.... That (i.e. the love revealed in Matthew 23:37) is not the love which beams resplendently upon his chosen, but it is true love for all that" (p. 98).

This distinction compromises Murray's doctrine of a universal love in the gospel. Whereas this universal love in the gospel is supposed to indicate and carry out a sincere desire of God to save all who hear, in fact it cannot save anybody. It is merely a non-electing kind of love that fails to secure the salvation of anyone. What good is it? What has Murray gained by inventing it? How does Murray's doctrine of the love of God in the gospel really differ from that which teaches particular love in the gospel for the elect only? And why all the uproar of a battle against the doctrine of par-

ticular love, or grace, in the preaching?

Second, although affirming that the distinction between two kinds of love in the gospel — an electing love that secures the salvation of some and a non-electing love that secures the salvation of no one — is “important,” Murray adds that in his preaching the preacher should not mention the distinction.

While holding firmly to these important theological distinctions, Spurgeon did not believe that they were ones which had necessarily to be introduced in presenting the gospel to the unconverted ... (p. 99).

The missionary or evangelist tells his audience, “The good news is that God loves all of you with a love in Jesus Christ that desires your salvation.” He deliberately leaves the impression with his audience that God loves them all alike with the same love and desires their salvation with one and the same desire. To himself, however, the missionary is thinking, “Some of you He loves merely with a non-electing love that will not and cannot save you, and some of you He desires to save with a desire that is nullified by His eternal will *not* to save you.” Is this not gross deception?

I have two, well-meant sugges-

tions for the Rev. Iain Murray and his colleagues at The Banner of Truth Trust. First, give up the notion that you will ever convert from hyper-Calvinism, or dissuade from converting to hyper-Calvinism, by means of your doctrine of a universal love of God and a universal desire for salvation in the preaching of the gospel, one soul who truly knows and loves sovereign grace. Your doctrine that in the gospel God loves and desires to save all sinners without exception would drive me *into* hyper-Calvinism, if these were the only options. At least, in hyper-Calvinism God is God, of one mind and will; consistent with and true to Himself; sovereign in His love in Christ; and carrying out without fail the precious desire to save. At least, in hyper-Calvinism Jesus is the Savior, rather than, in multitudes of instances, merely a would-be Savior. At least, in hyper-Calvinism the Holy Ghost is honored as the irresistible power of God in the preaching.

Second, rather than to continue futilely to fire away at the hyper-Calvinist fortress with your Arminian shells, arrange a theological discussion of the vital doctrine of the call of the gospel among all those who are interested and have something to contribute. This could be done in the periodicals or by a conference. Let the distinct positions be aired and ex-

amined in light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions (men’s opinions, even the opinions of good men such as Spurgeon, are not authoritative).

But there are *three* distinct positions, not two as you seem to suppose:

1) the call is universal grace (Murray and The Banner of Truth);

2) the call is particular grace and, therefore, must not be addressed even in its external aspect to any but the elect and regenerated hearer (hyper-Calvinism);

3) the call of God in the gospel, like election whence it originates and the cross on which it is based, is particular grace, but the external aspect of the call — the summons to repentance and faith — may, and must, be addressed to all hearers, in dead earnest (the Protestant Reformed Churches, the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and others).

Why not a conference at which all positions are represented?

What an interesting and worthwhile conference this would be.

If it were held in North America, it would be hard to find a church building big enough to hold the audience.

For the sake of the Reformed faith and the unity of Calvinistic saints. ■

— DJE

A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

5. Matthew 24 (cont.)

The apparent difficulty with Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:34 is that they seem to predict the end of the world in the lifetime of His disciples. He has been instructing the disciples concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end

of the world (v. 3). He has just spoken of His visible, bodily coming in the clouds (v. 30). Then, in verse 34, He declares, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”

In fact, of course, He did not return, nor did the world end, in the lifetime of the generation to whom He was speaking.

Various erroneous solutions have been proposed for this seeming difficulty. Theological liberal-

ism finds in the text evidence that Jesus Himself, like His apostles later, mistakenly supposed that His personal, glorious, perfected, Messianic rule over all the world would occur within a few years. This is unbelief.

Others interpret "generation" as referring to the Jewish race, to believers, or to the human race. On this view, Jesus merely affirmed that there would be Jews, or believers, or humans yet alive when He would return. This is a forced and unnatural reading of the text. It is an effort to escape the difficulty posed by the words of Jesus. It does not do justice to the vehement assertion by Jesus in verse 35 concerning the truth of His words.

As was pointed out in the previous editorial, the postmillennial Presbyterian J. Marcellus Kik limited the reference of "all these things" to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Implied is that verses 3-31 speak exclusively of the destruction of Jerusalem. There is nothing in these verses that applies to the days leading up to the second coming of Christ. There is nothing in these verses, therefore, that applies to the church at the end of the 20th century. All was exhaustively fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. All is past. Kik is followed in this exegesis by the postmillennial Christian Reconstruction movement.

This explanation is obviously false inasmuch as it ignores that Jesus' teaching answers the question of His disciples about His coming and the end of the world, not only about the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 3). Also, Jesus speaks in verses 3-31 of events that cannot by any stretch of the imagination be restricted to the destruction of Jerusalem. Such is the mention in verse 14 of the coming of "the end" (Greek: *to telos*) after the gospel of the kingdom has been preached "in all the world" (literally, 'in the whole inhabited earth')

"for a witness unto all nations." Such also are the events spoken of in verses 29-31: the catastrophic signs in the heavens; the sign of the Son of man; the visible coming of the Son of man in the clouds; and the gathering of the elect by the angels with the great sound of a trumpet.

How then is verse 34 to be explained?

The natural sense of "this generation" is the normal lifetime of those to whom Jesus was speaking. If a generation is of some 40 years duration, "all these things" spoken of in verses 3-31 would, and did, take place within 40 years of Jesus' having foretold them.

"All these things" would *happen*, or *take place*. The King James translation, "be fulfilled," might be misleading, as though these things would occur fully and exhaustively during the span of that generation. The Greek is simply, "... till all these things *happen*" (*geneetai*).

"All these things" are the things that have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem, the (second) coming of Jesus Christ, and the end of the world. These were the things about which the disciples asked Jesus in verse 3. These were the things that Jesus prophesied in verses 4-31.

All these things would happen before the generation addressed by Jesus would pass away. They would happen within about 40 years. They would happen in the destruction of Jerusalem by the then risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ through the Roman army in A.D. 70.

All these things would happen *typically*, or *in the historical type*.

The destruction of Jerusalem was a God-ordained historical type of the deliverance of the elect church at the second coming of Christ through the judgment of tribulation. The New Testament church was delivered by the destruction of Jerusalem. It was delivered from the persecuting ha-

tred of the Jewish nation. It was delivered also from the clinging, entangling Jewishness of the now transcended Old Testament worship: the temple service; the civil and ceremonial laws of the nation of Israel; the earthly forms of the promises and hopes of the people of God. The grand temple had to be thrown down, to the last stone, so that the mature church of believing Jew and Gentile might flourish in her New Testament spirituality.

This deliverance took place only by way of struggle, affliction, and tribulation.

Indeed, all these things took place in A.D. 70.

Typically!

Merely typically!

Not exhaustively!

Not in the reality!

The reality was yet in the future from the vantage point of the church standing on the ruins of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The early church understood this well, as is evident from her exegesis of Matthew 24 and related passages after A.D. 70.

The reality is still in the future from the vantage point of the church in A.D. 1996. The reality, as the question of the disciples in verse 3 plainly shows, is the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

As is always the case with types, the destruction of Jerusalem came far short of complete fulfillment of the deliverance of the saints in the way of judgment. Verses 29-31 of Matthew 24 make this failure of the type clear beyond any doubt. These events await the reality: the end of the world.

But this coming reality typified in the destruction of Jerusalem is certain.

The happening of the type according to Jesus' words which cannot pass away assures it.

(to be cont.) □

— DJE

Deathbeds and Angels

I am writing in response to the Rev. Dale Kuiper's articles entitled "The Reformed View of Angels" (*Standard Bearer*, Feb. 15 and March 1, 1996). In the first article, on page 225, he sets forth his approach to the subject:

When we studied the available literature on our subject, we found that as soon as an author went beyond the Bible, without exception he became speculative and fanciful. We are not interested in that. We will restrict ourselves to the Word of God as the only source of truth regarding angels.

However, in the second installment, on page 253, under the subtitled section "Questions that often arise," he entertains questions such as "Do angels appear just before a child of God dies? Or, just as a saint expires, is it possible that he sees angels?" Some of the comments of those on their deathbed have been offered such as, "Oh, it's very beautiful!" and "I hear music," or "I see angels!" Rev. Kuiper instructs us as to what we are to think of this, as follows:

Our response is that it is entirely possible. Who are we to say that it is not true? If we keep in mind that the soul of the redeemed child of God enters into glory at the moment of physical death, and if we keep in mind that Christ sends His angels to gather His people home, why is such an experience not possible? ... we see no reason to doubt the authenticity of these remarks.

Firstly, Rev. Kuiper's position seems to fall into the realm of speculation that he intended to avoid. Secondly, even in the absence of absolutes, I believe his conclusion leans more to the side of error than truth. Furthermore,

I think it weakens his next section of the article concerning angelic appearances and leaves the door dangerously wide open for abhorrent tendencies. Perhaps Rev. Kuiper would like to respond to the following observations.

1) Someone might attempt to argue that similar experiences or statements arise from the mouths of those near death yet still in unbelief, as well as those whose hearts stop for 15 minutes and are alleged to have been "miraculously brought back to life."

2) Whatever the experience of the believer upon the senses (as we conceive of them) after death, or even at the very moment of death whenever this occurs (the cessation of consciousness, breathing, and heartbeat may not necessarily or immediately equate to "absence from the body"), the situation which Rev. Kuiper describes is still prior to death.

3) Having been at the side of some believing family members who have breathed their last breath, I have, on the one hand, heard statements that evidenced disorientation in those that were suffering, and on the other hand heard statements of peace and security in Jesus their Savior. This experience in and of itself means nothing, yet combined with my understanding of the Scriptures, it would tell me that where the believer has placed full confidence and trust in the risen Savior on this side of the grave, he has no need that the sufficiency of the Word of God and the knowledge of the glorious work of Christ in the cross cannot supply (Phil. 4:19). Death is still a curse, and in this life, until we are in the presence of the Almighty, the hope and substance for the faithful Christian is in the evidence of that which is not seen (Heb. 11:1).

4) If there is any doubt in the

mind of Rev. Kuiper (for his argument seems a bit uncertain), I suggest that it is better to err on the side that denies these alleged declarations by those nearing death. The age that we live in is not the only one that has had an excessive fascination with the study of angels. Certainly the history of the church will demonstrate that many strange and heretical doctrines and practices have arisen (particularly in the Roman Catholic church).

5) Lastly, if I were to apply the logic of Rev. Kuiper's defense to another scenario, I could defend visions of angels upon conversion. Of course, this could not be, yet the points which he makes are that the believer anticipates the entrance into glory and that the angels will have a part in bringing him there. At conversion, however, is not the change which occurs a miraculous one, where the individual is transformed in his spirit or soul, filled by the Spirit, raised up and made to sit in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6)? And even Rev. Kuiper's comments on page 252 speak of the angels in these heavenly places when he refers to Ephesians 3:10. He also speaks of the angels who are involved by way of observation and through rejoicing over that conversion.

Although there was much that was good in these articles, I think that this particular area could have been dealt with differently, or better yet, perhaps not at all.

Ernie Springer
Audubon, NJ

Response:

The questions with which I closed the article on angels were asked of me when I spoke on this subject in the Grand Rapids area last fall. I thought that both in the speech and in the *SB* article I used careful enough language that I was

not "instructing us as to what we are to think of this." I made the point that it was "possible," "we see no reason to doubt," and "this may not be experienced in every

case." Perhaps I could better have said, "This happens rarely."

Does someone want to say it is impossible? Does someone want to say to those who have heard these deathbed words, "Your

loved one was mistaken and confused"? Does someone want dogmatically to say, "It has never happened once"? Very well. I would rather leave open the possibility.

— (Rev.) Dale H. Kuiper □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ What is "Reformed"?

The *Grand Rapids Press*, February 24, 1996, reports on a controversy engaging Classis Muskegon of the Reformed Church. The report, on its front page, states:

A pastor with tolerant, yet controversial, views on homosexuality faces the likelihood of being forced out of the Reformed Church in America, following a committee recommendation to an RCA church governing body.

The Rev. Richard Rhem, pastor of the 3,500-member Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, should leave the RCA due to his "unacceptable" views on Scripture and salvation, according to the executive committee of the Muskegon Classis, a group of more than 20 Lakeshore-area churches.

In a letter mailed Friday to classis delegates, the committee urged "that Rev. Rhem and the Muskegon Classis purposefully move toward a peaceful separation, with humility and a gentle spirit." The full classis will meet Thursday at Muskegon's Hope Reformed Church to vote on the measure.

The *Grand Rapids Press*, March 5, 1996, gave the outcome of the Classical meeting:

A Reformed Church in America congregation in Spring Lake will leave the regional body that last

week voted to censure the congregation's pastor.

"We will sever ties with the Muskegon Classis," said Don VanOstenberg, chairman of the board at the 3,500-member Christ Community Church.

The Rev. Richard Rhem of Christ Community has been under fire for his beliefs in a non-literal interpretation of Scripture and salvation....

The classis was scheduled to meet this morning. Leaders in Classis Muskegon, the group of 22 churches that includes Christ Community, voted 39-19 last week that Rhem either recant his views or move toward a "peaceful separation" with the classis. Rhem has said he won't recant.

And the decision has left other congregations in the conservative classis facing a nagging question: Who's next?

One minister fears there may be no place for his congregation in the classis.

"We would be on the side of Dick Rhem's stand, and Christ Community's stand," said the Rev. Lawrence Doorn, interim pastor of Church of the Savior ... in Coopersville. "Whether that would lead us into some difficulty or not, that remains to be seen."

...Although Rhem came under scrutiny because he allowed a gay congregation to worship at his church, the classis' action was based on Rhem's beliefs in a non-literal interpretation of scripture and salvation outside of Jesus.

It was the last issue especially that's been a sticking point.

Rhem and other scholars have identified three views with regard to Christian salvation. The first holds that there is no salvation outside professed belief in Jesus. The second holds that there is sal-

vation without confessed belief but still through Jesus.

The third position, which Rhem holds, states that there is salvation through other religious systems.

... Christ Community hasn't exhausted its options within the denomination.

It could transfer to another classis.... Or Rhem himself, who is really the point of contention, could transfer his credentials to another classis....

Darrell Todd Maurina, United Reformed News Service, reports also some of the discussion which took place on the floor of the Classis. There was a majority voting to censure the views of Richard Rhem. But two things stand out in the report: (1) the vote was 38-19 against Rhem; (2) the strongest sentiments reported in Maurina's release in support of Rhem came from a woman minister and from a woman elder. Rhem himself told the Classis, "I am not prepared to say there is no salvation apart from that mediated by Jesus Christ as understood in the Christian tradition. Even the Polish Pope agrees with me on that issue, and so do many, many others, so I'm not really that far off in that area."

The women officebearers who supported Rhem's position, stated:

"There will be many of us who will still be here who will continue the debate," said Rev. Miriam Baar-Bush — sentiments echoed by a number of other delegates who reminded classis that Rhem was not the only RCA minister with similar views.

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

"We here at Classis Muskegon are one pocket of our denomination; we have to think about our brothers in the broader Reformed Church in America," said Elder Marilyn Rottschaefer of Christ Community Church. "I wonder if this is truly representative of what the broader denomination thinks about this...."

... Baar-Bush made clear that a decision to oppose Rhem would also have widespread consequences. "This will separate and divide our denomination," said Baar-Bush. "If you want to speak truth, the truth needs to be known that we are saying anyone who holds the same views as Dick needs to be excluded. We are setting a precedent for other classes; there are others in the pulpit, there are those in the Reformed Church who teach in our theological schools, who will be affected by this. Who's next?"

Faced with the inevitability of division within the classis and the possibility of greater division outside the classis, the delegates chose by a large majority to follow the recommendation of the classical executive committee. On a secret ballot vote, classis decided by a 38-19 margin to ask Rhem to recant his views, with the understanding that a peaceful separation would be sought if he does not recant.

One wonders what the outcome will be. The claim, reported by Maurina, was that there were many others in the Reformed Church who believed like Rhem. The 19 votes supporting Rhem indicate that in the conservative Classis Muskegon there are those who agree with him. How many more supporters would he then have within the whole of the denomination?

Strange, too, is the strong support he receives from two women who serve in the office of elder and minister. Is it possible that in violating Scriptural instructions concerning women in church offices, there is increasingly a willingness to violate other clear instructions of Scripture?

One might raise questions too about the manner of handling so serious a matter. When heresy arises from within the bosom of the church, is this the way with which it must be dealt? One receives the impression that Classis Muskegon is saying, "We have serious differences of opinion about Christ and Holy Scripture — so let us separate peaceably." Is this the way to seek the salvation of the sinner?

Meanwhile, various writers also point out the relationship of the "women in office" issue and other issues presently confronting many denominations. Rev. Daniel Brouwer in *The Outlook*, February 1996, reminds his readers that the same arguments used to maintain the right of women to serve in office can be and are being used to promote the legitimacy of monogamous homosexual relationships. It comes down to this: "What do we say of Scripture? Is it the infallible, inspired Word?" Only with a proper answer to that question can one rightly grapple with and answer the many heresies arising today. Where one refuses to recognize the trustworthiness of Scripture in one area, he will inevitably refuse its guidance in many others also.

■ The "Church" of the Promise-Keepers

Perhaps the title seems inappropriate. Many have insisted that the "Promise Keepers" is an organization which promotes family life. It especially encourages men to take their rightful place within the home. It encourages individuals to pray for their pastors. All worthy goals indeed!

But at the same time Promise Keepers increasingly assumes to itself the tasks which Christ gave exclusively to the church. The preaching of the Word is not considered adequate or sufficient to direct the men of the congregation in a godly walk at home and in

the church. Promise Keepers must do the "preaching" to encourage each to keep the seven promises that have been devised. Promise Keepers encourages men to pray for their pastors — but reports indicate that harsh and bitter words are spoken against any pastor who dares to condemn this movement. Some have even left churches because their pastor or church did not support this "worthy" organization.

Yet it is maintained that Promise Keepers does not consider itself a "church," though admittedly it seeks to "break down the walls" that separate denominations. And where is the proof that PK does not consider itself a church? Well — it does not administer sacraments — that is, until recently. *The Austin American Statesman*, February 15, 1996, prints an Associated Press release:

The Rev. Samuel Edwards believes portability and convenience shouldn't be issues when it comes to taking Holy Communion.

But a Chicago company is promoting exactly that in the form of pre-packaged Communion grape juice and wafers, despite mixed reviews.

... The pre-packaged Communion cups will be used Thursday night when about 40,000 clergy will observe Communion at a Promise Keepers rally in Atlanta's Georgia Dome....

So, now, is this movement a "church"? It has at least one sacrament offered to the attendants of the Atlanta rally. Is this the movement that so many, even in Reformed circles, are defending?

■ What's Next? Christian Nudists?

The *Christian News*, March 4, 1996, reports on a strange, nay, disturbing movement.

"Amazing Grace" lifts softly into the North Carolina pines from the meeting room where

voices gather greater fervor with each verse in praising God.

Take away the video screen and music and it might be just another Saturday night in a Christian campground tradition that goes back decades — except the woman leading the song has no clothes on, her husband wears only a T-shirt and all the others are similarly undressed.

Welcome to the first Christian Nudist Conference....

Some 40 Christian nudists from around the country stood naked and unashamed before their God

at the conference which ended Sunday with a worship service....

"The No. 1 goal of this whole thing, ultimately, is to glorify the name of Christ," said Carol Love, an owner of the Whispering Pines Resort.... "We feel like we've been Christians for a long time, and this is our next step to get closer to God."

One might wonder: what's this world coming to? What is the "church" coming to?

There could be given a long discourse on the place of clothing.

Adam after the fall clothed himself with fig leaves. God replaced that with animal skins — reminding Adam and us that proper covering for sins requires shed blood. Now some, claiming Christianity, would stand in their shame so that all can see — while singing: "Amazing Grace." It is shocking.

The passage of Hosea 2:2-3 comes to mind. Is this God's judgment upon those who willfully ignore God's Word and call evil "good"? □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Man: God's Unique Creation

It is unquestionably true, as one who subjects himself to the revelation of Holy Scripture can easily see, that man occupies a unique place in God's creation. For that very reason Scripture gives special attention to the account of man's creation. In doing so, Scripture demonstrates the importance of having a correct understanding of Adam, the first man, and of his place in the creation and before his God.

Necessary knowledge

A scriptural view of man is essential. That is true not only in order that we might gain a correct biblical understanding of ourselves, who are descendants of Adam. But to have a correct understanding of man is essential also to a true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This last statement would certainly find its objectors in our day. Many theologians and preachers in our day see no relationship between Adam and Christ. "The important thing," they say, "is that we know Jesus. There is no need to know Adam, if only we know Jesus."

There are several reasons for this disinterest in Adam. For one thing, it is indicative of a general disinterest in biblical doctrine. For another, the Old Testament, with all its rich revelation, has fallen on hard times in the church today. This portion of the biblical canon is largely neglected, if not outright rejected.

But a significant reason for much of the disinterest in Adam is that men have elevated their theories of science to the level of a god, and they insist that the biblical account of man's creation cannot be understood literally. Even in Reformed circles in recent years it has become popular to deny the Bible's literal account of man's cre-

ation in an attempt to compromise in one way or another with the philosophy of evolution.

In 1988 a committee was appointed in the Christian Reformed Church to investigate for the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary the teachings of three professors on the subject of creation and evolution. In the "Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee" which contained the conclusions and recommendations of the committee as a result of the investigation, Dr. Clarence Menninga, one of the professors being investigated, stated his thoughts concerning Genesis 2:7, where we are told that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground." Dr. Menninga stated, "Maybe the dust is a figure of speech and maybe God formed Adam by enabling a more primitive mother to give birth to an offspring who possessed the image of God." Immediately after recording Menninga's thoughts, the committee concluded that Dr. Menninga interprets the

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Scriptures in harmony with the Reformed creeds and synodical guidelines.

Another professor investigated by that Committee, Dr. Howard Van Till, states in his book *The Fourth Day*, "I see no reason whatsoever to deny that the creation might have had an evolutionary history or that morally responsible creatures might have been formed through the processes of evolutionary development." Professor Van Till also was judged by the Committee "to be submissive to the Word of God as interpreted in the Creeds and by the synodical guidelines." The *Ad Hoc* Committee showed itself utterly incapable of defending the Genesis account of man's creation.

According to others — and Howard Van Till also fits in this category, as his book demonstrates — the record in Genesis must be so interpreted as to deny the literal, historical account. It must be made a literary device, a sort of poetic art form into which the theories of man can be made to fit, while setting aside the literal interpretation of the biblical account.

But what is so deceitful about all these presentations is that they are made under the *guise* of exegesis, faithful attempts at biblical interpretation; while, in fact, they are no exegesis whatsoever, but the introduction of mere human speculation, anti-biblical speculation. They are attempts to force upon the Bible various theories and views which plainly contradict what the Bible states so clearly.

Clearly, these men are so uncomfortable with what the Bible teaches concerning Adam and Adam's origin and Adam's God-given place in creation that they will do anything to deny that biblical revelation.

So we hear their cries: "It doesn't matter what we believe concerning Adam; for we all believe in Jesus!" Such talk is bold to the extreme. It is the talk of

sinful man, standing in rebellion against God by openly despising His Word, and yet still claiming Christ. God was not clear enough, except in revealing Christ. God was not clear enough in His account of man's creation. After all, His account doesn't quite measure up to the "evidences" of science. "But we all believe in Jesus!" Such is their thinking.

Let us understand, even the simple call of the gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," presupposes a wealth of doctrine. Back of this gospel call lies the doctrine of man, the doctrine of his fall into sin, and the effects of that fall. Behind the call of the gospel lies the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, the doctrine of Christ's anointing, of Christ's headship, of Christ's relationship to the first Adam.

We must realize, therefore: You cannot understand the gospel unless you have at least a basic understanding of biblical truth, also concerning man. When one reads I Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," he cannot understand life in Christ, unless he understands Adam and his death. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (I Cor. 15:45). All these comparisons — and there are others — show us that our knowledge of Adam is essential to true knowledge of Jesus Christ. And true knowledge of Christ is life eternal!

How urgently necessary it is, therefore, to bow before what God teaches us in Scripture concerning the creation of man!

A unique creature

Indeed, man is himself a unique creation of God. Adam was created by God to stand at

the pinnacle of all earthly things, as the highest earthly creature. Man is God's masterpiece, a significant and unique masterpiece according to God's sovereign and eternal counsel.

Adam was created to occupy a position at the head of the whole human race.

Oh yes, Adam was created an individual, with his own personal characteristics. And he was personally responsible for all that he did over against his God. But Adam was more than an individual. He was created to stand in a unique relationship to all those who would follow him in his generations.

In the first place, Adam was created the head of all mankind, our representative head. God created Adam to stand as our legal head. That is evident from Romans 5:12ff: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." All sinned *in Adam*. We must develop that truth further at a later date. When we study the consequences of man's fall, we must certainly consider the question: How can I be guilty for that sin which Adam committed some 6,000 years before I was even born? But the very brief answer to that is this: Adam stood as the legal, representative head of the human race, a unique creature. Because he is our head, his guilt is also ours.

In the second place, God created Adam the father of the human race, and therefore the root of the organism which is the human race. Out of this one man the whole human race developed organically, even as a tree develops as one organism from a single seed. The apostle Paul referred to that truth in his sermon to the Athenians, when he said (Acts

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17:26) that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

The whole human race finds its root in Adam.

To put it in clear terms, no matter what color or nationality we may be, we are all related. The biblical truth concerning man rules out any false ideas of a superior race when it comes to skin color or nationality. God has made of *one blood* all nations of men.

That is also a truth that comes to most beautiful expression in the redeemed church as the elect body of Christ, gathered from all nations, tribes, and tongues. In fact (just to show how all Reformed doctrine stands related), the truth of the communion of saints is actually rooted in the truth of God's creation of man. Even as the human race is one in Adam, so we who are redeemed in Christ Jesus

are one body. There is no individualism. This is a very practical point when it comes to the truth of the church. All individualism and refusal to be one with the body of Christ is rebellion against God who created man an organism, and redeemed an elect organism in Christ Jesus. Regardless of what men may say, and what we may think, we do not stand by ourselves in this world. The human race is an organism with its root in Adam, even as the church is an organism with Christ as its organic head.

So man, the first Adam, occupied a unique place in God's creation — the representative head, and the first father, the organic root.

The uniqueness of man's place is also signified by his very creation. Man was created by a special act of God.

You will notice in the creation account of Genesis 1 a significant pause immediately before the record of man's creation. That pause is found in Genesis 1:26, where God speaks to Himself. In the fellowship of His own Triune Being He communicates in love. The God who is One in Being and yet three in Persons speaks within Himself concerning the place that His next creature will occupy. "And God said (within Himself [SK]), Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Man is to be distinct from all other creatures. God created him in distinction from the angels. He created man in distinction from the animals.

Man was created in the image of God. It is to that truth that we must turn our attention next time, God willing. □

When Thou Sittest In Thine House

Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers

The Reformed Family: Houses

"The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish."

Proverbs 14:11

The Arabs live in tents; the Eskimos, in igloos; the island people, in crudely-constructed huts; the Englishman, in his compact cottage. Probably no culture spends so much on the spacious design of a house, along with its compatible furnishings, as the American. A

goodly part of his annual income and life investment is spent on a house. *Time* (1/29/96) reports the average American as spending 393% of his annual income on a house, up from 205% in 1970. Owning one's own house is referred to as "the American dream." Reformed believers buy into this dream too.

Some of our houses come closer to being measured in acreage than in square feet. Carpeting, window coverings (currently billed as window "treatments" — I think because one needs a treatment after discovering the cost), elegant furniture, appliances of ev-

ery design and whimsy, islands, skylights, vaulted ceilings, fireplaces on every level, have become the norm for required living. A bathroom — a luxury in itself — is no longer merely functional, nor is a bathtub serviceable, but it must be a Jacuzzi. One can almost see the stout, idle Roman lolling in his spa, a bunch of succulent grapes suspended overhead. Consumptive living has a stranglehold on us all — although I still feel twinges of guilt living in a house which has two bathrooms for two people, when I grew up in a home which had one bathroom for twelve people. And the time

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and interest (no pun intended) spent on the acquisition of these possessions cannot be tallied.

The purchase and maintenance of these houses often put kingdom causes at jeopardy. And our luxuries speak loudly to our children. When we sacrifice too much on the altar of materialism, the sense of urgency about Christian school tuition, missions, needy churches, and care of the widow and orphan wanes. Frequently, husband and wife must both work to keep their financial heads above water. Curiously, I have never heard anyone say, "My house payment is too high," but I have heard the usual mumbling about Christian school cost.

It is important to remember that our lives and values are open letters to others, especially to our children. The principle of pursuing the finest of everything is not disguised from our children, no matter how vigorously we condemn covetousness. Children are masters at divining inconsistencies. Our children are learning as by an inviolable rule what makes us as parents content and happy. We may say: this is just a temporary house; it means very little to me; I can live without it. But when our children see the time, effort, concern, money, and interest devoted to these things, our words give away the real impulse of our heart. Paul says in II Corinthians 3:2, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

How much of our house qualifies as shelter (refuge from the elements)? ... and what percentage must be classified as luxurious living? Or is luxurious living one of our Christian prerogatives? Will it be said of us?

Here were decent godless people:

Their only monument an asphalt road

And a thousand lost golf balls.

(T.S. Eliot, *Choruses from 'The Rock'*)

The apostle Paul writes to Timothy, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous ... unthankful ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

It is true, a Christian must not be careless or slothful with his investments or belongings, nor is he required to live in a wattle and daub; nevertheless, if we truly believe that we are pilgrims and strangers in this earth, if we are really convinced that this life is a pilgrimage complete with winding, tortuous paths and deep, muddy sloughs, hazards steep and precipitous, then, it seems we should be traveling a bit lighter. Building up equity should be of inferior importance to living equitably.

Perhaps, our existence being a little more Spartan, we will be able to concentrate more keenly on the pitfalls in our path. With our heads up, and our backs less hunched over, we can be more observant of road signs. And there are road signs. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." The days are evil; our way, booby-trapped. All our powers of observation and detection are necessary.

Abraham was given the whole land of Canaan by God for his inheritance, yet he owned not one parcel of ground personally. When his wife Sarah died, he was forced to buy the cave of Machpelah from the sons of Heth to bury her. Nor would he receive this land as a gift from their unbelieving hands. Why? Hebrews 11 states: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose

builder and maker is God.

Ostentatious living has brought down civilization after civilization. By the very nature of a self-indulgent life-style, man becomes at ease with himself, his soul, his destiny. He is vulnerable to the excesses which topple men and empires. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven"? We must take seriously Christ's admonition that "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.... Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be...? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Each of us knows the individual trappings of his life. Gross materialism comes in all shapes and sizes. Vulgar living is not limited to an over-sized, over-furnished house. But a house is, undoubtedly, one of the priciest indicators of the ostentatious life-style. And it is often the benchmark of other, attendant forms of high-living. Now, to go with the house, we must buy into its life-style.

Weeks of vacation away from its confines (?), and television to fill the hours we do spend there. Not satisfied any longer with "a chicken in every pot" a recreational vehicle in every slot becomes the standard. It almost seems axiomatic: the bigger the house and the more commodious its facilities, the less time spent in it with family and faith-friend.

Does anyone, anywhere, live in the same house in which he lived when he married? The house in which he raised his family? The house which whispers with nostalgia? The house whose creaks and sighs are rich with the secrets and activities of years gone by? Are we a people who can't cope

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Weeks of vacation away from its confines (?), and television to fill the hours we do spend there.

Not satisfied any longer with "a chicken in every pot" a recreational vehicle in every slot becomes the standard. It almost seems axiomatic: the bigger the house and the more commodious its facilities, the less time spent in it with family and faith-friend.

Does anyone, anywhere, live in the same house in which he lived when he married? The house in which he raised his family? The house which whispers with nostalgia? The house whose creaks and sighs are rich with the secrets and activities of years gone by? Are we a people who can't cope

with the little quirks and big inconveniences which one frequently has to work around in such a house, but which very things make the house more than an edifice — a house with character?

As a teenager, I shared a bedroom with three sisters, and, because we had the biggest bedroom, it also held the baby's crib. We studied all together at the kitchen table; a desk in one's own room was unheard of — besides, it was too cold in the bedrooms. Sure, we argued; and the person who talked too much was warned to

"button it," but we also helped each other through the sticky math problems and that elusive vocabulary word. There was a sense of family. We inadvertently enjoyed the "sense of community" which is currently such a popular zip phrase. You could have fooled us! Today, parents seem to think that children need their own bathroom, their own bedroom, their own desk, their own bike, their own baseball mitt. An over-sized house, rooms too big, possessions which encourage individualism and selfishness, and we wonder

why raw cupidity and envy control our society?

What would it be like to disencumber oneself from the weight which holds one down in the running of our spiritual marathon? Sit loose from this world. How does the apostle Paul put it? "Giving no offense in anything ... but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God ... as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true: a house is not a home. □

Strength of Youth

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

A Lover of God ... or a Liar?

We hear it all the time: love God and love the neighbor. We hear it from the pulpit, in the classroom from our teachers, and surely we hear it at home from our parents. The one, great commandment of God's law is to love God. The second commandment is like unto it: love your neighbor.

We do not have to be great theologians to understand this command. We do not even have to be an adult or a young person to know what it is to love God and the neighbor. We are taught this command of God even before we enter kindergarten. For, godly youth, what we write in this article is not so much something new, as much as a reminder to us

of our calling toward God. Yet, since not all our friends and classmates pick up the *Standard Bearer* and read it, maybe it would not hurt to make a few copies of this article to distribute, just to remind them of their calling too?

The apostle John is considered the expert on the subject of love. In his three epistles or letters to the churches he pinpoints the source and describes the character of love. If we really want to learn what love is, we will not discover it in the thousands of sinful love novels available on bookshelves today. In fact, we will not find it in the books of the worldly, so-called experts on love either. They have no love for God. How then can they ever possibly tell us what love is? If you really want to know all about love, I suggest that you spend some time studying these letters of John. He is right on track. Of course he is — his words are infallibly inspired, after all!

I have gleaned from John's epistles four truths about love that we do well to consider.

Love is of God.

We all claim to love God, right? I mean, if I were to ask you in catechism class if you loved God, I do not think there would be anyone of you who would say, "No, I do not love God!" Maybe there might be one or two with reservations in their hearts, but they would not be very quick to admit that to me or to others. We all claim to love God. But do we really realize what loving God means? Love is not merely a feeling or an emotion. True love goes much deeper than that. It is rooted in the heart and forms an indissoluble bond with the one who is the object of that love. This is why we can confidently say, true love lasts forever. When two people love each other, then they long after and seek each other's fellow-

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ship and companionship. And that deep longing forms a bond between the two of them that cannot be broken.

For love to be such, however, it must exist between two perfect beings. Where there is sin, where there is wrong committed against another, love breaks down. Sin is a horrible canker that, if it is not stopped, eats away at the longing and desire we may have for another. To love someone requires perfection. This is why we read of love, in Colossians 3:14, as the bond of perfectness. For two people to love each other, therefore, requires that the love of God abide in them. Only God is perfect, and in Him alone is found true love. God is love. This love God cultivates in the hearts of His people through the work of Jesus on the cross. In Christ we have become holy and perfect. Not in ourselves, but as we belong to Christ we are capable of truly loving another person. So, that is love. That is the love that must be in our hearts. This same love comes to manifestation in our lives.

He who loves God also loves his fellow saints.

Not only does a child of God truly love God, but he also truly loves his neighbor. This truth John expresses in I John 4:20, 21: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not the brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Of course! That makes sense! God has worked in my heart His love, and God has worked His love in the heart of my fellow Christian too. We are both made holy in the blood of Christ; we are made perfect in Christ. Does it not follow then that as fellow saints we will love each other too? This is why the second commandment of God is like unto

the first: loving God requires that we love our neighbor. The two go hand in hand.

True love for the neighbor consists in the love we have just described. It is a bond that unites us with our fellow saints for whom Christ died. Since the hearts with which we love our neighbor are sanctified hearts, our love governs our thoughts and desires about the neighbor. God's love in us influences our attitude towards one another. This is why our claim to love God means very little to Him if He does not see us loving each other. In fact, John makes a bold statement: if you say you love God and do not love your brother, you are a liar! How so? You are lying about your love for God: if you do not love your neighbor, you do not love God either.

Now, that is quite an assertion! When applied to young people and children it says this: if you hate (resent, abhor, are embittered toward, offended at, or in competition or angry with) a fellow young person in the church or classmate in school, then you cannot claim to love God! If you say you love God and you hate that brother or sister, then you are a liar! You do not love God! God's law demands the love of God *by way of loving the neighbor*. How true is the Word of God in I Corinthians 13:1: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." I can say all kinds of nice religious things about God, and come off as pious as ever, but if I do not have love for my neighbor, then all I am doing is making a lot of noise!

But then ... there is the sin factor: "the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do." It seems to be much easier to love God than to love the neighbor. God is perfect and never sins against me. My neighbor of-

ten does things to hurt and injure me. He speaks evil of me. His actions often are meant to offend me. How can I love a neighbor of that sort? Most of the time I harbour feelings of revenge. Besides, my own envy and covetousness often lead me to do hurtful things toward my neighbor. Ah yes, that horrible, horrible sin factor — that sinful flesh we carry with us everywhere — it surely does mar our relationships with our classmates and fellow saints! But our sinful flesh cannot be used as an excuse for not loving the brother. What should we say about our proneness to hate the neighbor? Perhaps we ought to ask ourselves a couple of questions.

First of all, do we fight against this sin? Remember, Christ died not only to gain for us the forgiveness of sins, but He died to conquer the power and dominion of sin in our lives. Our sinful flesh was crucified with Christ on the cross. We are no longer servants to sin. Do we, then, earnestly fight the sinful desire in us to hurt someone or to "get back" at someone for what he did to us? How much do we struggle within ourselves to love the neighbor as much as we love God? Surely, we ought not to allow the sin of hating the brother to rule in us!

Secondly, how much do we hate our sin? When we do stumble into hateful and hurtful words or actions toward a fellow saint, perhaps a classmate in school, how much does that sin bother us? Do we go home at night and loathe ourselves for what we did to that person? Do our prayers get stuck in our throats because we know that having hurt our brother we are not right with God? How sorry are we when we sin against another? Sorry enough to confess our sin to God? Sorry enough to confess our sin to the one we hurt?

Are we lovers of God ... or are we liars?

We cannot love God without loving the neighbor.

**If a man loves his brother,
he will show that love.**

Loving the brother means that we must also reveal that love to him in our words and actions. Again, this is God's Word to us in John's first letter to the church. In I John 3:18 John writes, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." The child of God, above all other people in this world, should show compassion and charity toward his neighbor — especially toward his fellow saints. We live in a selfish and self-centered world that is filled with competition, envy, and strife. In our society, more than anywhere else, people do not show love, but hatred, in their words and deeds. Such ought never to be true of us! We say we love God. We say we love our fellow saints. But when it comes to putting those words into deeds ... are we lovers of God, or liars? The deeds to which we refer, of course, are the words we speak to and about a person. They are also what we reveal in our actions — our actual dealings with someone. We cannot say we love someone if we are constantly hurting him with our words and actions. Neither, when we do this, can we say that we love God.

Let me give an example or two. Can I say I love God when I have just called a classmate of mine "stupid," or whispered something mean about her to my friends? The question is not simply: do I love *my neighbor*, but do I love *God*? Do I love God when I roll my eyes at someone or make a snide remark to him? Do I love God when I, with my friends, deliberately try to walk fast enough to leave someone else out of the group? Do I love God when I mock a person or his inability to do something? Do I love God

when I throw a ball at him or threaten to hurt him? Again, the question is not: how cool am I when I do these things? My guess is that our sinful natures would tell us that we are really cool! So would plenty of other "cool" people! But when we do these things we ought to ask ourselves this question: do we truly love God as we say? Are we lovers of God, or liars? There is much more involved in our words and actions than merely our relationship with our neighbor. It is not simply a matter of being able to get along with a brother or sister in the church. Our relationship with God is involved. *Our place in heaven is involved!* That is a serious matter!

**Only those who love the brother
have a place in heaven.**

In the day of judgment, when all nations are gathered before Christ, He will say to His sheep, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:34-36). Then God's saints will humbly ask, "When did we do all this to you, Lord?" And He will answer them: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). In the day of judgment we will be judged

according to our works. Those works will include what we have done to our neighbor.

It is true that our place in heaven has already been determined in eternity. It is also true that entrance into the kingdom of heaven is possible only in the blood of Jesus Christ. If our salvation depended on our loving the neighbor perfectly, none of us would enter. How thankful we can be that Christ died for us! But it is also true that those for whom Christ died are believers. And believers are those who walk consciously with their Lord. The mind of Christ is in them. They hear and obey the exhortation of Paul in Philippians 2:3, 4: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." As believers walk in obedience to this command, they inherit the kingdom of heaven.

What then is the conclusion to all this? "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7).

I know, young people, none of this is new. Yet, as old as the commandment is to love each other, it always needs repeating because it is so easily forgotten. In fact, if your parents have not read this article, run off an extra copy for them. Parents need to be reminded of this commandment too! □

Clinging to Jesus

Close to Thee, my blessed Savior,
Keep me walking day by day;
Let me feel Thy presence with me,
Be my refuge all the way.

Standard Bearer,
May 1, 1928

John Gill: Hyper-Calvinist?

(A Review Article)

John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth, by George M. Ella. Eggleston, Co. Durham, England: Go Publications, 1995. 365 pp. \$16.95 (paper).

This new, well-written biography of 18th century, Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist preacher and theologian John Gill is welcome for several reasons. Gill was a notable pastor, theologian, and Bible commentator. Some of his writings are still being published today. His dogmatics was republished in 1977 by Primitive Baptist Library as *A Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*. Baker Book House published this dogmatics in two volumes in 1978 as *Gill's Body of Divinity*. In the early days of my ministry, there were older members of the Protestant Reformed Churches who used Gill's commentary on the entire Bible in preparation for Bible study classes.

Gill's friends included the sterling Calvinist Augustus M. Toplady, and his enemies included the notorious Arminian John Wesley. Toplady said of Gill:

Perhaps, no man, since the days of St. Austin (Augustine — DJE), has written so largely, in defence of the system of Grace; and, certainly, no man has treated that momentous subject, in all its

branches, more closely, judiciously, and successfully (cited in Ella, p. 18).

Gill crossed swords with Wesley over the doctrines of grace. To Wesley's *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints*, a denial of perseverance, Gill wrote, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Final Perseverance*. When Wesley continued his attack upon Calvinism generally and Gill in particular with his *Predestination calmly considered*, a denial of predestination, Gill responded with *The Doctrine of Predestination, Stated and Set in the Scripture light*.

Baptists should be attracted to an account of the life and work of the man about whom Toplady said, "He was, I believe, the greatest man the Baptists ever enjoyed."

This is the first thorough biography of Gill. It is certainly the first sympathetic full-scale biography.

No doubt the main interest that Gill holds for the Reformed reader is that Gill was an important figure in a controversy in England over the "offer of the gospel." Gill rejected the "offer" and is widely regarded in Calvinistic circles as a "hyper-Calvinist," if not the father of "hyper-Calvinism." Since the controversy over the "offer" continues unabated today, Gill comes up

for consideration in various quarters. Curt Daniel, e.g., has recently published his 900-page doctoral dissertation, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill." (I intend to review this massive study of "hyper-Calvinism" in a forthcoming issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.)

Ella makes the issue of Gill's alleged "hyper-Calvinism" a leading theme of the biography. He exonerates Gill from the charge. In the course of his treatment of this issue, Ella makes several references to the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

It is plain from the book that Gill preached more gospel without the "offer" than his critical contemporaries did with their "offer." Gill proclaimed and defended the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace without ambiguity, hedging, or compromise. Ella makes clear that Gill's main antagonist, Andrew Fuller, who was largely responsible for fixing the charge of "hyper-Calvinism" on Gill's doctrine, was himself heretical in his views of depravity, irresistible grace, and atonement.

Ella exposes the criticism by contemporary critics Peter Toon and Erroll Hulse as unscholarly and unfair. Charles H. Spurgeon was a fairer critic:

For good, sound, massive, sober

*Gill
preached
more gospel
without
the "offer"
than his
critical
contemporaries
did with
their
"offer."*

Prof. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

sense in commenting, who can excel Gill? Very seldom does he allow himself to be run away with by imagination, except now and then when he tries to open up a parable, and finds a meaning in every circumstance and minute detail; or when he falls upon a text which is not congenial with his creed, and hacks and hews terribly to bring the Word of God into a more systematic shape. Gill is the Coryphaeus (leader — DJE) of hyper-Calvinism, but if his followers never went beyond their master, they would not go very far astray (cited in Ella, p. 134).

Nevertheless, in addition to the Reformed charge that Gill as a Baptist seriously erred in denying God's covenantal work of grace in the infants of believers, it must be noted that Gill did, in fact, deny that the call, or summons, of the gospel comes to all who hear. This denial is real, and serious, hyper-Calvinism.

There was a good deal of confusion in Gill's own thinking about this matter, due partly to the confused and confusing errors which he combatted. Ella's treatment likewise is sometimes murky. But it becomes clear that Gill did not think that God and the preacher of the gospel command every hearer, unregenerate as well as regenerate, reprobate as well as elect, to repent of his sins with true, heartfelt repentance and to believe on the Savior from the heart with a genuine faith. The reason given was that the unregenerate is incapable of true repentance and faith by virtue of his total depravity.

Reflecting Gill's thinking, Ella writes:

The big question now is, does the Bible invite all men indiscriminately and everywhere to believe as Fuller maintains? No, says the Bible. Repentance must come first. Belief is always dependent on repentance. Repent ye and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). When God grants repentance we

may talk of belief but not before. Where does this belief come from? Is it for all to grasp at, spurned (*sic*) by a knowledge of their duties? No.... Sinners cannot possibly have any inkling of responsibilities towards saving faith as God has withheld these truths from them as fallen creatures.... Thus the command to exercise duty-faith can only be given to those who have a faith to exercise dutifully and a knowledge of their duties towards God. This faith is God's gift to his elect.... This is all in keeping with Gill's biblical duty-faith teaching that with the grant of faith comes the obligation to exercise it. What Gill could not believe was that the duty of the evangelist was to preach that sinners were duty-bound to exercise savingly a faith of which they knew nothing and of which they had nothing. He would not preach to the unsaved as though they were saved but he preached to save sinners (pp. 281, 282).

That Gill denied what Reformed theology teaches as the "external call of the gospel" is plain enough from his handling of the call in his dogmatics. The only command that is given to the unregenerate in the audience of the preacher is that he do what lies in his natural powers: "perform the natural duties of religion"; exercise a "natural faith"; "believe the external report of the gospel"; and the like (see *Gill's Body of Divinity*, vol. 2, Baker, repr. 1978, pp. 122-125).

The truth is that, although the unregenerate sinner has no ability to do what he is called by the gospel to do, God commands every hearer to repent of his sins and believe on Jesus Christ presented in the gospel. Thus, He summons him to the gospel feast of salvation (Matt. 22:1-14). To speak here of a merely "legal repentance" and of a merely "natural faith" is not

only evasion of the plain teaching of Christ but also demeaning to the gospel. The gospel insists on *true* repentance, nothing less, and on *genuine* faith, nothing other.

The basic mistake of Gill and his present-day disciples is their failure to recognize that total depravity, or inability, does not rule out full responsibility.

To put it as sharply as possible: The gospel commands the unregenerate and totally depraved sinner to do what he cannot do, and his punishment will one day be the greater for his refusal. The reason why he is accountable to do what he cannot do is that the fault for his inability is his own, not God's. Besides, when the sinner re-

jects the gospel in unbelief, he does so willingly.

If Gill hesitated to affirm the serious external call to all hearers because he feared that this was the Arminian offer, his error lay in not distinguishing between the Arminian offer and the Reformed external call. The Arminian offer consists of a gracious attempt by God to save all who hear, dependent upon their supposed free will. The Reformed call consists of a summons to all, setting forth their duty and making plain the one way of salvation, which summons God makes effectual by His particular grace in the hearts of the elect in the audience.

The book can be ordered in Great Britain from

Go Publications
c/o Peter L Meney
The Cairn

Hill Top, Eggleston
Co. Durham DL12 0AU.
In North America, order from the
Reformed Book Outlet
3505 Kelly St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(telephone: 616-669-6730). □

The gospel commands the unregenerate and totally depraved sinner to do what he cannot do, and his punishment will one day be the greater for his refusal.

Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revivals in America, by Keith J. Hardman. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994. 304 pp. \$16.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

For a thorough history of revival in the United States one can do no better than purchase and read this book. It is interesting and well-written, and traces the history of revivalism from the Great Awakening in New England to modern mass evangelism under the leadership of Billy Graham and Luis Palau. The purpose of the book is not, however, merely to give a bird's-eye view of the history, but, as Luis Palau explains in the Introduction, it is hoped that the book will bring about revival in our own day. All the men who participated in revivals get their fair share of time: Jonathan Edwards, Theodore Frelinghuysen, Charles Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday — they are all there and their views are examined.

The book is favorable towards revivalism, but is strangely silent for the most part on the excesses which often accompanied revivals and speaks sparingly about the criticisms which were leveled against revivals by orthodox theologians.

Yet, the book brings out in many ways the weaknesses of revivalism, and for this reason alone it is worth reading.

The book finds its support for revivals in the Old Testament and Pentecost; but this biblical basis is weak, for the appeal to the Old Testament is really a misinterpretation of the place which Israel occupied in the history of redemption, and an appeal to Pentecost is a complete misunderstanding of what took place on that important day when the Spirit was given to the church.

A wrong view of conversion lies at the heart of revival theory. This view is an erroneous view first promoted by later Puritan theology, basically Arminian, and based on a wrong view of the covenant of grace, especially the truth that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations. It is briefly described on page 43:

Before conversion, every sinner had to undergo certain preparatory stages, although those stages had no salvific power in themselves. Such preparations were similar to Puritan "convictions," in which a "law work" based on the paradigm of the Old Testament legal dispensation manifested the sinner's helplessness and need. This instruction in helplessness prepared the sinner for introduction to the saving grace of Christ. Preparations ... came in the two stages of humiliation and contrition (see also pp. 115, 116).

The role that the doctrine of freewill plays in revivalism is admitted and defended. As early as Solomon Stoddard (p. 49), the predecessor of Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, this Pelagian heresy was a part of revival thinking. And it maintained that preeminent place throughout, coming to sharp expression in Charles Finney's total rejection of Calvinism (see, e.g., pp. 122, 147, 156). There was always the tension found in revivals between a pious admission that revivals come from God and the need for man to do something to bring about revival.

Revivals always bred a false ecumenicity. Forgetting important biblical and confessional differences, churches would band together for or be united by revivals which, supposedly, swept entire areas. Doctrinal truths of God's

Word were laid aside in the broader and more compelling interests of cooperation for bringing about revival.

Nor was revivalism free from postmillennial thinking. The author makes that clear, e.g., when he writes: "Their optimistic hope was that as evil *decreased*, goodness and the gospel would *increase* to the point of bringing in the millennium" (p. 165).

The book, filled with statistics which are intended to prove the success of revivalism by listing the numbers of converts, shows the carnal emphasis on mere numbers, which are so important even to modern mass evangelism.

How different all this is from Scripture's emphases. The battle of faith is a battle of the ages in the defense of truth. The church is always a hut in a garden of cucumbers (Is. 1:8, 9). The life of the church in the world is the steady progress of an embattled remnant that perseveres by the power of Christ in every age even when it can scarcely be found on the earth (Belgic Confession, Art. 27); it is not, as revivalism teaches, a long series of ups and downs marked by spiritual declines and sudden bursts of revival which soon fade away. The life of the child of God is not of such spiritual lows and highs that revivals bring sudden bursts of intense spiritual ecstasy only to be followed by periods of extreme lethargy. It is the slow, unnoticed, steady progress in sanctification which marks the earnest believer in his daily struggle with sin and his daily putting off the old man and putting on the new man, expressed in confession, sorrow for sin, and renewed resolve to walk in the ways of God's commandments. The work of the Holy Spirit is not manifested in the earthquakes of religious frenzy,

but in the still, small voice of daily regeneration.

It is the spiritual aspect of revivals which is so extremely dangerous to a proper understanding

of the history of the church and the daily walk of the believer who finds his refuge daily in the cross of Christ. To pray for revival, as the book wants us to do, is to pray

for that which is contrary to the will of God and a denial of all that Scripture teaches of the age-old battle against sin. □

Report of Classis West

March 6, 1996
at Pella, Iowa

The March meeting of Classis West was held in Pella, Iowa on Wednesday, March 6. The customary Officebearers' Conference was held the day before. The theme of the Conference was "Discerning the Spirits." The keynote address was given by Pastor Steven Key, who spoke on "Trying the Spirits." Also giving presentations at the conference were Rev. Ron Cammenga, "Promise Keepers: What Should Be Our Response?"; Rev. Charles Terpstra, "Conferences: Of What Value?"; and Rev. Michael DeVries, "The Multiplication of Signs and Miracles: An Examination of the Influences of Pentecostalism." In attendance at the conference were almost all the delegates to Classis, as well as several visitors. The discussion and the fellowship were appreciated by all.

Rev. Carl Haak began the session of Classis on Wednesday with a devotional based on I Timothy 4:16, "Take heed to thyself." Rev. Steven Houck then chaired the Classis meeting.

The agenda of Classis was brief. Among the customary reports that are received early in the agenda, the Church Visitors annually give their report at the March Classis. The Church Visitors reported that the churches in Classis West are experiencing the gracious blessing of our God upon both councils and congregations. We give thanks to God for the unity

in the truth that we enjoy as churches.

The Classis considered an overture which asked Classis "to make it their practice to treat the questions of Article 41 (of the Church Order) early in the agenda." These questions; which are asked as part of the mutual supervision exercised among the churches, have long been asked near the close of the Classis meetings. One of the grounds for the change pointed Classis to historical precedent, where the practice all the way back to 1571 was to treat these questions at the beginning of the Classis meetings. The second ground stated that such a change is proper when one takes into account one of the reasons for the questions, namely, to insure the unity of faith and walk within the federation of churches. And a third ground pointed to a practical consideration of allowing the Classis, early in the meeting, to consider any matters that a consistory may bring under the fourth question of Article 41: "Do you need the judgment and help of the classis for the proper government of your church?" Classis West adopted the overture and made it the practice to ask the questions of Article 41 immediately after the reading of the minutes of the previous Classis meeting.

Classis granted classical appointments as follows: Doon PRC — Rev. Terpstra (April 21 and 28); Rev. DeVries (June 2 and 9); Rev. C. Haak (June 23 and 30). Immanuel, Lacombe PRC — Rev. Moore (April 21 and 28); Rev. VanBaren (June 23 and 30); Rev. denHartog (July 28 and August 4);

Rev. Brummel (August 25 and September 1); Rev. Joostens (September 22 and 29).

Classis approved subsidy requests as follows and forwarded them to Synod: Bethel PRC — \$20,300; Edgerton PRC — \$9,000; Edmonton PRC — \$31,773; Lacombe PRC — \$19,134; Pella PRC — \$22,500; Trinity PRC — \$31,000.

Voting for delegates to Synod 1996 resulted in the following elections: *Ministers: Primi:* A. denHartog, C. Haak, S. Key, C. Terpstra, G. VanBaren; *Secundi:* W. Bekkering, M. DeVries, S. Houck, M. Joostens, R. Moore. *Elders: Primi:* Robert Brands (Loveland), Allen Brummel (Edgerton), Ken DeJong (Peace), Jack Regnerus (Randolph), Bill Smit (Lynden); *Secundi:* John Feenstra (Redlands), Henry Ferguson (Edmonton), John Hilton (Edgerton), John Hoksbergen (Hull), Chester Hunter, Jr. (Doon).

Among other elections: Rev. S. Key was re-appointed to a three-year term as Stated Clerk. Elder Ed VanGinkel was elected to a one-year term on the Classical Committee. Rev. Key was re-elected to serve a three-year *primus* term and Rev. W. Bekkering was re-elected to a three-year *secundus* term as Synodical Deputies. Revs. G. Lanting and G. VanBaren were re-elected to be church visitors, with Revs. A. denHartog and S. Houck as alternates.

The next meeting of Classis will be in Randolph, Wisconsin on September 4, 1996, the Lord willing.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk

School Activities

We received the following note from Rev. R. Moore, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, and now pass the information on to you. Rev. Moore writes, "The Consistory at its last meeting, in accordance with its call to promote good Christian schools, has been working on ways to promote the beginning of a PR Secondary Education Society and has decided to seek out three men from our congregation to work to organize a basis for establishing such a society. We have also sought out our Doon consistory and our Edgerton consistory to join us in this effort. Both of our sister congregations have agreed to obtain men to labor on this committee, and have whole-heartedly encouraged us in this labor. In the future months we shall hear from this committee.

"We realize that it may be several years before we could possibly bring this goal of having our own school to fruition. But we begin this work now in the hope that God will one day make it possible."

We can also conclude by adding that in future months, you, the readers of the "News," will hear more about this worthwhile effort.

Almost simultaneous to the above, there appeared a note in the bulletin of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL asking these questions: "Is PR secondary education your priority? Should it be? Do you want to know, or consider if it ought to be?" Readers were asked to consider their answers and then come and hear a timely lecture on that subject by Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in

Itasca, IL, held at the South Holland, IL PRC on March 21, sponsored by the Association for PR Secondary Education.

At their annual meeting, March 18, the Society for PR Secondary Education in Grand Rapids, MI approved a proposal from their Board of Trustees to rent building space to Adams Street Christian School for their Junior High for the 1996-1997 year. You may remember that Adams sold their current property to the public school system of Grand Rapids, and this will be their last year in that location. In addition, we have also learned that Adams has received permission from the First PRC in Grand Rapids to use their lower level for grades K-6 for the next year as well. But we stress that these still remain options. At this time, at least to my knowledge, Adams Association has not approved either of these choices. And Adams' Board continues to look at all kinds of different solutions to their short and long-term goals.

Congregational Activities

The Council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI called a special congregational meeting for late February. At that meeting Grace approved two proposals. First, they approved a proposal to purchase five acres on the corner of Leonard Rd. and 14th Ave. for a future building site. This site would place their future church and parsonage just slightly north and west of their current meeting place. Grace also approved plans to rent a house for a temporary parsonage located on O'Brien Rd. in the city of Walker for their first pastor, Rev. M. Dick, and his family, who, the Lord willing, will be arriving later this month.

On March 9th, the members of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI got together for their annual Spring potluck/pig-roast. And we could add here that their young people's society recently hosted a slide presentation on Ireland and a past Conference in Northern Ireland given by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brands. The intent was to spur some interest in this year's upcoming conference, as well as to generate some income for this year's young people's convention.

Mission Activities

The Foreign Mission Committee of our churches is forwarding to this year's Synod a proposal to call a missionary to Ghana, contingent upon obtaining the services of a volunteer(s) lay person(s) to accompany the missionary and his family and to minister to the physical and material needs of the field.

Minister Activities

Our Doon, IA PRC has again formed a trio from which they will call a pastor. This trio consists of the Revs. Cammenga, Koole, and Spriensma.

Food For Thought

"When God's Word is removed as the standard of truth, then man is incapable of distinguishing between the truth and the lie."

— J.B. Scott □

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1996, the Lord willing,

MR. and MRS. RAYMOND BRUINSMA

will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are grateful to God, our heavenly Father, for giving us godly parents and grandparents. We are thankful for their godly example and covenant instruction and pray that the Lord will continue to bless and care for them in their life together. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- * Jim and Kathy Bruinsma
Kristen, Ryan, Eric
- * Jim and Lois Rau
Dan and Carol Boeve
Kimmy and Cheryl Kooiker
Christina, Brady
Jeff and Kim Scholten
Rodney
- * Jerry and Martha Bruinsma
- * Karen Bruinsma

South Holland, Illinois

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 1996 at the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Studies Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to fellow members Eric and Melissa Smith in the death of their unborn twin sons. May they rejoice in the words of Isaiah 40:11b, "He shall gather the young lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom...."

Rev. Ron Cammenga, President
Lisa Langerak, Secretary

NOTICE!!

The Hull PRC School has an opening for the 1996-1997 school year. The position is that of teaching the first grade all day and second grade half days. If interested, call Pete Brummel at (712) 439-1308 or Alvin Kooiker at (712) 725-2491.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Minnie VanDenTop and family in the death of her son,

MR. ANDREW VAN DEN TOP.

May they be comforted from Scripture in the words of II Corinthians 1:3, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort."

Henrietta VanOort, Vice Pres.
Gloria VanBemmel, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Doon PRC expresses its heartfelt sympathy to our fellow office-bearers, Mr. Peter VanDenTop and Mr. Edwin VanGinkel, in the death of their brother and brother-in-law,

MR. ANDREW VAN DEN TOP.

May God's rich grace sustain them and their families in their sorrow and may they be comforted with the words from I Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Council of Doon PRC
Gene VanBemmel, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 11, 1996, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. ARTHUR ZANDSTRA, SR.,

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the years He has spared them for each other and for us. It is our prayer that the Lord, who is good to His people, will continue to bless them in the years ahead in life's journey.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- * Art and Judy Zandstra
Jodi, Lisa, Jennifer, Joel
- * Garry and Joan Eriks
Garry and Jennifer,
Melissa, Beth, Nicole
- * Howard and Karen Hoekstra
Heather, Carrie, Ellie, David

South Holland, Illinois