



# *The Standard Bearer*

***A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine***

... the doctrine of a conditional covenant is, in reality, the introduction of the heresy of a universal, ineffectual love of God and a frustrated will of God to save all without exception into the sphere of the covenant.

See "A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant" — p. 293

**Vol. 73, No. 13  
April 1, 1997**



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## Editorially Speaking ...

The recent issue of *Clarion* (March 7, 1997), magazine of the Canadian Reformed Churches, contains an article that is of interest to the Protestant Reformed readers of the *Standard Bearer*. The author, G. Denbok, relates the history of the organization of a PR congregation among the Dutch, "Liberated" immigrants in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 1949. Mr. Denbok was one of the twelve male confessing members at that organization.

Denbok speaks well of the PR ministers and people involved in the work in Hamilton. The Canadian group were "overjoyed by the love and support" they received from the PRC. They enjoyed the preaching by the PR ministers.

He acknowledges that the PRC were up-front with their distinctive covenant-doctrine. Prior to organization, Herman Hoeksema preached two sermons (really "one oversized sermon") on one Sunday, admonishing the group concerning the differences over the doctrine of the covenant.

Hoeksema was right, says Denbok, when later, after the Hamilton church broke with the PRC, Hoeksema wrote that the PRC "faithfully laboured among them, ... have literally taken them into our bosom, ... have loved them."

Denbok admits that Hoeksema was also right when he lamented that "Liberated" ministers in the Netherlands persisted in exerting influence on the Hamilton PRC, "ignoring the fact that a church already had been established in Hamilton."

Mr. Denbok denies that the group in Hamilton "deliberately deceived the PRC." In time, they came to see that the differences between the doctrines of the covenant of the "Liberated" and of the PRC were "fundamental."

—DJE



**The  
Standard  
Bearer**

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.  
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.,  
4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418. Periodical Postage  
Paid at Grandville, Michigan.

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

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# Behold, I Make All Things New

**A**nd behold, there was a great earthquake.... And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

Matthew 28:2a, 5.

"And behold, there was a great earthquake."

God's clock is always very accurate, even to the second. His work is always carried out with most detailed precision.

Every part of the crucifixion on Friday, and all the happenings after that, even until the time of the resurrection, were an exact realization of God's eternal decree. Exactly at the appointed time Jesus gave up the ghost with the loud cry: "It is finished!" Joseph and Nicodemus stood ready to prepare His body for burial. As soon as they heard of it, the chief priests and rulers hastened to Pilate to demand a guard at the tomb and a government seal to make sure that no one would steal the body. Here is proof that any intrusion desecrating the grave or stealing the body was impossible. God had arranged all things in readiness for the gospel message, the resurrection.

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Early in the morning of the first day of the week one of the greatest wonders in history took place, a

wonder comparable to the wonder of creation, when God called the things that were not as though they were. The Father raised the Son, and the Son arose as Victor over Satan, sin, death, and the grave. The tomb was vacant! The grave clothes lay as a silent witness of the exact place where Jesus had lain. At the breaking of the dawn an angel of the Lord was sent from heaven to drive away the guard and to announce this wonder of the resurrection by opening the vacated tomb. At the sight of the angel the guard fell to the ground, and as soon as they were able they scurried off to report what they had seen to the chief priests and rulers, filling them with an anxiety and horror worse than defeat, which only increased as it became evident that the name of Jesus could not be silenced.

God gave a powerful sign of the rich significance of this wonder of the resurrection by shaking the earth down to its very foundation, a shock that was accompanied by deep rumblings coming from the very bowels of the earth! Nothing could have declared more clearly: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word cannot pass away. Behold, I make all things new!"

The group of women, who had started out with heavy hearts to pay their last respects to their Lord whom they loved so sincerely, must have been filled with fear as they approached the tomb and felt the earthquake. They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the

mother of James, Salome, and possibly one or two others who were privileged to be among the first eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord. An even greater surprise struck them when they saw that the stone was already rolled away from the grave. Mary Magdalene, drawing her own conclusion, hastened back to the city to inform the disciples that Jesus' body had been stolen. The other women stood perplexed at the open tomb, but soon gained sufficient courage to enter the sepulcher. There a new fear gripped their soul as they saw two angels sitting at the exact spot where the body of Jesus had lain.

But the angel answered their unspoken question by saying: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." God was saying to them, "Behold, I make all things new."

Risen! The Lord is risen! The mighty Conqueror who was promised already in paradise had suffered hellish torment, had ground to powder the vile head of Satan, had delivered from sin and guilt all those given to Him, and had surrendered Himself unto physical death and taken His place among the dead of all the ages to conquer over the grave, thus opening the way to victory and eternal life for Himself and for all His own!

Yes, an earthquake fills one with a sense of the end of the world. Everything rocks and reels, the very ground rolls or trembles

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



under one's feet. Nothing is stable, there is absolutely nothing that one can cling to with any assurance of safety. An earthquake declares, as it did at Calvary on Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock, that by the righteous judgment of the living God this present world and all that it contains will pass away. It was a sign of the great Day of the Lord. No wonder that the chief priests and elders, as well as many others, walked away from that cross beating their breasts in terror, and later the guard fell to the ground in terror. But through the earthquake, with all its severity, God also proclaims to His people: "Fear not ye! Behold, I make all things new!"



The resurrection of Christ is the dawning of a new day.

It was a new day for Jesus, God's Christ and our Lord. For Him, the resurrection from the dead was His final victory over death and the grave and God's seal upon His accomplished work on the cross. He had been delivered over to death because of our offenses and was now raised because He had merited our justification. He had passed out of the state of humiliation and had entered the state of exaltation. As our victorious Lord, Christ had marched triumphantly forth from the death of hell through physical death and the grave to arise on the opposite, the heavenly side. Forty days later He ascends to heaven and is given His place of authority at the right hand of the Father with all power entrusted to Him in heaven over the angels and saints, and on earth over all creatures, and even over all the universe. As Head of His church He carries out the counsel of God over all the works of God's hands, so that even the wicked and all the happenings from day to day serve for the salvation of His people even unto the day when He will return with the clouds of the heavens to take His own unto Him-

self. Behold, He makes all things new!



It was the dawning of a new day for Jesus' followers. They had spent many agonizing hours ever since Jesus had been led away captive by His enemies. They had not understood that He who was Lord over the winds and the waves and who had power to heal others seemingly could not deliver Himself from the power of those enemies. Still worse, the One in whom they trusted as the promised Messiah, their Lord and Savior, had been condemned by their leaders to die the accursed death of the cross as the worst of criminals. Sadly they recounted, "But we trusted that it should have been he which should have redeemed Israel." Yet suddenly, as the risen Lord appears to them, all their doubts and fears fade away. It is beyond their comprehension, but they see with their own eyes the very Jesus who was crucified standing alive among them, speaking to them and at times partaking of food, assuring them of His resurrection. The eleven actually saw Him ascend before their very eyes into heaven and were assured that He would return in the same manner.

Now, it is true, that as long as Jesus was with them this wonder far exceeded their comprehension. They saw it but they could not comprehend it. We read that they were terrified and affrighted, even troubled. As John remarks so succinctly: "None of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord."

It was not until Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that these things were made known to them. By the indwelling Spirit of our exalted Lord they understood the victory of the cross and resurrection. In fact, they realized that we are in Christ Jesus even eternally. We are chosen in Him,

redeemed by Him, and raised with Him. He is our life, or righteousness, our holiness. In Him we are righteous, as if we had never sinned, and we are worthy of eternal life. According to the new man in Christ we are saints who cannot sin. In Him we are created unto those good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Behold, God renews us with Christ! He makes all things new.



We are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Our fathers spoke of this rebirth as "a new creation; a resurrection from the grave, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid.... It is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable, not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead" (Cansons III/IV, 12). We are new creatures in Christ, restored in His likeness, members of His body, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, with His resurrection life in our hearts. We are made capable and willing to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

We live, yet according to the new man in Christ it is no more we, but Christ who lives in us, and the life that we now live in the flesh we live by faith in Him. Already in this life we have a foretaste of the heavenly life. For we have peace with God, a peace that passes all understanding. We experience the beginning of the eternal joy, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. True, this is still only in principle, accompanied by all the weaknesses of flesh, yet God, who has begun a good work in us, will surely finish it. Also for us all is made new.



Besides all that, death has lost its sting, and the grave has lost its victory. When the time of our departure comes, that is, when Christ has finished preparing a place for us with Him in glory, and we are ready for that place, God reaches out in Christ to draw us to Himself. I like to think that angels accompany us, give us a welcome entrance into our heavenly home, and show us our specific place prepared for us before the throne. Then also our spirit will be fully fitted for our place in glory, fully made new!

All of which still awaits the day when God has carried out His counsel in this present dispensation, when Christ returns with the clouds to bring about the final judgment. Then our bodies will be aroused out of their last resting place. Then we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to realize that all our sin-polluted works are burned like straw and stubble. What remains is that great work of grace that Christ has wrought in us — life, knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and those good works which He car-

ried out by us with the talents that He entrusted to us. And, wonder upon wonder, all of them are reckoned to our account, we are declared worthy of them, and by them our place is determined among the multitude that no man can number before the throne.

We are appointed our own seat at the wedding feast of the Lamb in the new creation! Then, yes, then God will have made *all things new* to the praise and glory of His great and marvelous name! We say in awesome wonder: My God, how great Thou art!! □

## Editorial

# A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant (7) Summing Up

**A**s the conclusion of this series of editorials on the covenant of God in Christ with believers and their children, I sum up for the benefit of the reader what has come to light in the discussion.

The editorials have been a response to an advocate of the doctrine of a conditional covenant with every physical child of believers. This doctrine holds that God makes His covenant by promise with every child at baptism, but that the promise depends for its realization, or efficacy to save, upon a condition that the child must fulfill. This condition is faith. If a child fails to fulfill the condition of faith, the promise is ineffectual. It cannot

give the child the eternal life that it has promised to the child. Thus, the child breaks the covenant that God established with him at baptism.

This doctrine of the covenant has become popular, perhaps the prevailing one, in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today.

With refreshing and commendable candor, the advocate of a conditional covenant freely acknowledged that this doctrine of the covenant holds that God loves every physical child of believing parents with His covenant love in Jesus Christ. To this love belongs, naturally, that God sincerely desires to save every physical child of believers.

There is then a covenant love of God in Christ for many children who are not saved by this love, but perish in spite of it.

At baptism, God is supposed to express a desire to save every baptized child, which desire goes unfulfilled and disappointed in many instances.

A conditional covenant teaches that God's grace in Jesus Christ is universal within the sphere of the families of believers. Inasmuch as the grace of this covenant is universal, it is also resistible and ineffectual. Many to whom the grace is extended are not, in fact, saved by it. God loved Esau, desired to save him, promised him salvation in the blood of Christ, and made



His covenant with him by promise at circumcision, just as with Jacob. But Esau is in hell.

Rev. Cecil Tuininga has been candid.

But he has merely expressed openly what is, in fact, necessarily implied in the doctrine of a conditional covenant, whether men candidly acknowledge it or not. Men may not always have seen this clearly. Others, knowing full well that the doctrine of a conditional covenant conflicts with Dordt's (and the Bible's!) teaching of particular grace, studiously avoid an open declaration of their conditional principles. But a promise to all alike, establishing the covenant with all alike, means grace to all alike.

Resistible grace.

Ineffectual grace.

Grace that depends squarely on the work of the child fulfilling a condition.

That about a conditional covenant which makes absolutely certain that it will, indeed *must*, teach universal, resistible grace is that the doctrine of a conditional covenant refuses to allow the covenant to be governed by divine election. If God's saving operations in the covenant are not controlled by election, covenant grace *must* be universal.

With this grievous error goes another, which is, if possible, still worse: the conditional covenant refuses to recognize Jesus Christ as head of the new covenant. The conditional covenant is headless! As though Romans 5:12ff. were not in Scripture. But if God's saving dealings in the covenant are not in Christ, as head of the new covenant, covenant grace *must* be universal, *must* be wider than Christ and His elect body, the church.

Rev. Cecil Tuininga has been candid, that is, honest and above-board. He is also correct in his understanding of his own covenant-view.

Others now begin to say the same. Dr. Jelle Faber, in the recent

book, *American Secession Theologians on Covenant and Baptism & Extra-Scriptural Binding—A New Danger* (Inheritance, 1996), admits that the conditional covenant of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") is essentially the same as the covenant-doctrine of Christian Reformed theologian William Heyns. But Heyns taught that in baptism God gives to every child "subjective grace," that is, the inner, spiritual power of the Holy Spirit of Christ. This grace enables every child to believe in Jesus Christ, if only he chooses to do so. Some, of course (according to Heyns), choose not to use this grace. They perish.

Grace for all.

Dependent for its success upon the will of man.

In defending the conditional covenant, Rev. Tuininga appealed especially to three texts: Matthew 23:37; II Peter 3:9; and I Timothy 2:3, 4.

This too is important. For these texts, especially the last two, are supposed to teach that God loves and desires to save all men without exception. The appeal to these texts *on behalf of a conditional covenant* shows that the doctrine of a conditional covenant is, in reality, the introduction of the heresy of a universal, ineffectual love of God and a frustrated will of God to save all without exception into the sphere of the covenant.

Why would a Reformed man appeal to II Peter 3:9 and to I Timothy 2:3, 4 in defense of a conditional covenant with the children of believers?

One and the same theology is at work in both the doctrine of a conditional covenant and the doctrine that God offers salvation to all out of His love for all and with a desire to save all. This is the theology that makes the grace of God dependent upon an act of man. It is the theology of "conditional grace."

Rev. Tuininga insisted on the

conditionality of salvation, whether within the covenant or without. With unerring insight into the nature of his own theology, he saw conditions and conditionality as the basic issue.

If he merely meant by "condition" that faith is the necessary means by which God gives, and the elect receive, salvation, he would get no argument from us, although we would plead for a better word.

If by "condition" he only had in mind that the God who gives faith to His elect (and faith is in every respect a purely gracious gift of God!) also commands them to be active in believing, he would find us in agreement. Indeed, we maintain that God commands all who hear the gospel to believe, not only the children born to believing parents.

But this is not his meaning. For him, faith is the act of the child *upon which the covenant of God depends*. For him, faith is the act of the child *that renders the promise effectual*. For him, faith is the act of the child *that explains why the grace that is extended to all alike saves some, but fails to save others*.

In the conditional covenant, grace is not "through" faith, but "on account of" faith.

Against this, it is the message of the gospel that a "conditional grace" is not the grace of God at all. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

God's salvation in Jesus Christ is unconditional. All of it. From beginning, in eternal election, to end, in the resurrection of the body.

Christ's death for me did not depend upon a condition that I must fulfill. The Holy Spirit's regeneration of me was not due to any condition that I had to fulfill. I am not justified because of any condition that I have fulfilled. The resurrection of my body into life in the Day of Christ will not be con-



ditioned by any act or worth of mine.

And this is true of all of my salvation because all of my salvation has its eternal origin in God's unconditional election of me in Jesus Christ. Out of an unconditional election flows an unconditional salvation.

Such also is the salvation that God works in the covenant in the generations of believing parents.

The English Calvinist theologian Augustus M. Toplady gave expression to the truth of the unconditionality of the covenant of grace:

God's covenant love to us in Christ is another stream, flowing from the fountain of unmingled grace. And here, as in the pre-

ceding instance, every truly awakened person disclaims all title to praise.... How is it possible that either God's purposes, or that his covenant concerning us, can be in any respect whatsoever suspended on the will or the works of men; seeing both his purposes and his covenant were framed, and fixed, and agreed upon, by the persons in the Trinity, not only before men existed, but before angels themselves were created, or time itself was born? All was vast eternity, when grace was federally given us in Christ ere the world began.... Repentance and faith, new obedience and perseverance, are not conditions of interest in the covenant of grace (for then it would be a covenant of works); but consequences and tokens of covenant interest ("Free Will and Merit Fairly Examined," in *The Works of Augustus Toplady*, London: J.

Cornish, 1853, p. 356).

As Luther said about the term "merit," so must it be said about the term "condition" as it is used in the theology of a conditional covenant: "Away with that profane, impious word!" It is the enemy of grace.

I urge the reader who regards the truth of God's covenant with our children as vital to buy and read carefully the new edition of Herman Hoeksema's *Believers and Their Seed: Children in the Covenant*, soon to be published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

If Rev. Cecil Tuininga would read it, I will happily send him a copy as a gift. □

— DJE

## Letters

### ■ On the Millennium

I am enclosing a review that I recently wrote of Dr. Kenneth Gentry's postmillennial book *He Shall Have Dominion*. It occurred to me that you might have some interest in the review due to the fact that your name is mentioned both in his book and in my review. I hope I have not misrepresented

your views in any way.

Your recent series of editorials entitled "A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism" was most helpful to me. Thank you for the good work you are doing.

(Pastor) Richard Bacon  
First Presbyterian Church  
of Rowlett  
Rowlett, Texas

### RESPONSE:

Pastor Bacon's review will appear in a forthcoming issue of his church's magazine, *Blue Banner* (8210 Schrade Road, Rowlett, TX 75088).

It has been posted on the world wide web at <http://www.fpcr.org/bluebanner/>. □

— Ed.

## Atonement

Into Gethsemane's garden  
Jesus retreated to pray,  
Knowing the path He must travel;  
The price for our sins He would pay.

His trial, unjust and so evil  
He endured. Yes, He drained the full cup —  
The cup of affliction and torment;  
On the cross the last drop was filled up.

Incomp'able anguish He suffered,  
Forsaken by man and by God.  
The pure, holy Lamb bore our vileness —  
Bore the wrath of His own Father's rod.

He perfectly, willingly suffered  
Because of His love for His own.  
This one sacrifice was sufficient  
For all of our guilt to atone.

May we now reflect that devotion,  
And with joy bear our own paltry pain;  
For our light afflictions are meager  
Compared with the glory we'll gain.

Thelma Westra



# Usury

**T**he Bible does not make a distinction between usury and interest, a distinction very common in the financial world today. The Bible *does* make a distinction in regard to the person who is charged the interest or usury, as we will see; but it does not distinguish between a legal rate (interest) and a rate that is in excess of what is legal (usury).

The biblical terms used to set forth God's will in this matter of charging for the use of one's money are vivid and instructive. The Hebrew word has the root meaning of striking with a sting as does a serpent; to bite or oppress with interest on a loan; to exact or extort. The Greek term has the meaning of bringing forth or giving birth; then, to charge interest of usury on money, for this multiplies or breeds more money.

The distinction that Scripture makes pays regard to the person who is required to pay for the use of money or some other item. Briefly, usury may be charged to the stranger (one who is not a brother or sister in the Lord), but not to a member of the household of faith. The biblical teaching on this matter is found in three passages: Exodus 22:25, "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury"; Leviticus 25:35-38, "And if thy brother be waxen poor and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him.... take no usury of him or increase: but fear thy God.... thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. I am the Lord thy God which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God"; and Deuteronomy 23:19, 20, "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury; Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury."

These passages make several important points: 1) Interest or usury may not be charged to the *poor*. The rule in regard to the poor is that we give them their needs, without charging interest and without thought of receiving the principal back either. 2) These passages do not forbid us from lending to a brother, and receiving interest on the loan, when the brother is not poor but merely wishes to expand his business or property. This occasion was not present with the Israelites who received their portion from God by lot. 3) The stranger may be charged interest, as this is an application of the principle that all things are for our good; God spoiled the Egyptians for Israel's sake, gave Egypt for her ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for her (Is. 43:3). 4)

It belongs to God's sovereignty that He gives people their money and possessions in various amounts, makes them stewards of such things, and He may decide how we dispose of our monies and whom we may charge for the use of it. 5) As the God who has mercy and pity towards the poor, He requires that we also show mercy towards them, and refrain from stinging them with usury.

Many warnings are sounded in Scripture against the desire and practice of squeezing the poor for personal gain. Nehemiah rebukes Judah for exacting usury of their brethren after the return from captivity (Neh. 5:6-12). One of the virtues of those who shall abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill is that they "put not their money to usury" (Ps. 15:5). God will take from those that increase their substance by usury and unjust gain, and give it to them that will pity the poor (Prov. 28:8). In Ezekiel 18, where the prophet explodes the notion that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," and sets forth the truth that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," usury and taking of increase are described as one of the abominations for which each transgressor shall pay (vv. 8, 13, 17). One of the sins for which Israel was scattered among the heathen is that many have taken usury and increase, and greedily gained of their neighbors by extortion (Ezek. 11:12). When they did this, they forgot the Lord God and trusted an idol in the form of money. Well does the apostle Paul call covetousness idolatry.

Questions arise in the life of the church regarding borrowing and lending; such a question is the occasion for this word study. Ought Synod loan money to those who labor in behalf of the churches? Ought Synod invest the churches' money in financial instruments that are not insured against loss? Ought members of the churches loan money for church building projects, receiving again with interest? Opinions vary on these and other questions. But on one point all must agree: the poor must be taken care of, and not be charged one cent for this assistance, nor be required to return any thing.

"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord" (Prov. 19:17). And the Lord will pay him again, that is, the Lord will repay with high interest! The Lord will reward works of charity and mercy with everlasting life and glory in the new creation. Then rich and poor, bond and free, Jew and Gentile, will inherit riches of salvation in Christ which are beyond calculation and price! □

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# If God Is Sovereign, Is Evangelism Necessary and Urgent?

**T**he sovereignty of God is fundamental to Reformed theology. Throughout the history of the church there has been a constant struggle to maintain this truth as the cornerstone of missions. Some have so emphasized missions to be the work of the church and missionaries that they have weakened and minimized God's control over missions. Others have so emphasized God's sovereignty as to deny the church any obligation to do missions.

A biblical conception of God's sovereignty in missions gives believers a sense of the urgency and necessity of evangelism.

On the one hand, those who fail to understand God's sovereignty in missions castigate the church for her unfaithfulness and lay upon her the blame for the gospel not yet reaching the ends of the earth. Why have not all men heard the preaching of the gospel? Their answer is: the church has been slow in performing her task. The church has not been obedient to the calling Jesus Christ gave her in the great commission. Jesus Christ has every right to come and shame the church for her disobedience.

On the opposite extreme are those who emphasize that there is no need to be actively involved in missions, for God is sovereign over all things. He has elected His people and He will insure that all

of them come to salvation. All of this will occur either through the church or in spite of the church.

Both of these views do an injustice to the precious doctrine of God's sovereignty in missions. William Carey, a simple English cobbler who became a minister and finally a pioneer missionary to India, faced both of the extremes. Carey was a preacher among the Particular, Calvinistic Baptists in England who held firmly to the doctrines of election, irresistible grace, and particular atonement. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the views of "False Calvinism" gained distinction among Particular Baptists, in part due to the influence of Joseph Hussey, a Congregational minister, who denied that it was the duty of sinners to believe in Jesus. Many churches in England were shaped by this influence for years to come and became Hyper-Calvinistic.

The missionary mandate was understood as restricted to the original apostles only! Since the world had already heard the gospel in the apostolic age, what need was there to offer it again? So pervasive was this thinking that it was reflected in an anti-missionary hymn which made the rounds in the eighteenth century.

Go into all the world,  
the Lord of old did say,  
But now where He has planted  
thee,  
there thou shouldst stay.<sup>1</sup>

Due largely to the theological influence of Andrew Fuller, a fellow Particular Baptist minister, Carey came to see that evangelism

and Calvinism could be reconciled.

There was no contradiction between the universal obligation of all who hear the gospel to believe in Christ and the sovereign decision of God to save those whom He has chosen. The failure to believe stemmed not from any physical or "natural inability," but rather from a "moral inability" which was the result of a perverted human will.<sup>2</sup>

William Carey came to the following convictions:

- 1) Unconverted sinners are commanded and exhorted to believe in Christ for salvation.
- 2) The gospel, though a message of pure grace, requires the obedient response of faith.
- 3) The lack of faith is a heinous sin which is ascribed in the Scriptures to human depravity.
- 4) God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on sinners for their not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5) The Bible requires of all persons certain spiritual exercises which are represented as their duty. These include repentance and faith no less than the requirement to love God, fear God, and glorify God. That no one can accomplish these things apart from the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is clear. Nevertheless, the obligation remains.
- 6) If sinners are obligated to repent and believe, there must be another obligation! Christians who were themselves delivered

<sup>1</sup> Timothy George, *Faithful Witness* (Birmingham: New Hope, 1991), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.



from darkness into light are most urgently obliged to present the commands of Christ to those who have never heard!<sup>3</sup>

Carey became convinced that the divine commission was binding upon all succeeding ministers. He therefore suggested this as a topic for discussion at a meeting of fellow pastors. The response was harsh and unexpected: "Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to converse with heathen He'll do it without consulting you or me."<sup>4</sup> These remarks reflected the hardened attitude which had gained widespread support in Carey's day. The Particular, Calvinistic Baptists resisted the liberalizing tendencies of the Arminian Baptists and strongly affirmed the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace. In their zeal they minimized the responsibility of the church to be zealous in evangelism and missions. God would save His people with or without them.

Responding to this type of argumentation, R.B. Kuiper states:

The premise of that argumentation is altogether true. Divine election makes the salvation of the elect unalterably certain. But the conclusion drawn from that premise reveals a serious misunderstanding of the divine sovereignty as expressed in the decree of election.

While election is from everlasting, the truth may not be lost out of sight that its realization is a process in time. In that process numerous factors play a part. One of those factors is the evangel. And it is a most significant factor.<sup>5</sup>

R.B. Kuiper goes on to state that election demands evangelism and also guarantees that evangelism will result in genuine conversions.

God chose certain persons, not only that they might go to heaven when they die, but also that they

might be his witnesses while here on earth. Once more let it be said, *election demands evangelism.*

An equally significant conclusion is that election *guarantees that evangelism will result in genuine conversions.* The preacher of the gospel has no way of telling who in his audience belongs to the elect and who does not. But God knows. And God is sure to bless his Word to the hearts of his elect unto salvation. Just when it will please God to do that in the case of an elect individual, we do not know, but he most certainly will do it before that person's death. So certain as it is that all of God's elect will be saved, precisely so certain is it that the word of the gospel will not return to God void. (Cf. Is. 55:11.)<sup>6</sup>

Through the theological impetus of Andrew Fuller and the zeal of William Carey, a missionary society was soon formed and the first missionaries were sent to India. Among these first missionaries were William Carey and his wife. For more than five years Carey labored with little fruit. There was unrelieved opposition, the kind of opposition which natural man always exhibits toward the gospel. One day Carey was talking to a Brahman who was defending the worship of idols. Tom Wells relates the conversation:

Carey cited Acts 14:16 and 17:30 and explained that God formerly "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," said Carey, "but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

"Indeed," said the native, "I think God ought to repent for not sending the gospel sooner to us."

This was the Brahman's way of saying that he did not believe Carey's message. He was in essence saying, "If what you say is true, why have I not heard it before?"<sup>7</sup>

The Brahman was failing to understand properly God's sovereignty in evangelism and his own responsibility. He was blaming

Christians, the church, and ultimately God for not having sent the gospel to him and his country earlier. What was missionary Carey's response?

Suppose a kingdom had been long overrun by the enemies of its true king, and he, though possessed of sufficient power to conquer them, should yet suffer them to prevail, and establish themselves as much as they could desire, would not the valor and wisdom of that king be far more conspicuous in exterminating them, than it would have been if he had opposed them at first, and prevented their entering the country? Thus by the diffusion of gospel light, the wisdom, power, and grace of God will be more conspicuous in overcoming such deep-rooted idolatries, and in destroying all that darkness and vice which have so universally prevailed in this country, than they would have been if all had not been suffered to walk in their own ways for so many ages past.<sup>8</sup>

Essentially the answer of Carey was that it pleased God to keep the gospel from India, and He had His perfect reason for doing so. It was so that India would sink into idolatry and corruption. God's rescuing it, then, would be a far greater work and God would display His power and grace in a far greater manner.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 56, 67.

<sup>4</sup> Basil Miller, *William Carey* (Bethany House: Minneapolis, 1980), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> R.B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Wells, *A Vision For Missions* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Wells, p. 13.



God's sovereignty, so far from making missions pointless, gives us our hope for success in missions. God's sovereign grace makes us confident that our efforts in missions will be used to gather His church. God's grace alone can conquer the two obstacles which missions face: First, man's natural and irresistible impulse to oppose God (Rom. 3:10ff.), and secondly, the devil's powerful efforts to lead men down the pathways of unbelief and disobedience (I Pet. 5:8). "Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel."<sup>9</sup>

That God is sovereign makes missions necessary and urgent! God has determined that no man can be saved apart from the gospel (Rom. 10:9ff.). The urgency of repentance is stated throughout the Scriptures: "Except ye repent, ye

shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5).

In conclusion I quote a section from "An enquiry into the obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the heathens," which William Carey wrote to motivate the saints to see the proper relationship between God's sovereignty in missions and the responsibility of man.

If the prophecies concerning the increase of Christ's Kingdom be true, and if what has been argued concerning the commission given by him to his disciples being obligatory on us be just, it must be inferred that all Christians ought heartily to concur with God in promoting his glorious designs, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" (I Cor. 6:17).

One of the first and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us is fervent and united prayer. However the influence of the Holy Spirit may be set at nought and run down by many, it will be found upon trial

that all means which we can use will be ineffectual without it. If a temple is raised for God in the heathen world, it will not be "by might, nor by power," "nor by the authority of the magistrate, or the eloquence of the orator," "but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6). We must therefore be in real earnest in supplicating his blessing upon our labors....

We must not be contented however with praying without exerting ourselves in the use of means for the obtaining of those things we pray for. Were "the children of light" but "as wise in their generation as the children of this world" (Luke 16:8), they would stretch every nerve to gain so glorious a prize, nor ever imagine it was to be obtained in any other way.<sup>10</sup> □

<sup>9</sup> J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1961), p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy George, p. E.54.

## All Around Us

### ■ Exegesis of a Woman Minister

The United Reformed News Service reports that Mary-Lee Bouma, who has served as the unordained pastor of Trinity Christian Reformed Church on the campus of Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant, will now seek ordination in the way of this congregation switching from Classis Northern Michigan (which will not allow ordination of women into the ministry) to Classis Muskegon (which presumably will). The switch was approved by Classis Northern Michigan but not yet by Classis Muskegon. One might make comments on these strange

antics of switching classes to gain one's desired goal — but at this time I refrain from that. What is of interest is the strange reasoning of Mary-Lee Bouma in support of her desire for ordination. Though originally opposed to women serving in the ministry, she is now convinced that Scripture supports such ordination. Evidently two thousand years' practice within the churches no longer weighs heavily upon her. The question she and others with her face is: has the Spirit now in these latter days suddenly given light (revelation) to the church which none have before seen? Or perhaps is it part of the "strong delusion" sent upon many in our day — a sign of the end times? URNS reports thus:

Bouma — who was opposed to women's ordination when she first entered seminary and used to tell

her female friends who wanted to be ordained that they were sinning against God — said she didn't see herself as a crusader for women's issues or a role model for future women pastors.

"I don't intend to militate for women going into the ministry," said Bouma. "I think it's great when women go into the ministry, I think it's great when men go into the ministry. I just think it's great when people use the gifts God has given them. I just want us, as a local congregation, not to be hindered."

Bouma — whose positions on other theological issues are still conservative by Christian Reformed standards — said she didn't have a problem with saying Scripture is inerrant and that it has a clear position on women in office. Unlike those opposing women's ordination, however, Bouma says Scripture clearly favors women's ordination.

"I think the New Testament is

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## Rev. Gise VanBaren



very clear that we, men and women, will be ruling with Christ someday," said Bouma. "I'm a Reformed person who believes that Scripture teaches a creation, fall, and redemption, and I believe in the created order in Genesis 1-3 we see God telling men and women to take care of his world and in the fall in Genesis 3 when men and women are faced with the consequences of sin, those results, except for the curse of the ground and the curse of the snake, fall on both."

How does Bouma reconcile her views with her belief in the inerrancy of Genesis 3's declaration that Eve's husband "will rule over" her and I Timothy 2's declaration, citing the fall of Adam and Eve as proof, that "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent"?

"When that passage in Genesis says men should rule over women it is a description of the consequences of sin, not prescriptions for the way things should be," said Bouma.

"The first recorded sermon in the New Testament after Christ's resurrection is Peter quoting the prophecy of Joel about how men and women will all be filled with the Holy Spirit and will speak," said Bouma. "The Holy Spirit now comes on every Christian believer and comes to live and dwell in power."

Bouma's arguments didn't convince Classis Northern Michigan that it should allow the ordination of a woman pastor who affirms both inerrancy and women in office. On March 6, however, she hopes her church will have an easier time with Classis Muskegon.

One wonders about the exegesis which must be taught at Calvin Seminary — or did Bouma arrive at this on her own? Which church father ever taught that? What church confession teaches that? But more seriously still: how can that view be based on inerrant Scripture? Is Adam's headship the consequence of the fall? Is such headship ended after restoration in

Christ? What then of Romans 5? What does this infallible Scripture mean when it states in verse 17, "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one..."? Surely this "one man" is not Eve who first sinned. It can only be Adam. If death reigned by Adam, it can only mean that he was representative head *before* the fall. If Adam's headship is the punishment for sin, then what about Christ's headship? If Christ once removes sin, then His headship must also disappear—if He were indeed ever head. Can one possibly maintain the infallibility of Scripture — and deny headship or attribute that to the consequence of sin? For shame!!

And what of I Timothy 2? There is nothing in the report indicating even an attempt to give an explanation to that. Bouma could best reexamine her position in light of Scripture. Is her present stance a result of new revelation — or strong delusion?

### ■ Further Decline in the CRC

The United Reformed News Service reports a further decline in the membership of the Christian Reformed Church:

The Christian Reformed denomination has lost members for an unprecedented fifth year in a row, a loss now totaling over 30,551 — more than the total memberships of most of the North American Reformed and Presbyterian denominations with which the CRC maintains ecclesiastical fellowship. Many of these members have joined the rapidly growing conservative secession movement from the denomination.

While many mainline denominations are used to reporting annual declines, until five years ago the CRC had been quite different. Prior to the beginning of the secession, the CRC had only experienced two years of decline in its 140-year history, the largest of which was prompted by the 1925 secession which began the Protestant Reformed denomination.

In 1925, the CRC lost 1288 members, about 1.2% of the total denominational membership at that time, according to official denominational statistics reported in the Christian Reformed yearbook. By contrast, the current secession has prompted a much larger decline of nearly ten percent of the total denominational membership, which reached a high of 316,415 members in 1992. The current CRC membership stands at 285,864 — a level last seen 26 years ago in 1971. The 1997 annual decline of 2.03% is only a hundredth of a percentage point less than the second-highest percentage decline in CRC history, which occurred two years ago when the CRC dropped from 300,320 members in 1994 to 294,179 members in 1995.

Nearly two-thirds of the loss can be traced to churches which are largely composed of seceders from the Christian Reformed denomination. Of the four major groups of seceding churches, the largest is the United Reformed Churches, whose 43 member congregations total 9259 members. The second group, the Christian Presbyterian Church, is entirely composed of Korean congregations, most of which left the CRC under the leadership of Dr. John E. Kim, formerly pastor of the CRC's second-largest church. At their initial organization in 1993, the Christian Presbyterians counted over 6000 members and have continued rapid growth, but part of the initial membership and most recent growth has been from the receipt of members and congregations which never were Christian Reformed; 2934 of the initial members came from CRC sources and some additional Korean CRC members have left since that time. The oldest and smallest of the secession groups is the federation of Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, a small 1399-member denomination with 14 churches. So far, 24 secession churches with approximately 3900 members have chosen not to affiliate with any of the organized denominations and most are loosely associated under the rubric of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. In addition, individual churches and groups



have left the CRC to affiliate with other denominations such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Protestant Reformed Churches, and Canadian Reformed Churches.

CRC General Secretary Dr. David Engelhard said he was "caught a bit by surprise" by the decline, which followed a smaller loss of only 2383 members last year.

"It's not ideal; the Christian Reformed Church has not obviously gone out of its way to lose members," said Engelhard. "I hadn't anticipated that the number would be quite so high.

According to Engelhard, much of the decline could be attributed to denominational infighting. "It's got itself in a very serious discussion about women in office and some of this membership loss is a result of that," said Engelhard. "You know as well as I do that all thirty thousand people are not in independent churches and they haven't all gone to the Orthodox

Presbyterian Church or the Presbyterian Church in America, either. Nobody can say that all thirty thousand people left on account of the women in office decision, but it is certainly a significant number...."

...Despite the decline, Engelhard said there were some bright items in the statistics. "The one feature of our statistics which I think is still encouraging is the number of people that have come in through evangelism in the course of the year; there was a 1% increase through evangelism," noted Engelhard. "The other fact is the professions of faith of the young people this year was 4350, that's an encouraging sign. I think that even though we lose some people through indifference and rejection of the faith, the Lord is still working."

"I still think those two points are something we need to have some rejoicing over," said Engelhard.

The decline continues. Recently the Doon, Iowa CRC decided by a vote of 44 to 22 to leave the CRC denomination and become part of the United Reformed Church. Indeed the "trickle" has increasingly the appearance of a "flood."

But the conclusion of Engelhard, if I understand it correctly, seems cruel indeed: "I think that even though we lose some people through indifference and rejection of the faith, the Lord is still working." Can he really mean that the "conservatives," those who fought strongly for the 2000-year-old stand of Christ's church against women in office and other historical positions of doctrine have now left "through indifference and rejection of the faith?" Indifference??? Rejection of the faith??? Or did most leave at great sacrifice because "mother church" had departed from its old moorings and now drifts ever more quickly in the rapids of liberalism? □

**Taking Heed to the Doctrine**

**Rev. Steven Key**

## The Antithesis (3)

**H**aving considered several ways in which the truth of the antithesis is brought under attack, we were left to consider our own lives in relationship to that antithesis established by God from the beginning.

While there are many attacks upon the antithesis, coming from many different angles, we must not be misled into thinking that so long

as we remain free from the influence of Roman Catholicism and common grace, we are free from error in this matter. The fact is, our own sinful flesh brings us into conflict constantly with the truth of the antithesis.

You and I have constantly to say "yes" to God, while at the same time saying "no" to all that to which God says "no." We must say "no" to our own flesh, and to the sin and temptations we face not only around us, but within ourselves. We must learn to *live* antithetically.

### A Spiritual Antithesis

This antithesis, it must be remembered, is a *spiritual* antithesis.

The life of the Christian, the life of the antithesis, is not to be found in world-flight. While it is true that sometimes and to some degree the spiritual separation required of us also involves physical separation, we would make a grievous error were we to view the antithesis as a mere matter of physically separating from the world.

When we live under the daily attacks and temptations of the world, not only in our homes but

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also in the work place, there can be something appealing about the separate little communities established by the Amish. There can be something appealing about the life of a communal existence — at least as we perceive that life from the outside.

But that is not how God would have us live.

The life of separation required of the Christian is not physical separation from the world, but a *spiritual* separation unto holiness.

That is clear from the words of the apostle in I Corinthians 5. In writing about the practical consequences of Christian discipline, Paul says (vv. 9-11): "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man *that is called a brother* (my emphasis, SK) be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

When the inspired apostle tells the church not to company with fornicators and idolaters and those who pay no regard to God's law, he recognizes that our life in the world is going to require that many of us have daily contact with such people. Many of you rub shoulders with such men and women in the work place. They are your neighbors. You buy from them. You sell to them. You say hello to them and are friendly toward them. The point of the apostle is *not* that we separate ourselves entirely from the world. Although we are not to have fellowship with the world, with all that the term fellowship denotes, we are to live among them. Paul points rather to the impenitent man or woman within the church, who walks un-

godly and refuses to heed the Word of God. And from such Paul commands the church to separate.

The antithesis, therefore, is not that the child of God turns his back on the world and refuses to drive an automobile or use electricity.

The antithesis is not carried out by refusing to marry or by living in a monastery or convent.

After all, whose world is this creation?

Even though the creation bears evidence of God's curse, and even though the world is filled with those who are sinners and even ungodly, this world remains *God's* world. This world is so much God's world, that He provides for the beasts of the fields and the flowers of the valley. Every sparrow is watched by our heavenly Father. Every single thing and activity is governed by our God who is all powerful and everywhere present. That truth we considered at length just recently.

But we may also say something else about this world. As God's world, this present creation is the stage upon which God gathers His church and performs His wonder work of grace in our salvation. This present world is the stage on which the antithesis is manifested. God made this world the stage for the antithesis of sin and grace. We may not turn our backs on this world, to live in physical separation.

To separate from the world is not the solution to accomplish our antithetical calling anyway. Martin Luther discovered that. We simply carry the sin with us, in our own sinful flesh.

The antithesis, therefore, is *spiritual*.

### An Urgent Calling

It is our calling, while living on the stage of this present world, to manifest ourselves as being of the

party of the living God, members of Christ's body.

That means that as those who are redeemed, we express our gratitude to God by living a life of obedience to His Word. We live antithetically by walking in the way of His Word.

This requires an unwavering commitment to the Scriptures as the authoritative truth of God. To live antithetically requires antithetical mind-sets. We must think in terms of truth over against the lie. Where Scripture speaks, it speaks definitively. It speaks with authority. It calls for absolute conviction. The conviction of the psalmist in Psalm 119:111, 112 must be our own conviction and song: "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end."

This is the way of blessing, as the psalmist proclaims in Psalm 1:1, 2: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

The application of the principle here is very broad. To live as those who are wholly consecrated to God means that we walk in a "straight and narrow way" that leads to heaven. Our life is a life that requires great care and fervent dedication to God's precepts. The life of the antithesis is a life that recognizes "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). It is a life that heeds God's call constantly to turn from our evil ways, and to be holy, as He is holy.

This has powerful implications when it comes to our earthly relationships and perspective.

The antithesis, put to practice in our lives, means that our fellowship is with those who are godly.

*The  
antithesis  
is not  
carried out  
by refusing  
to marry  
or by living  
in a monastery  
or convent.*



Notice, I do not say merely that our fellowship is to be found with those who *call* themselves Christian or even Protestant Reformed. There are those who call themselves Christian, and there are those within the church, who do not walk antithetically, who do not live in obedience to God's precepts. There are those, even within the church, whom the devil would use to lead us astray! Our fellowship is not to be found with such!

We must teach these things to our children. Our children must seek fellowship and establish friendships with those who are *godly*, who know what it means to live antithetically as the redeemed people of God. Our fellowship is to be found with those who are one with us in the faith, who have the same hope, the same love for the Word, the same fellowship with God.

The antithesis, put to practice in our lives, means that there are many activities, wholly acceptable to the world, which we as the friends of God are not comfortable with. In fact, insofar as we live in the consciousness of our fellowship with the Holy One, we abhor many things that the world counts pleasure. As the friends of God, we find many worldly activities offensive to our calling to holiness. Indeed, many of the activities of this world are nothing less than expressions of the world's depravity and hatred of God.

Living in this consciousness affects our perspective concerning the use of television, for example. It causes us to reject many of the world's amusements — their dancing which inflames the lusts, their party-life and abuse of alcohol, their love of pleasure, their worship of sports.

But this truth also points to the fact that the antithesis hits very close to home.

The antithesis also operates *within* us. We have daily to fight a

tremendous battle against our own sinful flesh. Read Romans 7. Was it not the warfare of the flesh against the Spirit that compelled the apostle to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" You and I must live the antithesis by fighting the battle of faith against that great enemy within — the old man of sin.

But let it also be emphasized: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

The antithesis, after all, has been realized in Christ.

### Realized in Christ

What a tremendous blessing was that tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, as revealed to Adam and Eve. That tree pointed to Christ.

The tree of life for Adam and Eve signified everlasting life. After their fall into sin, the way to that tree was banished from them, in order that the last Adam might come and make for us a way to life everlasting. Our salvation is only in Christ Jesus. There is no other way.

If it were so that salvation is only to be attained in the way of our obedience, there would be for us no salvation. For you and I have often failed to walk in obedience to our antithetical calling.

That salvation is only in the Messiah was revealed to Adam and Eve too, in their banishment from the inner sanctuary of God's garden, and the tree of life. We find in the last part of Genesis 3 that the way to the tree of life was absolutely barred from them.

Why?

Because if Adam would have had continued access to that tree of life, he would have continued to sustain his earthly existence *apart from God*. Then there would be no redemption for him!

Adam must lose that life. He must lose his earthly life, in order

to receive life in Christ Jesus.

And as it was with Adam, so it is with you and me. We too must lose our life, our natural, carnal life without God in the world. We must lose this earthly life in the fellowship of the ungodly, in order to have the favor and fellowship of God.

The tabernacle of God with man is no longer to be found in something earthly, not even as magnificent as was that original tree of life.

God purposed to build His tabernacle with His people in Christ Jesus. He would do it through the shedding of blood on the cross of Calvary.

And so the tree of life is seen in its full significance.

The tree of life says to you and to me, "You must die for your sin. But there is hope. For with this earthly tree of life you are pointed to Him in whom God comes to us and pays the price for our sins." The tree of life finds its fulfillment in Christ the Savior. And so in Revelation 22 it signifies the perfected life of heavenly fellowship with God for all who believe and who confess the name of Christ.

The time is coming when we shall enjoy perfectly that life of fellowship with God.

In that hope we live.

With that promise we walk antithetically in the midst of this world.

We are pilgrims and strangers here, having no abiding place. Our home is with Christ in heaven.

That is how we live. That is what we teach our children. That is the way in which we walk together as children of the living God, our Savior. □

*... the  
antithesis  
hits  
very close  
to home.*



# The Foundation of the Family

**G**ood families do not just happen. Many young men and women enter a relationship and even marriage without ever giving that a thought. They have these romantic, fairy-tale expectations that they will simply, without any effort, fall in love, marry, have a few children, and live happily ever after. They think that no matter whom they marry or what they do in dating and in marriage, life will somehow work out for the better and they will settle into a routine of happiness and bliss. Many find out later that this is not so! Good families do not just happen. Solid marriages do not fall from the sky. Obedient children do not come in a surprise package. Happiness in the home is not a made-to-order treat from the pizza parlor down the street. Good families take conscientious work.

But they take more than that! In order for one to establish and maintain a good family, his efforts must flow out of a true and living faith in God! God's blessing must rest on a family in order for it to be a "good" family in the true sense of the word. To experience that blessing requires the conscientious labor of faith. In other words, our families must be founded on what we believe concerning God and His Son, Jesus Christ. There

must be a theological reason behind our labors — a reason that motivates us in establishing and maintaining good Christian homes.

There are very few books or magazines that establish the theological foundation for the family. Most writers begin with a reference to the fact that the family is the fundamental unit of all of society. Then, having proved from Scripture that the family is foundational, they hurriedly proceed to discuss what makes that family strong. Such an introduction, however, inevitably leads to the wrong end. We do not mean to say, of course, that there is no significance in the truth that the family is the basic unit of society. Nor do we mean that it is unnecessary to discuss what makes a family strong. What we do mean to propose is that all this amounts to very little if it is not rooted in our faith in God and in Jesus Christ! A person may follow all the prescribed rules and advice for what constitutes a good family, but what he will end up with is just a morally good family. A morally good family is not synonymous with a spiritually strong family. In many respects the two may look alike, but they are not the same. It is the spiritually good family that is pleasing to God, because there He finds the proper spiritual motivation: a genuine love for Him and His Word.

To discover the proper theological basis for the family raises the question: *why* has God established the family as the basic unit of society? Why did God institute marriage? Why did God command

a husband and wife to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth? Why does God ordain particular places to the husband, wife, and children in the family and command them to walk faithfully in their individual callings? None of this is arbitrary. God never does anything in that manner. He always has a purpose behind all that He creates and ordains. Why the family? The answer to this is found in God Himself and in the covenant He establishes with believers and their seed! That is where it all begins for us.

The doctrine of the Trinity has in our modern day been viewed by many as a non-essential of the Christian religion. It is far too abstract. It has nothing to do with salvation. Why should one bother his head about it? There are, too, those who maintain the truth of the Trinity, yet find no practical significance in it for their lives. Therefore they relegate it to the shelf of doctrinal antiques to be taken out once in a great while to dust it off, admire it from a distance, and then to put it back on the shelf. The truth of the Triune God holds no special place in their hearts. If this is true of us, then we are in a sad state. What we believe concerning the Triune God, and the fervency with which we believe it, will indeed affect our marriages, our relationship with our children, and the way we conduct ourselves in the home.

The God whom we serve is a covenant God. That means that God *within His very Being* experiences a perfect life of fellowship

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and love. God does not need anyone else for friendship or fellowship. He does not need anyone else to converse with, to walk with, to share His secrets with. He does not need this because God is Triune. Within the one divine Essence there are three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three Persons are not three parts of the Godhead; they are one God. They are one in nature, in mind, and in will. All possess the infinite perfections of the divine Being. They are one in eternity, sovereignty, wisdom, holiness, and grace. Yet, within that Godhead there are three distinct Persons, each possessing His own personal characteristics. From eternity there is the Father who begets the Son. From eternity there is the Son who is begotten by the Father. From eternity there is the Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the Father. There is no doubt that we do not comprehend all of this in its full beauty. Nevertheless, we can glean from all of this one most blessed truth. Within God's

very own Being there is an exclusive life of love and unity! These three Persons enter into one another's life, and in perfect love they are bound together as the one true God of heaven and earth!

To try to put into human words the heavenly joy and bliss that God experiences in Himself as God is impossible! There is a relationship of friendship and fellowship within God that is not in the least sense touched with sin. In the light of perfection the Father and the Son dwell eternally in the most intimate of relationship of love: generation! In that relationship the Spirit also enters, breathed forth from Father to Son and Son to Father. As a result, there can be found no greater happiness, no greater peace, no greater safety, no greater

contentment than what God has within Himself!

Now, we can say to ourselves, "boring, abstract, does not do much for me!" Or we can say, "that is the joy, peace, safety, and contentment I would like to experience and share in! That is my chief desire in life! What a blessing it would be if I could somehow share in that covenant life of the ever-blessed God! That would be for me the highest possible good!" It is this latter reaction that belongs to the child of God in whom God has worked by His grace. And His greatest delight is in this fact: he knows he *does* share in that fellowship and love with God!

How all of this applies to our establishing and maintaining a good marriage and family we will consider soon. But let us not rush here. There is more to know of this truth of the covenant of God. God from eternity willed in His great wisdom to share that fellowship and love He has within Himself with the creature outside Himself. For this reason, from eternity

*... the same intimate love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience within their own Being, God now shares with us!*

He elected a certain people in Christ with whom He chose to establish His covenant of friendship. These elect people God has called out of this world of sin and darkness since the beginning of time and has made them partakers of His eternal love and friendship. Throughout the ages God's people, in all of their struggles and sorrows, hear the promise of God that He will lead them to His heavenly dwelling place so that they might one day perfectly share in His life of love. In that connection, the elect also hear the promise that until that day they need not fear, because nothing will separate them from the love of their God which is Christ Jesus! He who has begun a good work will be faithful to complete it!

Neither ought we to underesti-

mate just how close and personal a relationship God has entered with His people. Within God there is the intimate relationship of Father and Son. It is that same relationship that God establishes with us. Romans 8:14-17 has always been a mainstay for the afflicted child of God: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...."

There is only one natural-born Son of God, and that is Christ. But God has entered the same relationship with His people through adoption in the blood of Christ. This means that the same intimate love that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience within their own Being, God now shares with us! He does that by adopting us and by sending His Spirit to dwell in us! We are the children of the living God! He is a Father who dwells with us and loves us so much, we can face the worst of sicknesses, the worst of persecution, the worst this present valley of tears can send us, with the greatest of joy and peace!

There is one other way that the Bible describes this intimate love God shares with His people in Christ: "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Is. 62:5). This intimate relationship between God and His church, this covenant relationship, is also described in this manner in a most beautiful way in Ezekiel 16:8-14. God's love for His people in Christ is so intimate, so close, that it can be best described as the inseparable bond between a husband and wife.

This is the covenant that God has established with His people. We are given to taste and to see in this life already the wonderful life of joy that God has within Him-



self. So much do we experience that joy that we long for the day when sin will not mar our relationship with Him. We look forward to that day of which Jesus prays in John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Because we look forward to that day, it is the one great desire of the child of God to dwell in the house of the Lord and to behold His beauty!

It is faith in this covenant God and in His covenant established with us that is the very foundation of a good family. It is this that distinguishes a merely outwardly moral family from that family deeply committed spiritually in its aims and goals. We conclude this because God's covenant is the reason God instituted marriage. God's covenant is the very purpose of God behind commanding a man and his wife to be fruitful and multiply. God establishes the home and its various relationships based on His covenant with us. How is this true? God has ordained marriage, and He has determined that

through this bond children might be born, because by these means we are given an earthly taste of our fellowship with Him.

Every godly husband and wife who dwell together according to God's Word can testify of how intimate their love for one another is. They can understand the bond that it creates, the fellowship that they share, their utter dependence on each other. They experience love and friendship in a way that is hard to put into words. By means of this institution, therefore, God gives the godly husband and wife a taste of the joy that we share right now with our divine Bridegroom and which we will share some day perfectly in His presence! The same is true with the bond between parent and child. How intimately close is the love and friendship between parents and children! Our children are our flesh and bone! Nothing can describe the pride and the pleasure that godly parents find in their believing children. Well, God has ordered this relationship that we might be given in it a wonderful taste of the closeness we have with Him as our

heavenly Father.

If we are those therefore who cling to our covenant God in true faith, that will have everything to do with these relationships in life. We will enter marriage seeking to experience there the blessed fellowship we have with our God and our Savior. When we bring forth children, we will seek in our relationship with them the blessed friendship we have with our Father and our God. In other words, our faith in the covenant God will dictate whom we seek as a spouse, how we live with that spouse, our desire for children, how we as parents deal with our children, and how we answer countless other questions that arise in connection with our families.

How zealous are we in our faith? How enthusiastic are we to live in communion with the covenant God? Is it our chief desire to dwell in the courts of the Lord forever to behold His beauty and to inquire in His temple? That will determine how spiritual our homes are. Do you want a good family? Exercise your faith in the Triune God! □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

# "When the Light Shines" (II)

(John 9)

In our last study (*Standard Bearer*, March 15, 1997) we focused on how Jesus demonstrated His being the light of the world in the healing of the man born blind.

This time our study turns especially to the various reactions to

this light-shining miracle.

And what do we see first of all?

## Religious Rascallions!

☛ Some (the neighbors, v.8?) brought the man healed of his blindness to a group of Pharisees.

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These religious “elite” of the Jews, understanding that this miracle which Jesus had performed might gain for Him more disciples, seek at all costs to discredit Him and this notable work. Just look at the infallible record in John 9! See the lengths to which the Jews go! In the name of God, thinking they do God service, they mock God’s Messiah and show great contempt for the light (cf. John 3:19-31)! And they seek to prevent God’s own from entering into the Kingdom! Ranting rascals! Self-righteous rogues! Religious rapsallions!

☛ Some of the Pharisees, noting that Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath day, argue that Jesus could not be of God because, they declare, He did not keep the law of the Sabbath day (v. 16). What was their argument here? What is the flaw in their logic?

☛ Other of the Pharisees wonder how a sinner could do such miracles, and so were inclined to think Jesus might indeed be of God. The result: there was a division or schism amongst the Pharisees (v. 16). Consider and discuss in this light how the lie *divides*, and how the truth *unites*. What is the explanation for all the disunity today in that which professes to be Christendom?

☛ Note at least five ways the Jewish leaders mock and (seek to) discredit Jesus in their discussion with the healed man and his parents (vv. 13-34). (Hint: #1: They say this man is not of God because he keepeth not the Sabbath day, v. 16.)

☛ The Jewish leaders had threatened with excommunication anyone who confessed that Jesus is the Christ (v.22). This is mentioned or alluded to elsewhere (John 12:42; 16:2; Luke 6:22). This was a grave threat! For, as Hendriksen comments: In Israel in those days to be excommunicated, or “unsynagogued” meant that one would be

“virtually cut off from the religious and social life of Israel.... From every point of view — social, economic, and religious — the results were frightening!”

What does this decree of the Jews to excommunicate disciples of Christ say of the religious state of Jewry in Jesus’ day? For what reasons does the church today excommunicate people (cf. Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Tit. 3:10; Lord’s Day 31)? Are the results just as frightening as, or worse than, to have been excommunicated by these Jews?

☛ In their examination of the man healed of blindness, the Jews call him to “give God the praise” (v. 24). What did they mean by this (cf. Josh. 7:19)? How does this show the utter hypocrisy of the Pharisees?

☛ Can we discern in the religious community today any behavior similar to that of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day? Is this behavior similar to what the disciples of Antichrist will show (II Thess.; II Tim. 3; I John 4:1ff; Rev. 13)?

### Fearing men, and not God!

☛ The parents of the healed man were called in by the Pharisees (vv. 18-23). The Pharisees hoped to get something out of them to discredit Jesus’ miracle. The parents confess, upon interrogation, that indeed this was their son, and that he had indeed been born blind. But then they say that they do not know how their son’s sight was restored (v. 21). Were they telling the truth? What evidence in the passage do we have that the parents were fearing men and not God?

☛ Look up passages in the Scriptures which say we must not fear men, but God, in our testifying of the truth. Would it ever be “prudent” and “the better part of wis-

dom” to be silent about our faith in Jesus Christ in order to preserve our life, our church membership, our job, or peace in the family? What do the Scriptures say about confessing Christ?

### Believing, and True Life and Light Through the Name of Jesus!

☛ The man who was healed of his blindness shows that he was also healed of spiritual blindness and brought into the marvelous saving light of God. Note and discuss at least five ways the man reveals his faith in the Savior in his discussion with the Pharisees.

☛ About this man’s faith:

✱ Note the *progress* in faith the man makes as he stands against the Pharisees. First he bases his testimony strictly on his experience (v. 15, 25). But then he begins to draw conclusions *from Scripture* about the identity of Jesus, and the greatness of the miracle. What enlightenment the Scripture gives him! How the Word of God sheds light, true light, on his experience (vv. 17, 30-33)! What Scriptures does the man have in mind when he makes the claims that he does? What does this man’s progress say of those churches and Christian entertainment groups which make mountains out of the “testimonies” and “conversion experiences” and other experiences of people? What does this man’s progress teach us about our own?

✱ Note the wisdom and *discernment* faith produces in the man. He is not “snowed” by the Pharisees’ logic. He reads right through their words to their corrupt motives. He will hear, without bias, and by true faith in God, what the Word has to say of this miracle-worker, Jesus of Nazareth! He will *search the Scriptures* to



know the truth of the matter! Reflect upon how one's *bias*, his *preconceptions*, can and do influence one's interpretation of Scripture. Is it good to have *any* preconceptions, certain fixed ideas, when reading the Scriptures for light?

✱ Note the *boldness* of the man's faith! He is not intimidated by this visitation of the church prelates, nor by this ranting of godless pretenders to true religion! He stands, boldly, against them! And this poor unlearned beggar refutes them, and puts them to shame! For his testimony to the truth of Messiah, the man is cast out of the society of the Jews (v. 34)! Would it have been possible for this man to remain in good standing among the Jews and still be a Christian? Could Luther, and then Calvin and all the Reformers, have remained in the Roman synagogue? How does one know today,

when so many churches and denominations are going (and have gone!) apostate, when it is time to "come out from among them"?

☛ The man healed of blindness has, humanly speaking, no "life" left when he is cast out of the Jews' society. But notice: Jesus comes to him (v. 35)! The Savior-Shepherd searches for the sheep so savagely attacked and left for dead by the wolves! He strengthens the man's faith in Himself by revealing His identity as the Son of God, and calling the man to faith (vv. 35-37). How does this man's response to Jesus' sermon show true faith in Jesus the Christ?

☛ This man has life with Jesus! What are the blessings of life with the Savior which make it worth having, though one should suffer and lose all in this life on account of it? Reflect upon how this man, cast out of the religious community of his fathers, might find com-

fort in Psalms 26 & 27.

☛ Reflecting upon the entire passage of John 9, and the stated purpose of the miracle recorded here, list and discuss several works of God manifest in this man (v. 3).

☛ This incident of Jesus' healing the blind man and working faith in him is *for us*. It is written *that we might believe, and stand, with this man!* It has been said that more Christians have been persecuted for their faith in this century than in all centuries before combined. How do we experience this persecution? Can it be a sign of *little faith*, and "fear of men" when we experience no persecution (cf. John 9: 21, 22; Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 3:12)?

☛ How are we to prepare for persecution under Antichrist? Will we be ready? Will it be so terrible that we will compromise our faith? **Fear not, brethren, beloved of the Lord! For the Light ... will shine!** □

## Book Reviews

*Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*, by Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xi-370. \$19.99. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Robert D. Decker.]

This is a very good book on a much needed subject. While the emphasis of the book is on the public prayers a minister is called to offer in the worship service, the author has a good deal to say about worship in general.

Prayer is an art, i.e., it is a gift from God. All God's servants in the ministry must have this gift to one degree or another or they cannot function in the ministry of the Word. But the gift of prayer can be developed. This book will help ministers to do precisely that.

In the introduction Old makes several important points. The first is that spontaneity in prayer, something to be desired in the minister's public prayers, too often lacks content. It may be sincere, but often not very profound. Hence, according to Old, spontaneity must be balanced by careful preparation and thought. Spontaneity in prayer must also be supported by an intense prayer life on the part of the minister. "One can hardly lead if one does not know the way oneself. Spontaneity has to arise from a profound experience of prayer" (p. 5).

Leading in prayer, Old rightly stresses, belongs to the office, the official work to which Christ calls His ministers. To support this point, Old cites William Perkins, a late 16th century Puritan theolo-

gian, who taught that the office of the ministry consisted of two functions, "First was preaching and teaching the Word of God to the people of God; second was presenting the needs of the people before their God ... as Perkins saw it, prayer was a prophetic ministry that demanded the same gifts of discernment and inspiration that preaching demanded" (pp. 5-6). One is reminded of Article 16 of our Church Order which lists prayer before the ministry of the Word and the dispensing of the sacraments as the work of the office of the ministry! Old points to the Puritans as worthy examples for us today. They prepared to lead their congregations in prayer by private prayer and by studying the prayers of Scripture.

In this connection Old points



to the truth that, "Prayer does have its own language, its own vocabulary, and its own imagery. This language is not simply a matter of style ... prayer uses biblical language" (p. 7). Closely related to this, Old correctly reminds us that the Bible provides what he calls "a prayer typology." By this Old means that the recorded prayers in Scripture are given by God as examples (paradigms) of how ministers ought to lead in prayer.

In the first chapter Old contends that the worship service ought to begin with an Invocation because this is a profoundly biblical form of worship. "This invocation names the God to whom the prayer is addressed. One might therefore define an invocation as a prayer that begins worship by calling on God's name. The Latin word *invocare* means to call upon, to appeal to, or to invoke in prayer" (p. 11). The Invocation includes the following elements: 1) It, as Jesus taught His disciples and us, ought to be offered in the name of Jesus. 2) It must include the hallowing of God's name. 3) It must claim God as *our* God. 4) It must include the petition that our worship be inspired of the Holy Spirit and received through the intercession of Christ. In this connection Old stresses that Christian worship is Trinitarian. 5) It should conclude with a full Trinitarian doxology. The chapter concludes with a listing of some thirty-six Invocations selected by Old and all based on Scripture. In our churches the "Invocation" consists of the vatum taken from Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth," followed by the salutation.

Chapter two is an excellent presentation of "The Psalms as Prayer." Old points out that the Psalms were used as both prayers and songs by the ancient church. This usage was lost in the Middle Ages, but restored by the 16th century Reformation. This was true of both the Lutheran and Calvinis-

tic branches of the Reformation. The Lutherans of Augsburg published a psalter as early as 1531, while in 1537 the Calvinists produced the *Strasbourg Psalter*, which contained vernacular versions of all 150 psalms. Psalm singing continued for the next 200 years, but lost popularity at the end of the 19th century. It ought to be restored, Old contends, because "the psalms are the prayers and songs of the Holy Spirit" (p. 57). Regular use of the psalms in worship teaches the congregation the biblical language of prayer, and therefore, too, the psalms should be "the core of Christian praise" (p. 58).

Chapter three deals with "Prayers of Confession and Supplication," elements which we include in our congregational prayers. Pointing to Psalm 51 as an example of this kind of prayer, Old concludes that two things stand out in this Psalm, a deep feeling of lament and the assurance of pardon. Worship, Old correctly emphasizes, must include recognition of our sin. Without this our worship lacks integrity. God is offended by sin and yet He accepts sinners.

Again the Reformation restored this type of prayer. Martin Bucer composed such a prayer for the Reformed Church at Strasbourg, which became a model for the Prayer of Confession used in Geneva as well as for Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England. Matthew Henry, at the beginning of the 18th century in his *Method of Prayer*, emphasized that the Prayer of Confession should confess both our sinful nature and our particular sins. Reformed Christians recognize that this profound thought occurs much earlier in *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 56.

In Chapter four Old discusses The Prayer for Illumination. This is a brief prayer offered by the minister just before preaching in which he asks the Lord to illumine the preacher and open the hearts of the

people of God to receive the preached Word. This reviewer is convinced that this is something which must be included in every congregational prayer. It would be even better to have a separate brief prayer for illumination just before the reading and preaching of the Word.

Old offers compelling theological reasons for this prayer. God reveals Himself, and revelation is an act of grace. Unless the Lord Himself enables the minister correctly to expound the Word and unless the Lord Himself opens the hearts of the congregation the Word can neither be preached nor received with faith and repentance.

This prayer too was lost in the Middle Ages and revived by the Reformers. Old includes in this chapter beautiful prayers for illumination composed by Bucer, Calvin, and Zwingli.

The Prayer of Intercession, what we would call the congregational prayer, is the subject of chapter five. Characteristic of biblical prayer is that it begins and ends with praise and thanksgiving.

The congregational prayer has strong theological foundations. Belonging to the theological foundations are the doctrine of the Trinity (God is a covenant God who speaks to and fellowships with His people in prayer), the doctrine of Christ (prayer must be in His name and is possible only on the basis of His efficacious atonement), and the doctrine of the church (especially the communion of the saints).

This prayer dropped out of the liturgy of the mass, but was restored by the Reformation. Included in this section are excerpts of some of the prayers of the Reformers.\* Old concludes the chapter with sound advice, "What is

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\* Unfortunately Old omits large sections of the beautiful prayer of Martin Bucer. The complete text of this prayer may be found in *Liturgies of the Western Church* by Bard Thompson, pp. 175-177.



important is that the minister regularly give time and thought to preparing for this ministry. Spontaneity and preparation should complement each other" (p. 183).

Since we are bound to the use of adopted forms, we refrain from comment on the next two sections of the book which deal with Communion prayers. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the petitions in our Communion prayers are found in the *Didache*, a first century collection of the prayers of the early church! In this section Old makes the interesting comment that the offerings ought

to be simple and without ostentation and properly belong at the end of the worship service.

The last section of the book deals with Hymnody, Benedictions, and The Ordering of Public Prayer. Those of us who are committed to exclusive psalmody will be interested to know that psalmody persisted from the Reformation until the middle of the eighteenth century in virtually all branches of the Reformation including the Anglican. The revivals of the mid 1700s introduced hymns.

Old concludes with a lament that, "For at least a generation we

have experienced a sort of atrophy in public prayer" (p. 361). He challenges us to revive the art of prayer in worship. With Calvin Old thinks the congregational prayer ought to follow the sermon. We ought to give this some serious consideration. Prayer, after all, is not something we offer to God, but is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's application of the Word in our hearts.

All in all, this is an excellent book on the subject. It will be helpful to ministers, and through them it will be beneficial for our congregations. □

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Congregational Activities

The congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC sponsored a marriage seminar at the Howard Johnson Hotel in Sioux Falls, SD on Thursday evening, February 27 through Saturday afternoon, March 1. About fifty people, coming from our various churches in Canada, Washington, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota attended the conference.

The first speech, given by Rev. Key on Thursday evening, was entitled "Love in a Godly Marriage." This was followed by Rev. Brummel speaking on Friday afternoon on "The Importance of Communication in a Godly Marriage." And the third speech, given by Rev. Haak on Saturday morning, brought out the "Blessings of a Godly Marriage."

The participants in this seminar were able not only to enjoy these three speeches, but also to be part of four different workshops revolving around Christian marriages. One dealt with keeping

marriages strong through trials, another with how to overcome strife and contention in a marriage, and a third with keeping your marriage secure.

The purpose of this seminar was to glorify God through enriching our marriages. It appears, from the comments heard after this weekend, that this seminar did just that. We thank our Edgerton congregation for the time and effort they willingly expended on behalf of our churches.

The Consistory of the Grandville, MI PRC recently gave their approval to their church's Young Adult Bible Study to sponsor a song service prior to their worship service on the first Sunday evening of each month.

At a congregational meeting in late January, the members of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada met to give their approval to plans for their new church building. By God's grace, Immanuel has raised over 2/3 of the estimated cost for construction and are now ready to begin construction. At that meeting the plans, as presented, were approved, after changes were made to the nursery, bathroom, and kitchen areas.

The Council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI called a general informational meeting for February 24 to discuss a final update on their building plans.

The members of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA recently gave their approval to their Consistory to purchase a new furnace. One of their two furnaces was worn out and it could not be properly repaired.

On March 4, Rev. Mahtani, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX, gave a slide presentation entitled "Reaching the Nations with the Gospel of Grace" in the sanctuary of the Doon, IA PRC. Those of us who have seen this presentation know that it lays down the principles of Reformed evangelism, as well as presenting some of Trinity's work with the Sindhis in Houston.

Rev. Mahtani was able to repeat this presentation two days later, March 6, in the Elk Grove Village Library, outside of Chicago, having been invited there by the Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC.

While at Bethel, Rev. Mahtani also led a group of adventurous Bethel members to India Town in Chicago to experience a taste of India, and to enjoy authentic Indian

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food, the smell of curry, a snake charmer's music, and a guide to explain what they were eating (if they really wanted to know).

#### Mission Activities

On February 26 Rev. Slopsema, representing the Mission Committee, and Elder Perlin Schut, an elder from the Hudsonville, MI PRC, left for what was intended to be a two-week visit to Northern Ireland to oversee the work of our missionary, Rev. Hanko. However, these men were unexpectedly called home a couple of days later when Rev. Slopsema's mother-in-law, suffering from cancer, took a sudden turn for the worse. (She died that following week.) Consequently, these men were able to do little of the work they had expected

to accomplish. Presently no return trip has been scheduled by the Mission Committee and Hudsonville Church. Truly a reminder that the Lord is in control and "His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33).

Rev. Spriensma, pastor of the Grandville, MI PRC, spent a recent weekend doing mission work with a group of interested families in Pittsburgh, PA.

#### Sister Church News

Mr. Cheah Fook Meng, who graduated from our seminary last June, has now completed an internship program in the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore. We rejoice with them in his successful examination by their Classis in February. He was examined in Reformed Dogmatics,

Knowledge of the Bible, Confessions, Church History, and Practica. His exam began at 2:30 with his preaching a sermon, and finished at 10:30 P.M. He did very well and we are thankful for this blessing of God on the ERCS.

#### Minister Activities

We pass along our congratulations to Rev. Allen and Crysta Brummel in the birth of a son, their third, Ethan Clay, born on February 27.

#### *Food for Thought*

"The world is a sea of glass, affliction scatters our path with sand and ashes and gravel, in order to keep our feet from sliding."

— Toplady □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on April 12, 1997

#### FRED and DOLLY GEERS

will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We, brothers and sisters, share their joy, thank the Lord for His tender care for them through the years, and confess with them,

"Yea, the plan of Thy salvation  
For our journey, all the way,  
Is a blessed preparation,  
Leads to life of endless day.  
And though time will all things  
conquer,  
It shall not our lot decide;  
Thou alone, eternal Father,  
Wilt for aye our Lord abide.  
And when dangers round us  
gather  
They cannot our souls molest;  
In Thy Son Thou art our Father,  
In Thy love our hearts e'er rest."

Ken and Joyce Rietema  
Hollis and Mary Heemstra  
Bud and Faye Korhorn  
Dave and Nancy Ondersma  
Tim and Jane Heemstra  
Bob and Evie Pastoor

Pentwater, Michigan

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 17, 1997, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. HENRY BRANDS,**  
will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for God-fearing, loving parents. We pray the Lord will continue to bless them in their life together.

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

- \* Dave and Karen Saliers  
Rich, Konni, Trevor, Calvin
- \* Rog Brands  
Carrie, Trent
- \* Jack and Brenda Brands

Wyoming, Michigan

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Grace PRC Adult Bible Society express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. James Kaptein, Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Meulenberg, and Mrs. Kay VanDyke in the death of their mother, grandmother, and sister-in-law,

#### MRS. FLORENCE KAPTEIN.

May they be comforted in His Word and sustained by God's grace. "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2).

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.  
Joan Hanko, Secretary

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of Doon Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to Tracy Aardema in the death of her sister,

#### RENA GORTER.

May she be comforted by the words of Psalm 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Rev. R. Smit, President  
A. Henrietta Klein, Sec'y.



#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Grace PRC Adult Bible Society express their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Meulenberg and their family in the death of their stillborn son,

**DAVID JAMES MEULENBERG.**

May they be comforted in His Word and sustained by God's Grace. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Corinthians 12:9).

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.  
Joan Hanko, Secretary

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Slopsema and family in the death of Joan's mother,

**ANNETTA JANSEN.**

May you be comforted especially in the knowledge that "... the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isaiah 35:10); as well as that her poetic talent has been a blessing to the readers of the *Standard Bearer* for many years.

Thomas Newhof, Jr.,  
Vice-President  
Ronald VanPutten, Clerk

#### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 14, 1997 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by April 14, 1997.

Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk

#### NOTICE!

The Board of the Reformed Heritage Christian School Association is inviting applications for a full-time teacher (grades 4-6) which will begin in August of 1997. Successful applicants must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical inerrancy, six-day creation, male headship, the antithesis between Christianity and the world, and covenantal theology. Reformed Heritage Christian School is located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Applicants should send a letter of application and resumé to: Tom Nagel, 18230 Michigan Avenue, Three Rivers, MI 49093. For more information, phone: (616) 279-7373.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church express our Christian sympathy to Elder Paul Haak, and to the Haak family, in the death of Paul's mother,

**HENRIETTA (NETTIE) HAAK.**

May they be comforted in the Word from I Thessalonians 4:16, 17, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Gil VanBaren, Vice-President  
George DeJong, Clerk

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. JOHN  
VANDER WOUDE,**

will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on April 18, 1997.

We are eternally grateful to our faithful, covenant Father who continues to gather His church from generation to generation through the line of the covenant.

We thank our parents now, publicly, for their faithfulness to God's commandment to bring up the children with which He has blessed them in the fear and admonition of His most holy name.

Surely they have kept His Word... "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

\* Rod and Sandy Kooiman

Bill, Lynne, Jonathan, Randy

\* Tom and Linda VanderWoude

Nathan, Lisa

\* Bill and Joan Hofman

Katie, Jeffrey, Jill, Michelle

\* Jim VanderWoude — dearly missed, departed son, brother, uncle.

Jenison, MI

#### ATTENTION TEACHERS!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, CA is in need of an administrator/teacher or teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. Grade assignments are negotiable. For more information, interested persons should contact the school principal, Mr. Ed Karsemeyer, at the school at (909) 793-4584, or Doug Pastoor at (909) 792-9392, or Glenn Feenstra at (909) 794-5859.