



The Standard Bearer

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

Free-willism is no gospel.... It proclaims another savior than Jesus Christ: the willing sinner. It worships another god than the God of the one gospel: a nice, well-intentioned, loving, helpless, bumbling deity, who is perfectly willing to share the glory of salvation with every Tom, Dick, and Harry.

See "Free-Willism: Another Gospel" — p. 342

**Vol. 73, No. 15
May 1, 1997**

CONTENTS:

May 1, 1997

Meditation — <i>Herman Hoeksema</i>	
The Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God	339
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	
Free-Willism: Another Gospel	342
Letters	345
A Cloud of Witnesses — <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i>	
George Martin Ophoff: Humble Servant of the Truth (1)	346
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i>	348
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — <i>Rev. Steven Key</i>	
How Then Can We Be Saved?	350
In His Fear — <i>Rev. Arie denHartog</i>	
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God and Its Righteousness	352
Day of Shadows — <i>Homer C. Hoeksema</i>	
The Fall of Our First Parents	
Adam and the Race (2)	355
Book Reviews	357
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	359

In This Issue ...

One would almost think that this issue of the *SB* had been specially arranged — that is, that a theme had been assigned to the various contributors. For a common thread finds its way through the issue, from the Meditation at the beginning, to the Book Review at the end.

From H.H., the riveting question: When in the judgment "God exhibits your and my works, and you see those works, and you say of them, 'Yes, they are mine,' what do you think it will be?" And: "There will be no denial *there*."

Here it's different. Men make of God a liar. "Offended by grace — free, sovereign, particular, almighty grace — men change God's gospel, creating other gospels more to their liking. There are many of them. All have one thing in common: they are gospels of man." (Read "Free-Willism: Another Gospel.")

In "All Around Us" Rev. VanBaren comments on the RCA's rejection of a proposed C.O. amendment which would require all ministers and churches in the denomination to reaffirm annually that salvation is through Christ alone. To the argument that the amendment is redundant, in light of the already existing requirement that ministers affirm conformity with the Word of God and the RCA doctrinal standards, Rev. VanBaren adds another, more compelling, reason why the proposed addition would be an exercise in futility.

The "only answer," as provided by Rev. VanBaren in "All Around Us," is picked up again in Prof. Engelsma's review of Gary North's book *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*. "The liberals lied. And the orthodox let them get away with it." No discipline of heretics. No holding of officebearers to genuine subscription to the confessions.

Then there's Rev. Key's "How Then Can We Be Saved?" And Rev. denHartog's article on seeking first the kingdom, in which he affirms that the main reason why the truth of "the kingdom" is hated today is "the spiritual hatred of the righteousness of this kingdom."

What is that righteousness? Don't miss "The Fall of Our First Parents." "... we do not live — thanks be to God — because of our actual works. For then we could never live! But we are reborn and are alive unto good works because we have obeyed before we are so reborn — in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A common thread.

D.D.



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The Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.

Romans 2:6-8

The apostle is still addressing man. He is still addressing the man to whom he had spoken in verse 1. No longer is he addressing the Gentiles. Nor is he exclusively addressing the Jews. But he is addressing man — any man, man in general, and yet every man individually. Not all men, but each man, the apostle is addressing, both in the context and in the text.

This man is addressed as a sinner, such as he is in the sphere of this present world. The apostle has told him that while he exalts himself as judge over the deeds over others he himself is doing the same things. Therefore, he is his own judge, while he pretends to be a judge of others. This is characteristic of the sinner.

The apostle asks this man two questions, in order to obtain an explanation from him. The first ques-

tion is: "Thinkest thou this, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God, because thou judgest others in the things which thou doest thyself?" Is this the explanation? Is this the reason why you assume that attitude in which you judge others in the things you do yourself? In other words, "Thinkest thou that by making thyself judge, thou shalt not be among the condemned?" This is one possibility.

Or, and this is the second possibility, "Despisest thou the goodness of God? That goodness of God, which becomes manifest in lovingkindness, forbearance, and longsuffering. That goodness of God which becomes manifest in this, that God loves the righteous and hates the wicked. That goodness of God which leads to repentance. Despisest thou that goodness of God, not knowing it?" Is this the explanation?

But the apostle means to say, "Whatever may be the explanation, thou that judgest others and doest the same things art continually busy in heaping up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This is true. Therefore, in the text the apostle speaks of the righteous judgment of God.

What is that righteous judgment of God? What will be its procedure? How is it possible? In what possible state can a man stand in that righteous judgment of God? What must be the possible verdict? What must be the verdict of Him

who will reward every man according to his deeds?

Then the apostle knows of but two possibilities. On the one hand, they "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." On the other hand, it is possible that a man has been contentious and, therefore, did not obey the truth; he shall be judged worthy of indignation and wrath. These are the only two possibilities. There is no other possibility, because God is the only standard. God is the Judge, but He is also the only standard according to which that judgment shall be.

We have in the text, therefore, the truth of the righteous judgment of God in its revelation. It is not the judgment of God of which the text speaks. The judgment of God takes place always. God always judges the deeds of men. But the text speaks of the *revelation* of this judgment of God.

A Revelation of All the Evidences

The evidences which are brought into that court, the text says, are the works, the deeds, of men. These deeds are not the objects to be judged. They are the evidences. The one to be judged is man. What must be made plain of every man is what he is worth. Or rather, it must be made plain that every man is worth what God judges him to be worth.

God has no need of a day of judgment. He does not even have

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer.

need of our works as evidence. God knows our works from eternity. In this sense, God has no need of a day of judgment. He knows who is worthy of eternal life and who is worthy of indignation and wrath. But the purpose of the day of judgment is that everyone may justify God when He judges. God knows what every man's spiritual, ethical value is. But if God is to be justified, that is, if in the consciousness of every moral creature God is to appear as just when He judges, so that every man may be exposed as a liar and God become manifest as true, then the day of judgment must come. If this day is to be a revelation of the righteous judgment of God, God must produce His evidences. This He will do. He will produce His evidences, not to Himself, but to us, to every moral creature, to men and angels.

This evidence will be the works of man. The works of man will be the evidence by which his worth will be shown. God will render to every man according to his works. These works of man are all his activities between the hour of his birth and the moment of his death. They are all his activities in connection with his position, his occupation, and his relations.

These works are not limited to what is seen by men. They are not only the outward works which we see. No, they are all that man does between the hour of his birth and the hour of his death in the sense of speaking, seeing, hearing, thinking, willing, and desiring. They include the works which man never knew or which he conveniently forgot. We do this. We do a certain evil, and then we conveniently forget about it. We like to remember our good deeds and talk about them. But our evil deeds we like to forget. Did you never notice that when you commit a sin, you let a day go by before confessing that

sin before the Lord? It does not seem so raw then. We forget about these evil things. But all these sins God will produce.

He will produce them to your consciousness. He will convince you that they are yours. You will never say in that day, "I never did that." There will be no denial in the day of judgment. They will be brought to us as our works. God has a way of doing this. He will bring those works as evidences before our consciousness and before the consciousness of all moral creatures, angels, and men. The Lord says that what has been done in secret will be preached from the housetops. That is, your works will be made perfectly plain to me and to all the world. He will expose your and my works to the world. Exposing them, He will cast the light of His own judgment upon them in order that the answer to the question as to the purpose, the motive — why did you do it? may be plain.

A Revelation of Every Man Who is to be Judged

The apostle says that God will judge every man according to his works. Notice, not the deeds are to be judged. But man will be judged. Every man will be judged according to his deeds. That is, the real value of every man will be exposed as God sees his worth by the evidence of his works.

How is this possible? Why are a man's works evidence of his worth? The answer is that they are in relation to man as fruit is to the tree. By their fruit ye shall know them. As you know a tree by its fruit, so you can know man by his works. These works are his fruit. Accordingly, God will use all these works to show what you and I re-

ally are, and what we are worth. This must be revealed.

This day must come. It is coming. If this is the case, how shall we appear? In this revelation of God's righteous judgment, there will be only two possibilities with regard to those who are to be judged. The reason is that God is Judge, and He is the only standard by which man shall be judged. There are only two possibilities, namely, that we stand before Him as righteous, or as unrighteous.

Who are the righteous? Notice how the apostle describes the righteous. He describes them as those who seek for glory and honour and immortality. This first of all. In the second place, they are those who seek for these things in the way of patient continuance in well-doing. This man, who from the moment of his birth to the hour of his death has sought for glory and honour and immortality in the way of patient continuance in well-doing, this man shall be righteous.

When the apostle says that they seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he does not mean to say that this man seeks for *any* glory, honour, and immortality. In a way, all men seek for glory, honour, and immortality. But the apostle means *real* glory, *real* honour, and *real* immortality. If we seek this, we shall surely find it.

Real glory is essentially the glory of God. This is the only glory there is. If we seek this glory, glory being the radiation of good, then we seek God and His glory as our own. We may say therefore, that if we seek glory, we seek God.

Honour is not any kind of praise. But honour belongs to God. If we seek the honour of God, we seek that honour of God by which He approves of us.

"Immortality" is a weak translation. The original means "incor-

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ruptibility." If we seek incorruptibility, we seek God and that blessing by which we may be incorruptible before Him. This is why the text says that we can seek this only in the way of patient continuance in well-doing. Well-doing is that which is in harmony with the will of God. If we do the will of God, we seek Him. Continuance in well-doing means continuous, uninterrupted seeking of immortality. Patience means that we walk in that way no matter how much we suffer.

If we meet the day of the righteous judgment of God in this way, it will be all right. If from the moment of our birth to the moment of our death, we have never sought anything but glory and honour and immortality; if we have never sought anything but God's face and fellowship, we will be righteous. Then, when we face him in the judgment day, it will be all right. This is one possibility.

The other possibility is expressed in verse 8. They who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, "indignation and wrath." They are the unrighteous.

The word "contentious" in our Bibles rests on a mistaken translation. The original word really means "partisanship." What is a partisan? Let me illustrate. Take, for example, in the evil sense, a politician. He is one who uses the position in which he is supposed to serve the community, not because he wants to serve the community but to advance himself. This is a partisan. This is awful, but it is quite common in our day. Such a man uses his job for himself.

God has given man a position. His position is that he is king. God has appointed man to be king in creation. Why is man appointed king? In order that he should seek the glory of God. But he is a partisan. He uses his position in creation, not to the glory of God but to oppose Him and to seek self.

This is the principle from which he lives. In this principle, of course, he disobeys the truth.

This is the other possibility. A third there is not. We shall appear in that judgment according to that one class or the other.

Which will it be?

When God exhibits your and my works, and you see those works, and you say of them, "Yes, they are mine," what do you think it will be? Will it be one long way of seeking for glory and honour and immortality? Or, which is the other alternative, will our works reveal that we have been partisans? Will they reveal that we have sought the world, not for God but for ourselves?

Which will it be?

A Revelation of the Final Verdict

The apostle does not answer. But the apostle says that God will reward every man according to those works. To them who have been unrighteous, have been contentious, and have disobeyed the truth, to them God will give the reward of indignation and wrath.

When God gives His wrath to anyone, it means that He gives him the complete operation of His wrath and indignation. It means that He pours out the intense heat of His wrath upon all who have been contentious and have disobeyed the truth. All will admit that this judgment of God is just.

We can see this now. God is God. As God, He says, "Love Me." This is good. All else is evil. God says, "Love Me." The sinner says, "I will not." He turns his back upon God until he stands before the face of God, and God shows to him that he is worthy of indignation and wrath, that he is worthy of hell. The sinner will say, "This is right, this is all that I am worthy of." All who deny this *here* make God a liar. But *there* it will be different. There will be no denial there. All will admit that God is

just. All the world will say that His verdict is right.

On the other hand, they who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality will receive eternal life. Eternal life means that life

which Scripture always pictures, not only as everlasting, but also as the highest life. It is perfect fellowship with God.

You say, how is this possible? My answer is that it is impossible. If you ask, how can anyone come to eternal life? — the answer is that it is impossible. It is impossible to come to eternal life, if one from the moment of his birth to the moment of his death must, in the way of patient continuance in well-doing, seek glory and honour and immortality. The apostle means exactly to say that it is impossible.

Because it is impossible, the apostle is still thinking of the main subject of the context: I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There was only one among mankind who sought, in the way of patient continuance in well-doing, glory and honour and immortality. That was not a mere man. That was Immanuel, God in our human nature.

God did it!

Jesus Christ, from the moment of His birth until the moment of His death, sought glory and honour and immortality, in the way of patient continuance in well-doing. Finally, He said, "It is finished." He did so as the revelation of God's righteousness for His people.

Therefore, when we have seen that the case of man is hopeless, God comes to us with the gospel. He proclaims a righteousness which is His and which He has realized in Christ.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the heart of which is: the righteous shall live by faith. □

*... when
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Free-Willism: Another Gospel

There is one gospel. This gospel is the message of salvation in Jesus Christ by grace alone. "Grace alone" means that God saves sinners. God saves sinners according to His own attitude of favor (grace) toward those sinners whom He saves. God saves sinners by His own quickening power (grace) in the hearts of those whom He wills to save. "Grace alone" means that grace is without supplement, condition, or assistance.

"Grace alone" means that the salvation of sinners does not depend on, is not due to, and is not accomplished by the worth, will, or work of those sinners. Not at all! Not any aspect of salvation! "Grace alone" means that man does not save himself.

This is why the gospel is good news. This is why the gospel exalts God.

This is also why the gospel is offensive to men.

Offended by grace — free, sovereign, particular, almighty grace — men change God's gospel, creating other gospels more to their liking. There are many of them. All have one thing in common: they are gospels of man.

One such gospel is free-willism. This is the message that God's salvation of the sinner depends upon the activity of the sinner's will. The sinner's will is free, that is, it is able to choose for God as well as against Him. By the free, sovereign activity of his will, the sinner makes God's willingness (grace) to save him effectual. By this act of his

will, the sinner allows God's quickening power (grace) to have its way with him. The salvation proclaimed by the gospel of free-willism is man's salvation of himself by choosing God, opening up his heart to let Jesus in, making a decision for Christ, accepting the offer made well-meaningly to all, and fulfilling the prerequisite for regeneration and conversion.

This gospel is wildly popular.

But it is "another" gospel. It is "another gospel" precisely in the sense in which the apostle speaks of "another gospel" in Galatians 1:6-9. It is a gospel that adds a work of man to the work of God in Jesus Christ. It is a message that makes the grace of God dependent upon some act of man. It is a message that calls the sinner to cooperate with God in Christ. It is a message that rejects "grace alone" for "grace and" (or, "grace but"). The other gospel in the Galatian churches was "grace and human circumcision." Free-willism is the gospel of "grace and human will."

As "another gospel," free-willism is not an acceptable, though somewhat deficient, version of the gospel, but a perversion of the one gospel. It is not an encouraging, though undeveloped, beginning of the gospel, out of which the full gospel can be expected to grow, but an enemy of the one gospel that nurses a murderous hatred toward the one gospel and those who confess it.

Free-willism is no gospel. It is

not the good news that the gracious God conceived in eternity and revealed in time in Jesus Christ. It is not the faith of the Bible. Free-willism sets forth another way of salvation than the way of faith in Christ: the decision for Christ by the dead sinner. It proclaims another savior than Jesus Christ: the willing sinner. It worships another god than the God of the one gospel: a nice, well-intentioned, loving, helpless, bumbling deity, who is perfectly willing to share the glory of salvation with every Tom, Dick, and Harry.

Free-willism denies the cross. The cross redeemed no one. The cross accomplished nothing. The cross was not substitutionary satisfaction of the justice of God regarding those for whom Christ died. Many for whom Christ died perish in hell. Those who are saved by the cross are saved, not because of the cross but because of their decision for Christ, their acceptance of the well-meant offer, their act of believing.

This condemnation of free-willism is not the private opinion of the author of this article. Much less is it the eccentric stand of the denomination of churches in which he is a minister.

That free-willism is another gospel, which is no gospel, is the official confession, and urgent testimony, of the Reformed churches in the world. They have voiced their confession, once for all time, in the Canons of Dordt. Free-willism, which at that time took

"Grace alone" means that grace is without supplement, condition, or assistance.

form in the heresy of Arminianism, the Reformed churches have damned as "the Pelagian error out of hell." Many Reformed churches require all their officebearers to subscribe this creed. Subscription explicitly expresses that the one subscribing agrees with Dordt's condemnation of free-willism. It binds the subscriber "to refute and contradict" this false teaching and "to exert (himself) in keeping the Church free from such errors."

Presbyterians who affirm commitment to the system of doctrine set down in the Westminster Standards likewise express condemnation of free-willism as another gospel. For the system of doctrine set down in the confession and catechisms of Westminster is the gospel of salvation by grace alone, to which free-willism is diametrically opposite.

God judges free-willism as another gospel in His inspired, clear, and authoritative Word. He does this in every passage that teaches salvation by His own gracious will and work. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (faith) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

God exposes free-willism by name as one of the leading forms of the false gospel that always threatens to supplant the one gospel: "So then it (salvation) is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Salvation is not of man's will. Man's will and willing have nothing to do with the saving of elect sinners. They are excluded as much as is man's running, or working. But the teaching that salvation is at least partly a matter of man's will is as much an enemy of the gospel of salvation

by God's mercy alone as is the teaching that man's own works cooperate in salvation. The one gospel is the message that salvation is alone of God who shows mercy.

The teaching that salvation is at least partly a matter of man's will is as much an enemy of the gospel of salvation by God's mercy alone as is the teaching that man's own works cooperate in salvation.

Against the one gospel stand two other gospels, which are no gospels: salvation by man's willing, and salvation by man's working. Both agree that man saves himself, at least in part.

To teach that salvation depends on, or is due to, or is made effectual by man's choosing Christ, or opening his heart to let Christ come in, or accepting an offer made well-meaningly to all, or fulfilling a condition in order then to be born again and converted is the lie. It is not merely a lie. It is the lie. In comparison with this gross blasphemy, this monstrous robbery of God of His glory in the work of salvation, women in church office is a small sin.

Free-willism is a real threat today to the true churches of Christ. Free-willism has always been the heart of the false church that is Rome. Luther taught us this in his *On the Bondage of the Will*.

Now free-willism has infiltrated and corrupted much of Protestantism. Many of the self-styled "evangelical" churches and preachers are free-willist. These are the churches and churchmen represented by the magazine *Christianity Today*. These are the preachers who dominate religious radio and television. This is the reason why Billy Graham and his associates cooperate with the Roman Catholic clergy in their "evangelical" endeavors. This is the reason why prominent Protestant "evangelicals" are defecting to Rome. This is the reason for the recent union of "evangelicals" and Roman Catholics. The "evangelicals" have

the same gospel that Rome has: man saves man by his free-will.

The threat is graver.

There are toleration of, compromise with, and even approval of free-willism within the Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Men who profess Calvinism (a mere identifying label of the gospel that God saves men—*elect* men—by sovereign grace alone) and who are esteemed as Calvinists speak well of, and defend, free-willism as gospel. Arminian free-willism is not the best and highest form of the gospel. It definitely leaves something to be desired. It could be wished that it would shake off certain of its weaknesses. But it is, for all this, gospel. It is the one gospel.

James I. Packer, who, though not ecclesiastically Presbyterian or Reformed himself, nevertheless has tremendous influence on Presbyterian and Reformed churches and Christians, compromises with Wesleyan free-willism in an article that is bearing bitter fruit in Reformed circles. Packer is intent on defending the gospel preached by John Wesley—Wesley, who blasphemed God's eternal predestination (source and foundation of the gospel of grace) as few enemies of grace have ever done. Packer speaks of "evangelical Arminianism." He claims that "Wesley's teaching included so much Reformation truth." Packer diagnoses Arminianism, that is, the gospel of free-willism, as "an impoverishing reaction from it (Reformation teaching), involving a partial denial of the biblical faith in the God of all grace. The lapse is less serious in some cases...." "Calvinists should therefore approach professed Arminians as brother evangelicals trapped in weakening theological mistakes, and seek to help them to a better mind" ("Arminianisms," in *The Manifest Grace of God*, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference, 1968).

Free-willism is not "another gospel." The condemnation of

Dordt does not apply to this brand of free-willism.

The Presbyterian theologian John M. Frame tolerates, if he does not approve, free-willism in his recent work on C. Van Til:

There is a great gulf between Christianity and unbelief.... Is there also a "great gulf" between Reformed Christians and non-Reformed Christians ... ? Arminianism ... (is) erroneous in some measure, I would say, but (it has) much in common with the Reformed faith at the deepest level. Thus, we should not criticize (it) in the same terms that we use to criticize unbelief.... I am confident that Reformed believers are, in general, of one heart with their Arminian brothers and sisters (*Cornelius Van Til*, P&R, 1995, pp. 211, 212).

Free-willism is not "another gospel." Dordt was wrong in its condemnation of free-willism.

The acceptance of free-willism within the nominally Reformed churches is evident from the murderous opposition on the part of these churches to churches and ministers that condemn free-willism as soul-destroying, God-dishonoring heresy. The "Conclusion" of the Canons of Dordt indicates the enraged slander of the Reformed churches by the free-willists at the time of the synod of Dordt. Today, all these slanders are wrapped up in one epithet, and hurled at the churches that are faithful to Dordt: "hyper-Calvinist!"

There are ministers who are being killed all the day long by nominal Calvinists for no other offense than that they preach the gospel of grace in such a way that they expose and condemn free-willism as the lie.

As might be expected from the expressions of tolerance for free-willism and from the rage at those who dare to condemn free-willism, the error itself now corrupts the confession and preaching of many

Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Wherever the doctrine of a love of God in the gospel for all men and a desire of God in the preaching of the gospel to save all men is accepted and defended, there free-willism has established its stronghold. In time, the entire system of the doctrine of salvation by sovereign grace alone will be systematically destroyed.

And the end will be sheer theological modernism.

In his *Crossed Fingers*, reviewed in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Gary North demonstrates that the apostasy of the Northern Presbyterian Church began with the toleration of Arminianism. The history of the Christian Reformed Church provides the same terrible lesson. Herman Bavinck gave the warning long ago when he wrote, "Remonstrantism (Arminianism) paved the way for rationalism" (*The Doctrine of God*, Eerdmans, 1951, p. 366).

Reformed churches must preach and teach salvation by sovereign grace alone. As they do, they must condemn free-willism.

Reformed Christians must confess salvation by sovereign grace alone. As they do, they must condemn free-willism.

This stand will preserve us, as Reformed churches and as Reformed Christians, in the dangerous times in which we live and are called to glorify God by a sound confession and an obedient walk.

It will keep us as churches out of ungodly, destructive ecumenical alliances. We have no unity with free-willist Rome. We have no unity with free-willist "evangelical" Protestantism. We have no unity with compromising Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

It will keep the Reformed

Christian out of such a movement as Promise Keepers. The Reformed Christian may not subject himself to free-willist preaching. He may

not worship with those who claim to have saved themselves by their free will. He may not pretend spiritual oneness with those who hold "another gospel." He may not promise to help break down the denominational barriers between Calvinist and Arminian churches. God forbid!

It will keep the Reformed Christian out of interdenominational Bible studies. How can a Reformed Christian tolerate study of the Word of God that professes to be neutral and non-committal regarding the doctrinal difference

between Calvinism and Arminianism, that is, between the one gospel and "another gospel"? How can a Reformed Christian participate in a Bible study that gives equal time to free-willism and sovereign grace? How can a Reformed Christian be involved in a Bible study that does not defend salvation by grace alone and condemn free-willism?

The good and right stand for grace and against free-will must govern our church membership, our *lively* church membership.

Where is sovereign grace faithfully and uncompromisingly preached and defended, with an accompanying condemnation of free-will?

There, and nowhere else, every child of God belongs, come what may.

There, and nowhere else, *I* belong, with my family, come what may.

For there, and nowhere else, is the one gospel. □

— DJE

■ Movies: Where Do We Stand?

After reading "The Reformed Family: Teachers," (*Standard Bearer*, 9/15/96) and the subsequent letters, I would like to make a few comments.

My concern is centered primarily in the paragraph that relates Miss Reitsma showing her history class a secular movie with bedroom scenes supposedly involving a husband and wife.

Allow me to quote Herman Hoeksema as related by Gertrude Hoeksema in her biography of him, *Therefore Have I Spoken*, pages 183-185. Mrs. Hoeksema takes this quote of Herman Hoeksema from the *Standard Bearer*, vol. III, pages 318-320. The article is entitled, "A Compromise on Movies." Although written 70 years ago, this article stands unquestionably relevant for us today.

Mrs. Hoeksema first tells of her father-in-law's deep concern with the impact of the amusement craze on the lives of the church of tomorrow. (I hardly need to emphasize that his concern was for us today.)

Secondly, she states that the article was written in April, 1927, just before the Christian Reformed Synod's "Thou Shalt Not's" of 1928, occasioned by the pleas of various Classes to Synod for a definite stand on amusements. The article follows, in part:

One cannot, forsooth, help to be sarcastic when he beholds the church who sits still and raises no cry of indignation, *when in her schools* (emphasis mine — HDB),

that bear the name Christian, the youth of the church are taught that a good movie and a good theater are not bad; who lets her young men and young women in her own college be instructed to appreciate the beautiful things that are played in the theater; who banishes her faithful servants that desire to teach and to maintain the true line of doctrine in life with regard to these things of the world; and who, thereupon, sits serious in synodical dignity to "solve the problem" of worldly amusements.

Rev. Hoeksema continues:

Dr. C. Bowman, professor in Ethics in the Theological School of the same churches, prepared a lecture on "Movies" and with it he appears occasionally in public to enlighten the Church with regard to this "serious problem."

The principle of the movie is accepted by him. A movie is not necessarily bad. But not all movies are good even as not all movies are bad. God's people, therefore, must distinguish. They must decide for themselves what is good and what is bad and take the former....

We differ emphatically from the professor of Ethics.

We claim he does not understand the matter; that his advice is positively dangerous; that he caters to the spirit of worldlimindedness in that lecture....

But the movie and the theater are to be condemned principally. There is no good movie. A Christian theater and a Christian movie are a contradiction in terms.

And the reason is, that you cannot play with life and be acceptable in the sight of the Lord.

Certainly, it must be evident,

that no child of God is able to appear on the stage or on the screen, playing the part of an ungodly man. To be an ungodly man and to live an ungodly life in reality is admittedly an abomination in the eyes of Jehovah. But to play such a part is no less abhorred by him.

And he continues a little further down:

And to the Most High, who desires truth in the inward parts, and in whose eyes *all hypocrisy* (emphasis mine — HDB) is an abomination, these things were of darkness and of the evil one....

The ethics of the professor with regard to movies are not those of the word of God.

We advise him to burn his lecture.

Strong language indeed, and this 70 years ago!

To whom, may I ask, did Rev. Hoeksema refer when he said "We differ emphatically..."? Was Hoeksema's concern for the "church of tomorrow," for us, perhaps somehow misguided? I believe even he would be shocked today at the inroads that drama and movies have made into our homes and, yes, even into our schools under the disguise of educational. I wonder, "Where do we stand?" Does anyone know? Does anyone dare anymore to answer this question for the "Church of tomorrow?" Perhaps we too have some burning to do in order to lay full claim to the title, "The Children of the Reformation of 1924."

H. Boonstra, Jr.
Lynden, WA □

George Martin Ophoff: Humble Servant of the Truth (1)

Introduction

A part from my parents, two men had the most influence on my life: my two professors in seminary. The one was Rev. Herman Hoeksema; the other was Prof. George M. Ophoff. From Rev. Hoeksema I learned Reformed Dogmatics and how to exegete the New Testament; from Prof. Ophoff I learned the history of the church of Christ and how to exegete the Old Testament. They determined the nature of my ministry in the church of Christ.

The seminary was meeting for most of the time I was studying for the ministry in the basement of First Protestant Reformed Church. The one room set aside for seminary had nothing to commend it as a classroom conducive to study. The student body was small. The library was all by non-existent. The seminary boasted no support staff: no secretary, no administrator, no registrar, no department heads, no records. Just two professors and a handful of students.

I am bold to say that we received some of the best theological education available in this country if not abroad. Yet this seemingly bold statement is only true if one weighs the value of theological

education in the scales of the one thing theological education is all about: learning to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions. I never wanted to study elsewhere, did not in fact even give it a thought. I have never had one moment's regret that the place where I studied was the dingy "seminary room" in the basement of First Church.

The only possible explanation of all this is the fact that the two professors who taught us everything we know about theology and preaching were two men, themselves gifted preachers, who were wholly committed to the Reformed faith and the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In all the world no two men could be found working together who were so different from each other. It was itself a miracle of divine grace that those two men not only worked together from the beginning of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924 to the late 50s — a period of over 35 years — but did so in unity, harmony, singleness of purpose, and equal devotion to the cause of Christ.

I have written of Rev. Herman Hoeksema. The delightful task of writing of Rev. George Ophoff now awaits me. It is the story of a man whom I respected greatly and whom I learned to love deeply. That his name may not be forgotten by those who love the Re-

formed faith, I write these lines with thankfulness to God for my seminary professors.

Early Life and Training

George Ophoff was born in the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan on January 25, 1891. He was the oldest of eight children born to Frederick H. Ophoff and Yeta Hemkes Ophoff. Frederick Ophoff worked in a furniture factory in downtown Grand Rapids, to and from which place he walked to save the nickel-cost of streetcar fare. The hours were long: from 6:00 in the morning to 5:00 in the afternoon, six days a week. And the rather meager wages could barely support the family and provide Christian school tuition for the children.

The household lived a rather normal life for a second generation immigrant family. The Dutch communities in Grand Rapids were close-knit, and life centered in the church. The churches were composed of immigrants from the Netherlands and their children and grandchildren; and they were scattered throughout the city. Almost all of them had roots in The Separation, the reforming movement in the Netherlands which had been launched by Henrick DeCock and which had come to Michigan under the leadership of VanRaalte.

In keeping with the traditions of those who belonged to this particular group of Dutch immigrants, the family was a godly and pious

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

family willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christian instruction. Ophoff received his instruction in the home, in Oakdale Christian School, and in Franklin St. and Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Churches. It was truly a covenantal instruction which Ophoff himself, in all his life, considered a great blessing. In his later years in seminary Ophoff was wont to speak of what he called *Gereformeerde gevoelhoren*, which is translated, "Reformed antennae." By this expression he referred to one who had a deep sense of what was included in the Reformed faith and an ability to detect unerringly that which was opposed to it. Ophoff firmly believed that such a sense for what is truly Reformed could only be gained through covenantal instruction given to the children of God's covenant in church, home, and school.

While Ophoff was not himself a brawler, but rather something of a loner, he nevertheless did not run from a good fight, and he was quick to come to the defense of one who was being unjustly or cruelly taunted on the playground, even if this involved a battle with his peers. His mother despaired of the many ruined clothes in which he came home — in days when one pair of trousers and one shirt was worn all week long, to be washed on Saturday and put on again on Monday. He had on his right hand a crooked index finger, with which he often gestured on the pulpit and in class, the legacy of one such brawl in which his finger was broken.

At the time Ophoff graduated from grade school, there was as yet no Christian high school. Calvin College, organized exclusively for the training of teachers and ministers, incorporated various high school subjects into its curriculum. To this school Ophoff went with his mind set upon being a minister of the gospel. He graduated from the high school part of it in 1909 at the age of 18.

Preparation for the Ministry

From that point on, Ophoff's education was repeatedly interrupted. Apparently the reason was in part a lack of finances in the Ophoff household, which forced him to drop out of school and seek employment with a local ice company.

Another event was to alter his life significantly. Between Ophoff's college studies and seminary work, while he was laboring at the ice company, his maternal grandfather fell and broke his hip.

Ophoff's grandfather, Gerrit Hemkes, had been born and raised in the Netherlands, had entered the ministry of the churches of The Separation led by DeCock, and had come to this country when he took a call extended to him from the Christian Reformed congregation in Vriesland, Michigan. Because of his many abilities, he was called to be assistant professor in the seminary in Grand Rapids, where he served with distinction.

When as a relatively old man Prof. Hemkes broke his hip, Ophoff was sent by his parents to the home of his grandfather, to live with him and care for him. Ophoff never returned again to his home.

God has his purpose in all our sufferings, sorrows, and disappointments. So it was in this instance. Because of the care of his grandson, Prof. Hemkes was able to remain at his home until he died. But Ophoff also benefited. It was Hemkes who encouraged him to return to school, who helped him with his studies, and who provided a quiet place to pursue his studies. Furthermore, Hemkes, a very gifted man, was able to give Ophoff a great deal of instruction in and a deep and abiding love for the Reformed faith.

In 1918, at 27 years of age, George entered Calvin Seminary. Two events of these years must be recorded.

The first was tragedy in the Ophoff family. George's father was fatally injured in a fire which broke

out in his place of work. Although he escaped from the building when it began to burn, he rushed back into the building to rescue a very precious watch which he had left on the shelf in his department. An explosion tore to pieces that part of the building, and Frederick Ophoff was badly burned. He died the same day at the age of 52, leaving a widow and eight children.

The second incident was also somewhat revealing with regard to Ophoff's character. As one of his course requirements, he was assigned a paper on "common grace," an issue under discussion in the churches. He had a great deal of difficulty with the paper, chiefly because of the fact that he could not fit the current teachings on common grace into the organic body of Reformed thought. It seemed to conflict with everything he knew of the Reformed heritage of the truth.

Finally, in sheer desperation, he decided to approach the subject from the viewpoint of its being a doctrine contrary to Scripture. Unaware of questions concerning its biblical character which had already appeared in some places in the church, and using a denial of common grace only as a "working hypothesis," he discovered that this approach solved all his problems. To use his own words, "Suddenly the light went on," and all the pieces began to fall into place. The paper became easy to write.

Whatever may have been the reaction of his professor to this paper, Ophoff himself became subjectively convinced that common grace was contrary to Scripture and the Reformed confessions long before the controversy became public in the churches. And that conviction was to remain unalterable throughout his life.

During his seminary years, George met and married Jane Boom, with whom he had four sons. God gave him a wife who was truly a help meet for him. She was a beautiful woman of amaz-

ing character, herself born in a Reformed home and brought up in the Reformed faith; but a woman who completely devoted herself to her husband. She was to be his support and encouragement in unbelievably difficult years that lay ahead. Because Prof. Hemkes was

still living, the newly married couple moved in with him. George and Jane were married in August of 1920, and in December of 1920 Prof. Hemkes died.

In May of 1921 George graduated from the seminary, and in January of 1922 he assumed the responsibilities of his first pastorate

in a Christian Reformed Church in Riverbend, Michigan. The congregation is now the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker and has its sanctuary within a long block of where the old church once stood. □

(to be continued)

All Around Us

■ Salvation Through Christ Alone?

The United Reformed News Service reports that by a margin of 23 to 22 (a 2/3 affirmative vote was required), the Reformed Church's classes has rejected a church order amendment that would have required all ministers and churches throughout the denomination to reaffirm annually that salvation is through Christ alone.

"This indicates a real split on a very fundamental issue," said Rev. Patrick Shetler of First Reformed Church in Grant, who drafted the amendment in response to the conflict over Rev. Richard Rhem, pastor of Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan, and his view that faith in Christ is not necessary for salvation. After the Rhem debate began, a second RCA pastor was drawn into the conflict when retired campus minister Rev. Don VanHoeven of Kalamazoo was formally rebuked by his classis for writing articles in the *Kalamazoo Gazette* supporting Rhem's views.

Rhem and his church seceded from the RCA on July 4, 1996, in

an action that has not been recognized by the denomination pending resolution of an unrelated charge of "gross sexual misconduct" against Rhem, dismissed by the RCA's Muskegon Classis on grounds of insufficient evidence and currently on appeal to the Regional Synod of the Great Lakes.

If churches answer "yes" to the question whether they "preach in conformity with the Word of God and the RCA doctrinal standards," yet teach that there are other paths to eternal life, then additional questions would serve no useful purpose.

...The hotly-disputed amendment would have required each of the RCA's 46 classis presidents to ask each church and minister in their classis whether "the doctrines of the gospel [are] preached in your church in their purity in conformity with...the truth that divine redemption from sin is only by grace through faith in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, the only mediator between God and humankind." Each RCA classis president must already ask each year whether ministers and churches preach in conformity with the Word of God and the RCA doctrinal standards.

Last year's general synod had approved the proposal. Before final approval, 2/3 of the Classes were also to approve, followed by another majority vote by the Synod this summer. But the final vote, 23 no, 22 yes, and one postponed, means that the proposal has failed. Various conclusions have been drawn from the defeat. Some conclude, with justification,

that this points to the growing liberalism in the Reformed Church of America. Others insist that current requirements do precisely what the proposed question was designed to duplicate. If churches answer "yes" to the question whether they "preach in conformity with the Word of God and the RCA doctrinal standards," yet teach that there are other paths to eternal life, then additional questions would serve no useful purpose. If one can falsely answer the first, he could as easily do so to the second. The only answer, of course, is that discipline must be faithfully exercised in harmony with the Word of God and the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Church.

■ That Homosexuality Issue

The URNS reports also on a controversial issue of the Calvin College *Chimes*. The *Chimes* (the student newspaper) has been the cause for controversy in the past. In its March 7 issue, there is included a four-page supplement which introduces the subject of homosexuality. Interviews are recorded with several homosexual alumni. An article by Calvin College professor Dr. Phil Holtrop presented the "Five stands Christians take - and what to do now." Darrell Maurina, United Reformed News Service, reports:

According to Holtrop, the positions include declaring that "there is no homosexual 'orientation' or 'condition,' but that such longings

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(and a *fortiori* actions) are simply sin"; the official CRC position that homosexual practice violates Scripture but that "we should have compassion on homosexual people and sympathize with them because of their painful experiences"; and a third position declaring that while homosexuality is contrary to God's will, "we — and the church — should allow for faithful, monogamous relationships for homosexual people who truly love each other and cannot be celibate" as an alternative to promiscuity.

A fourth and fifth position — both closely related — were also outlined by Holtrop. "A fourth approach has come to be common in the last two decades, among both homo- and heterosexual people, among both conservatives and liberals," wrote Holtrop. "The representatives of this thinking often engage in sophisticated biblical exegeses and conclude that the Bible does not condemn homosexual acts within a bond of fidelity." The fifth position, according to Holtrop, is that "increasing numbers of biblical exegeses, theologians, and pious Bible readers are saying today that the Bible does not address specifically the condition of homosexuality, or homosexual actions *per se* within a bond of commitment that we may have to each other."

"This is not to suggest that the Bible is irrelevant, since there are guiding principles of love, justice, wisdom, maturity, or discernment in the Scriptures that are utterly *a propos*," wrote Holtrop. "It is to say (as is the case of the women-in-the-office issue, and others) that the Bible cannot be and will not be the only 'authority' or 'voice' that we listen to in struggling with the challenge of homosexuality. Medical, biological, and social studies affect the way we read the Bible."

So there is introduced in a public manner the question of homosexuality. Though Holtrop insists that he does not take a position on the five propositions presented, the question might well be asked, "Why not?" Much of the presen-

tation is that the Bible must not be the ultimate guide; one must be able to listen to the "hurting" members of the community. "Medical, biological, and social studies affect the way we read the Bible." Why is it that in the past 25 or so years the church suddenly has a higher, better, and different understanding about the scriptural teachings concerning women in office — and now about homosexuality? How can things change after virtually 2000 years of clear understanding on these very issues? This is indeed increasingly a "slippery slope" which brings formerly orthodox churches down the road to increasing departure from the Word of God.

■ Persecution

U.S. News and World Report, March 31, 1997, reports on the persecution of Christians:

At the close of a century that witnessed particularly horrific examples of man's inhumanity to man, the ongoing repression of Christians worldwide receives scant notice. China, North Korea, and Vietnam all bar or severely restrict the activities of Roman Catholic priests. In Egypt, 18 Christian Copts were massacred in recent weeks, reportedly by Islamic extremists. In Algeria, Muslim guerrillas kidnapped seven Trappist monks a year ago and slit their throats.

Now, Christian leaders are getting help from Jews. Last week, at a conference hosted by Washington's Center for Jewish and Christian Values, religious leaders discussed the lessons of the 30-year campaign to free Soviet Jews....

...What explains the widespread indifference to Christian oppression? In part, it's "secular myopia," says Nina Shea of Freedom House, a human-rights group. "There's a view that someone who stands before Army tanks in Tiananmen is a hero, while someone willing to lay down his life for his religious faith must be a zealot."

The report adds that in Sudan some Christians—often children—are sold into slavery for \$15 a head. Others are forced to convert to Islam. In Pakistan, under blasphemy laws, non-Muslims may be forced to convert to Islam or face death. In China Christians who worship in churches that are not state run face prison or even torture. Reports are presented that claim the past century was one of the worst in connection with the persecution of Christians. It is one further sign of the times in which we live.

■ Now, What to Do?

The same issue of *U.S. News* has a startling article titled: "OK, OK, cigarettes do kill — A tobacco company ends decades of denials."

Given how many times over the years tobacco company officials have denied that smoking causes cancer, last week's confession from Liggett, maker of Chesterfield cigarettes, is astonishing in its directness. "We at Liggett know and acknowledge that ... cigarette smoking causes health problems, including lung cancer, heart and vascular disease, and emphysema," said Bennett LeBow, chairman of Liggett's parent company, Brooke Group, in a written statement. "We at Liggett also know and acknowledge that ... nicotine is addictive."

The announcement, of course, gave fits to the larger tobacco companies. It gave much ammunition to lawyers who are suing these companies for the sickness or death of clients. It gave states, likewise suing these companies for recovery of costs for health care of cigarette addicts, basis for their claims.

But do we now have a problem too? What are we to say of Exodus 20:13 and its explanation in the Heidelberg Catechism, question 105? And what about I Corinthians 3:16-17? And is addiction a sin?

□

How Then Can We Be Saved?

Scripture teaches that the natural man is in an absolutely hopeless state and condition. We are members of a corrupt race in which we are conceived and born in sin, and are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all wickedness. We are guilty before God. Our natures are corrupt. Our sins continue to accumulate an immeasurable mountain of debt before God.

Furthermore, our sin is not a minor fault, but an attack upon the holiness and righteousness of the God with whom we have to do. All departure from God's law, no matter how minor it may appear to us, must stand condemned by God, lest He deny Himself and His holiness. And that condemnation brings death in all its forms, finally everlasting death and damnation.

An Urgent Question

We ask the question therefore (and to us it is an extremely urgent question): How then can we be saved?

We ask this question from a particular point of view. We are not interested any longer in merely escaping the consequences of our own sins. We have played that game from the time we were small children, always trying to escape the consequences of our actions. We have found time and time again that the consequences of our sins are inescapable.

We ask this urgent question now as those who have been touched by the Spirit. And the sinner who has been born again by God's wonder work of regeneration does not ask for an easy way out of a bad situation. We are no longer denying the reality of the seriousness of our sin.

We are no longer among those who try to bring themselves to believe that the situation is not nearly so serious, and that the picture of man has been colored too dark.

Nor do we raise the question, "How then can we be saved?" with the slightest hope that God will just overlook and forget about our guilt and sin.

We understand fully that there is no possibility of sinning in God's universe and getting away with it. We read in Galatians 6:7, 8, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." That truth is expressed throughout all Scripture and in the soul of every man. The wages of sin is death.

Nevertheless, we ask the question in all seriousness. We who have been given by God to see our misery seek a way out of our spiritual death. We have seen the righteousness and holiness of God and know that His wrath is just. We ask with all urgency, "How can we be saved?"

Still more, when we inquire about that way of salvation, we

look not merely for an escape from hell. We look for much more. We look for the *favor of God*. Ours is the consuming desire to have the consciousness of God's fellowship and love.

Furthermore, if we are to escape the punishment of everlasting death and be received into God's favor, we must not only be transferred from the legal state of guilt into the legal state of those who are innocent, but we must also be delivered from our shameful condition. All sin and corruption must be rooted out and destroyed, and we must be filled with the love of God.

To be changed from guilty to not-guilty, from haters of God to lovers of God — that is salvation.

Apart from that, there may be something which society calls "rehabilitation," that which enables one to function better in society while he continues on the way to hell. But another salvation there is not.

How then can we be saved? This is the question of those whose hearts have been renewed by God's powerful work of grace. With the apostle Paul in Romans 7 we cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Required Satisfaction

If we shall be saved, it will be in a way approved by God. The way of escape, the way of deliver-

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ance, must not in any way violate the justice and holiness and honor of God.

That means that God cannot simply issue a pardon by canceling our guilt arbitrarily. He cannot for a moment simply suspend His justice. The guilt must be paid, the debt cleared. As long as we are guilty, there is no hope for us. And salvation implies that our guilt be paid only in a way which is in harmony with God's righteousness.

God's justice must be satisfied.

The curse, which rests upon everyone who has failed to obey even a single one of God's commandments, can be taken away only by rendering perfect satisfaction to the justice of God. God cannot accept a partial payment and forgive the balance of the debt.

From one point of view it is true: God can do all things. That is, He can do all things that are in harmony with His Being and will. But don't forget, God cannot do anything that would conflict with His own Being, with His holiness and righteousness. For that very reason there are things that God cannot do, just because He is God. He cannot sin. He cannot lie. He cannot set aside His own justice and holiness. Satisfaction must be made.

What is required for such satisfaction?

Satisfaction is not the mere bearing of punishment for sin. The reprobate who are damned and in hell certainly bear the wrath of God without end. But they never atone. Their bearing of punishment never satisfies God for even one of their sins. For the fact is that even in hell God's demand is trumpeted forth, "Love Me!" And the damned cannot fulfill that demand.

Positively, therefore, the act of satisfaction is the payment of the love-debt to God even while He reveals Himself in His wrath against the sinner. We stand before God as debtors. He continues to demand from us the payment of a

debt. We owe Him. We owe Him *perfect love*.

It is only when we understand the unchangeable character of God's love-demand that we can apprehend in a limited way the terrible reality of necessary satisfaction. God requires the payment of everything that we owe. The debt must be fully satisfied. He who will satisfy must voluntarily bear the full punishment of sin in loving obedience to God and for the sake of God's righteousness.

Do you understand what that means for us? That means that while loving Him perfectly we must bear the burden of God's infinite and eternal wrath against our sin and guilt.

Perfect satisfaction is required. Without it there can be no salvation.

That puts us in a terrible predicament, doesn't it? Not only are we failing to pay our back debt towards the satisfaction of God's justice; but to the contrary, we are continuing even daily to increase our indebtedness before God! As Isaiah puts it, Even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags! Even when I do something that appears to you to be a very good work, that deed was corrupted by my old, sinful nature. So rather than reducing our debt with God and making satisfaction of His justice, we continue to *increase* our debt. Even as God's people we do that.

You don't go before God, laying claim to your performance of meritorious religious acts, do you? Would your claim to salvation be that your parents brought you up in the church, or that you attend church regularly, or that you are not so bad as other men are? Oh no!

If you think about it, this is the heart of every false religion there is and there ever has been — to try to work one's own righteousness

*... this is
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and there ever
has been
— to try
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salvation.*

and merit one's own salvation. All ancient idolatry and religion centered in a self-made salvation. That was also the sin of the church in Jesus' day, as was seen particularly in the Pharisees. It has been the sin of Roman Catholicism throughout the centuries. It is the sin of the modern church as well, which has taken the cross and the blood of Calvary out of the preaching of the Word, and replaced it with the social agendas of men.

But if you have been born again by the Spirit, if you have the beginning of the new life of Christ in you, you know that there is nothing you can bring to God to satisfy His justice, but that you only daily increase your guilt. And you say, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." That is the reality of the Christian life, as we stand before the all-glorious God.

Our situation is so serious that there can be no hope of salvation in us.

There is only one way in which we can be saved. There is only One who can and did satisfy the justice of God for us and in our place. He is the One whose Word Peter preached, when he explained the power by which the impotent man was healed. I refer to Acts 4:10-12.

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. □

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God and Its Righteousness

"But seek ye first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

This is the great command of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. The meaning is not that we must seek the kingdom first and then afterwards can seek a number of worldly things, such as riches and glory and the pleasures of this world. Rather, the meaning of this exhortation is that we must seek the kingdom always, in all things, as the principal consideration in our life. Everything else must be subservient to our seeking the kingdom. All the things of this world have their significance for us only in that they help us to seek the kingdom of God. When we understand the exhortation of our Lord in this manner, we see that it is truly a tremendous perspective of life that the Lord sets before us.

To understand the great implications of this exhortation it is of paramount importance that we rightly understand what is meant by the concept "kingdom of God." In the history of the church there has been much misunderstanding about the nature of the kingdom of God. Many have taught an altogether carnal idea of the kingdom. A carnal idea of the kingdom was in fact the prevailing error of the Jews of Jesus' day, and even of Jesus' own disciples before Pentecost. Modernism has as one of its chief errors a false concep-

tion of the kingdom. There have even been zealous advocates of the kingdom of Christ who have an entirely misdirected zeal for the kingdom.

The general idea of the kingdom of God is plain. The kingdom is the sovereign and supreme rule of God. It is the place where God is known and acknowledged as God, the holy and sovereign and righteous God of all. It is the place where He is worshiped, glorified, and served by His subjects. The kingdom is the place where God is the savior and protector of His elect people. In the sphere of the kingdom, God reveals His splendor and glorious majesty, His power and goodness among His people. There is no more glorious realm imaginable than the realm of God's kingdom. There is no greater blessedness imaginable than the blessedness of being a citizen of the kingdom of God. The whole universe is the kingdom of God because He created it and He is sovereign Lord over it.

Satan struck a breach in the kingdom of God when he exalted himself in pride against God and vainly desired himself to be king of God's universe. Because of his rebellion against God he became the archenemy of God. Satan brought about the fall of man and instigated in the heart of man rebellion against God, his creator and rightful Lord. Satan became the prince of darkness of this present world through his great wickedness in bringing about the fall. However, he is only a usurper of God's throne. He rules only for a short space of time. Satan is by no

means the rightful ruler of this world. He rules only by the sovereign permission of God. His destruction has been absolutely determined from the beginning.

It was God's sovereign purpose, even in and through the fall of the devil, to bring into this world a more glorious King. It was His eternal purpose that His only begotten Son, the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, should be the everlasting and glorious King of His kingdom in the new heavens and earth. By His decree God has determined to set His Son on His holy hill of Zion. The consummation of all things will be the final exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God. The elect of God shall be around the throne of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. Together with the angels the redeemed of God shall sing the glorious song, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. Amen."

The truth of the final and glorious triumph of the kingdom of God is the grand theme that runs throughout the Scriptures from beginning to end. Think of the great part which the theme of the kingdom of God plays in the history of the Old Testament. We may even say that the central type of the Old Testament is the kingdom of David and Solomon as it foreshadows the triumphant and glorious kingdom of Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament again and again speak of the coming of the Messiah as the coming of the great and glorious

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King who will be the Son of David. He will establish a perfect kingdom that shall triumph over all the kingdoms of this world and shall be an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and glory.

When the Lord Jesus was born in the fullness of time, it was immediately declared that He was the great King born from David's line. But the wicked Jews rejected Christ because they were looking for a carnal king. They hated the righteousness of God that Christ preached. They finally crucified Him, in the hope of utterly destroying Him, that they might raise up their own king. The nation of Israel still today looks for a king of their own making.

It is amazing how much Jesus spoke of His kingdom when He was on this earth. Jesus teaches us very plainly concerning the nature of His kingdom. His many parables set forth the mysteries of the kingdom. The beautiful "Sermon on the Mount" is a mighty treatise regarding the kingdom. It is of greatest importance that we listen to Jesus' own instruction concerning the nature of His kingdom. This is something that many, even up to today, fail entirely to do.

Jesus declared plainly that His kingdom would be a heavenly kingdom. It would not be a kingdom of this world. Jesus declared that His kingdom would be a kingdom of righteousness and peace with God. It would be realized first of all in the hearts of His people by His Spirit and through the preaching of the Word. According to the abundant testimony of Jesus, His kingdom would not be finally realized until the day of His return. Then it would be realized in the new heavens and the new earth.

The kingdom of Jesus was established at the cross. This was something which was entirely unexpected by carnal and wicked men. Rather, the enemies of Christ, inspired by the devil himself, imagined that they had defeated and

destroyed Christ at the cross. But Scripture testifies that in the cross Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, making an open show of them, utterly putting them to shame. That Christ was triumphant as the mighty Lord of His kingdom was proven in His resurrection from the dead on the third day and His exaltation at the right hand of God. We believe that now King Jesus is enthroned in the heavens in highest glory as God determined from eternity. To Him has been given all power and authority in heaven and in earth. He rules supremely over all the universe. Jesus, the King appointed by God, rules sovereignly and with almighty power through the history of this world. His purpose in this rule is finally to realize His glorious heavenly kingdom of righteousness in the new heavens and earth.

The kingdom of Jesus will come through the destruction of the kingdoms of this world. Many who claim to be advocates of the kingdom of God willingly forget this. They teach that the kingdom of God will come through the betterment of the kingdoms of this world and that these will finally evolve into the kingdom of God and of Christ. Scripture is plain that this world will in the end grow worse and worse in its enmity against God, its rebellion against Him, and its transgression of all of His commandments. When the cup of iniquity of this world is full, King Jesus will come to destroy the kingdoms of this world. He will dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. Jesus' destruction of the kingdoms of the world will be His fearful righteous and holy judgments on them. The glory of King Jesus will shine most brilliantly when He executes righteous judgment on the kingdom of this world.

Two truths are abundantly plain from this. The kingdom of Jesus will not be of this world. It will not come through the change of the institutions of this world. It

will not come through the conversion of the majority or all of the peoples of this world. It will not come through carnal political or social achievements according to the wisdom and power of men of this present world. The kingdoms of this present world will in the end be destroyed by King Jesus because of their wickedness.

The second truth that follows from this is that in their calling to seek the righteousness of the kingdom of God those who are truly citizens of the kingdom must separate themselves from this present world. The great kingdom calling sounded throughout the Scriptures is: Come ye out from among them and be not partaker of the abominations of this world. He that will be a friend of this world is an enemy of God. Compromise with this world in its wickedness will lead to being destroyed out of the kingdom of Christ. Those who join with this world, even in the foolish imagination that by doing this they will bring the citizens of this world into the kingdom of God, will in fact be destroyed by the same righteous judgments that in the end will destroy all the kingdoms of this world. To put this in other words, seeking the kingdom is emphatically an antithetical calling.

The kingdom of God and of Christ Jesus is a kingdom of righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount makes this so plain. The kingdom of God is characterized by the righteousness of God. The glory of the kingdom of God is the glory of the perfect righteousness of God. There can be no compromise of this righteousness. Righteousness is the foundation of this kingdom. For this reason, to establish this kingdom Jesus had to die on the cross. Almost no one understood this truth at the time when Jesus was crucified. Even Jesus' own disciples little understood it. They did not understand this truth until the Spirit of Christ was poured into their hearts.

The great issue of the kingdom of God is the issue of righteousness. This truth of the kingdom is again largely forgotten and even denied by many modern-day advocates of the kingdom of God. When Christ was crucified, the world imagined that it had triumphed in putting King Jesus to death. In fact, through the cross Jesus was absolutely victorious and triumphant over Satan and all that follow him.

The only way that we can understand this is if we understand that the great issue of the kingdom of God is righteousness. Christ established this righteousness through His sacrifice on the cross. By means of the sacrifice of the cross, Jesus gained the right to deliver His elect people from the kingdom of darkness of this present world and to make them heirs of His blessed and everlasting kingdom of righteousness. Because of the righteousness of the cross, Jesus arose in triumph from the dead and was exalted at the right hand of God. Jesus is King of His kingdom because of righteousness. This righteousness is His glory and power. Seeking the kingdom of Christ is therefore with grace in our hearts and by faith seeking the righteousness of the cross of Christ Jesus.

Another great truth of the kingdom that Jesus in all His teaching on this great subject made so plain is the truth that His kingdom is first of all spiritual in nature. It is not carnal and earthly. It does not come through carnal and earthly measures. It is not realized by the strength and wisdom of men. This truth of the kingdom is intimately related to the truth of the righteousness of God which characterizes this kingdom.

That the kingdom of Jesus is a spiritual kingdom means first of all that it has spiritual characteristics and spiritual requirements. We do not, we cannot enter into the kingdom by any human efforts, wisdom, strength, or achievements.

Jesus taught this great truth of the kingdom to Nicodemus. Nicodemus belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. The main characteristic of this sect was the false idea that they were citizens of the kingdom of God through their own works of righteousness. Jesus condemned this teaching and the vain imagination of the Pharisees. Therefore He told Nicodemus to his utter dismay and confusion that except a man be born again he cannot even see the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus declared in the Sermon on the Mount, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." How the Pharisees hated this teaching of Jesus. It would not be an exaggeration to say that one of the main reasons why the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews crucified Jesus was because of this particular teaching regarding the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. It would also not be an exaggeration to say that the chief reason why the truth of the kingdom is hated in the world today, even by those who seem to be advocates of this kingdom, is the spiritual hatred of the righteousness of this kingdom.

The elect of God become spiritual citizens of the kingdom of God through the wonder work of regeneration. Without regeneration no one will see the kingdom. The kingdom therefore is first of all a spiritual reality accomplished by God in the hearts of His people by the working of the Spirit of Christ. This truth is also largely ignored by many modern-day preachers of the kingdom. Our Lord Jesus referred to this great truth of the kingdom when He declared: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is *within you*" (Luke 17:20, 21).

One more characteristic of the kingdom taught again and again by

our Lord Jesus is the truth that this kingdom is heavenly. It is heavenly in distinction from, in opposition to, being earthly. This has great implications for what it means truly to seek the kingdom. To seek the kingdom one must be other worldly, heavenly minded. One cannot seek the kingdom while setting his heart on the things of this world. We can seek the kingdom only by forsaking this present world. To seek the kingdom, the citizens of this kingdom must be ready to sacrifice if necessary all the things of this present world, to have nothing in this world.

In the measure that a man sets His heart on the things of this world he makes it impossible to seek the kingdom. The love of the things of this present world will draw a man away from seeking the kingdom. Seeking the kingdom we must be ready to count the things of this world as secondary in significance. If necessary we must suffer the loss of the riches and glory of this world and wait patiently for the true and lasting glory and blessedness of the kingdom that shall come down from heaven.

That the kingdom of Jesus is heavenly means that it is a future reality. It cannot and will not be perfectly realized on this earth but in a future realm which the Bible calls the new heavens and earth. The citizens of the kingdom live in hope and expectation for the glorious and blessed realization of the kingdom that is yet to come.

We have outlined what we believe are several of the great truths of the kingdom as they are taught us in Scripture and by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Only when we have a right understanding of these truths of the kingdom can we have any understanding at all of what our Lord means when He exhorts us to seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. We shall consider some of the practical applications of this in our next article. □

Chapter 6

The Fall of Our First Parents

Appendix

Adam and the Race (2)

All Sinners Through One Man

The question is: what is the explanation of this astounding and awesome fact of universal death? How is the universal reign of death even before and apart from any actual and conscious transgression of the law to be explained?

To understand this question and its solution, we must remember another significant fact. Death is punishment. Death is not natural. It is not the inevitable and necessary end of all life, the normal termination of a normal process. According to Scripture, death is the punishment of sin. It is always the execution of a sentence, a divine death sentence. It is the manifestation of the wrath of God. This we have already seen in connection with the forbidden tree in Paradise. God said to man, "For the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And die Adam did, not because that tree was a kind of poison but because God in His righteous judgment inflicted the death sentence on him. Thus it is always with death according to Scripture. "In thy wrath we pine and die," the psalmist of Psalm 90 complains. "For the wages of sin is death," the apostle tells us in Romans 6:23. The same apostle, in I Corinthians 15:56, in-

structs us: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Also, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). Death, therefore, is punishment. It is the clear manifestation of the fact that the Holy One is turned against us in holy and righteous wrath.

This can only mean that death reigns over all men because all men have sinned. Let us understand this clearly. Death is punishment. But there can be no punishment without guilt. Punishment without guilt would be the height of injustice, and God is just. Punishment implies guilt. Guilt is the liability to punishment. But there can be no guilt without a real transgression, a violation of the law. It follows, therefore, that there must needs be sin before there can be death. Hence, if, as the text says, all men die, this can only be because all have sinned.

But the question is: how have all men sinned? This is the question now, especially in the light of the fact that the text emphasizes that death reigned universally even when there was no law and even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression. Yet all have sinned. Otherwise the punishment of death could not come upon all. How, then, have they sinned? The answer is: *they have all sinned even before they were born.*

But how could all men have

sinned even before they were born? The answer is: they all have sinned through and in the one man Adam. Through one man sin entered into the world, the world of man. That one man is the first man who ever was, the man who was not born, but created, namely, Adam. Death entered into the world because of sin. This is emphasized once more in the latter part of verse 12 when the apostle says: "And so death passed upon all men, for that (or 'because') all have sinned."

Here, therefore, is the scriptural explanation of the universality of sin and death.

This explanation is not the humanistic and Pelagian explanation, which attempts to account for the dreadful, universal phenomenon of sin and death by the theory of the imitation of a bad example and the influence of an evil environment. This view is always *individualistic*. It always insists that sin is only in the *deed*, never a matter of the corruption of man's very nature. Human nature is inherently good, and it always has the power to determine either for good or for evil, according to this theory. The will is free. There is no such thing as a bondage to sin. Adam's nature did not become corrupt through that one act of breaking God's commandment. He may have become weaker, and it may have become more difficult for him after that first sin to return to the way of obedience. But his nature did not become corrupt.

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Thus every child that is born is inherently good, born with a will that can choose freely either for good or for evil. The natural or moral character of a baby is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which one may write what he pleases, and on which the child himself writes as he grows up, covering it with the writing of good or evil. If you put the question, how it must be explained that every man sins and that the writing on this blank slate invariably proves to be evil, the answer is: *environment!* They explain that, as soon as a child comes into the world, the language of sin is inscribed on that babe's character. As the child grows up, it comes increasingly into contact with bad examples and evil influences. So it is that all men become disposed to sin and form evil habits. Hence, also, to improve men you must educate them and improve their surroundings and provide them with a good environment. To save mankind we must build a better world and apply ourselves to social improvement and to character building.

But notice that in the light of Scripture the Christian should have no part of this philosophy, neither in his view of sin and salvation, nor in his view of education and psychology. Sin and death are not to be explained thus, that every man has followed Adam's bad example, and sinned, and died. This is exactly disproved by the statement in verse 14 that death passed upon all men, even upon those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

Nor is the answer to the question how it is that we all sinned in the one man Adam to be found in our organic relation to Adam. Thus some attempt to explain it. Adam had the whole human race in his loins. We were, therefore, actually in him, they say. Thus the whole human race sinned because they were organically in the first man, their father Adam.

But this cannot possibly be the

answer; and it is not the meaning of the text in Romans 5:12.

It is indeed true that we were organically in Adam. This is one important aspect of the relationship between Adam and the human race and between Adam's fall and our sin. Adam was the father (or: the organic head) and root of the entire human race. Because of this relationship, the whole human race became corrupt through Adam's corruption. This is always Scripture's presentation of the reality of sin and death. Sin is not merely in the deed. The Bible insists that man himself, his nature, his mind and will, is corrupt, so that he is dead through trespasses and sins. The whole human nature is depraved, and every individual human being is born in sin. Man is really dead and has the wrath of God abiding in him, unless he is reborn through the Spirit of Christ and believes in the Son of God (John 3:36). The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth (Gen. 8:21). Again, the tree is known by its fruits. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:16-18).

This is true of the individual sinner. It is also true of the race as a whole. The tree of the human race is corrupt and produces corrupt fruit. The stock is corrupt, and it inevitably produces a corrupt offspring. For, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). So the psalmist complained, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

This is the doctrine of *inherited pollution*. It means that the very seed of man is corrupt, that the act of generation by the father and of conception by the mother takes place in the sphere of sin, and that the nature of the child who is brought forth is depraved, totally depraved, unless the divine wonder of regeneration intervenes. It means that this universal corrup-

tion of the human nature is to be traced to the one, first sin of Adam as its beginning. In Paradise not only the individual human nature of Adam, but the nature of the whole race was corrupted. This can only be because when God created Adam, He created an organism, the organism of the human race. Adam was the father, the root, the bearer of the nature of the entire race. For God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

Nevertheless, this does not explain the universality of death. It does not explain, in this connection, how we all sinned before we were born in and through the one man Adam. For, in the first place, although our whole nature was *organically* in Adam, we were not in that sense personally and individually and actually present in Adam in Paradise, and we did not actually sin. Adam sinned the sin, not we.

In the second place, if this were the whole explanation, would not the universality of sin and death be a matter of injustice? Are we then not the innocent victims of Adam's transgression? He sinned, and we all suffer and come into the world with a corrupt nature. Are men not to be pitied, then, for their deplorable state, rather than to be condemned? Moreover, in that case can we be held responsible for our actual sins and transgressions if we are born with a nature that is not able to keep God's law and is inclined to all wickedness? We are, in that case, born with a corrupt nature, and we cannot help it. We never personally had the opportunity to choose for the good. We are victims of circumstances and are to be pitied instead of condemned for our misdeeds.

In the third place, this would lead to a contradiction of the thought of the text. For remember, that very spiritual corruption, that very depravity of our nature, is but an aspect of the death that

came upon all men. But that death, including our spiritual death, the corruption of our nature, is itself punishment. It is on account of our guilt. It is the punishment of a sin which we all committed in and through the one man Adam.

How did we all sin and become guilty and liable to the punishment of death? The answer is: in and through the sin of the one man Adam in the *legal sense*.

How was this possible?

The answer is: because Adam was our *head in a representative sense*. He was not only organically the father of the race, the progenitor of the race, so that we all inherit our nature from him. But he was our representative head in the covenant, and we were legally in him.

God created the human race not only an organism with Adam as the root and first father, but He also created the race as a legal solidarity, a legal corporation, with Adam as the representative head. Adam was our legal head before God in His covenant. As such, he was legally representative of the entire human race. Hence, when Adam sinned and became guilty, the entire race, being in him legally, became guilty in and through that one sin. In that legal sense all sinned when Adam sinned. Death, death in all its implications, is the punishment of that sin. So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

This is the plain teaching of the passage we have been considering and the only possible explanation

of it. Let us pay attention to the fact that throughout this passage, beginning with Romans 5:12, the apostle speaks *legal language*. This is why he can conclude, as he does, in that same legal terminology: "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom. 5:18).

This is the doctrine of *original guilt*. It is based upon the truth that our relation to the first man Adam was such that he was our representative head, and acted as such in Paradise the First.

You and I cannot object to this doctrine that it is not fair, that we had nothing to say about Adam's representation of us. In the first place, all of our objecting will not change the grim and hard reality of the hopelessness of our sin and death, our inherited pollution of nature and our original guilt. But, in the second place, this would be the height of sinful rebellion. For shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" What if the Sovereign of heaven and earth designed and created the race as such a legal solidarity in its representative head, Adam? Shall we, puny creatures of the dust, and sinners besides, have the audacity to challenge His doings? Shall we not rather bow in the dust and cry out: "Sinners we are! sinners by nature! hopelessly lost sinners! such sinners that we could never deliver ourselves from the power of a universal sin and condemnation and death, in and under which we are born"?

Finally, do not overlook the

fact that only thus can we understand that Christ is the only hope of His people, their sole comfort in life and in death. For do not overlook the last expression in this passage: "Adam was the figure (that is, the type) of him that was to come." This does not mean that Adam was a type of Christ in every respect, but in a certain particular respect — here, the respect that is under discussion in the entire passage. Hence, he was a type of Christ as Head, representative Head.

Adam was the head of a legal corporation, the human race. So Christ is the representative Head, not of all men, for then all men are necessarily justified and saved in Him, which is not true. But He is the representative Head of the church, of the elect, of all His own, whom the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world.

Adam sins for all, so that all have sinned when he sinned. Christ obeys for all the members of the corporation of which He is the Head, so that all have obeyed and are righteous before God when He obeyed. We do not die in the deepest sense because of our actual sins. We are born in death because we have sinned before we are born — in Adam. Thus we can also understand that we do not live — thanks be to God — because of our actual good works. For then we could never live! But we are reborn and are alive unto good works because we have obeyed before we are so reborn — in Christ Jesus our Lord. □

Book Reviews

Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church, by Gary North. Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996. Pp. li - 1023, plus indexes of texts and subjects. \$34.95 (hardcover). (Reviewed by the editor)

The book is a blockbuster, big and explosive. It is the study

— a history — of the apostasy of the Northern Presbyterian Church that culminated in the deposition of J. Gresham Machen in 1936. At that time, Machen founded what is now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Earlier he had started Westminster Theological Seminary.

The Northern Church is known today as the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA). This is the

church that recently helped to sponsor the "RE-imagining Conference" at which idolaters, mostly female, represented the God of Scripture as a pagan goddess with Presbyterian gold and silver. In the late 1800's, this was the church of the Princeton Seminary of the Hodges and B. B. Warfield.

How did the church of Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge, and B.B.

Warfield come to this? How did this church earlier, in 1924, become the church of the Auburn Affirmation? The Auburn Affirmation was a document signed by more than 1,200 Presbyterian ministers, denying that such cardinal Christian doctrines as the virgin birth of Jesus Christ are necessary to be believed.

Gary North answers this "How?"

There was the recommended training of ministers, especially college and seminary professors, in the infidel universities in Germany. The result was the corruption of those who were to teach the Presbyterian Church's future pastors and teachers.

There was, for many years, the failure of the orthodox to discipline heretics. Running through the book is the refrain, "The issue was sanctions," that is, discipline. The church did not hold her officebearers, particularly her ministers and professors of theology, to a "strict," that is, genuine subscription to the confessions.

This is the meaning of the book's curious title, *Crossed Fingers*. The modernists in the church signed their subscription vow with the fingers of their other hand crossed behind their backs. They lied. And the orthodox let them get away with it.

Doctrinally, the falling away of the church into sheer unbelief and the depravity of life that issues from it took place by means of the church's toleration of Arminianism. North speaks of the "evolution of Presbyterianism from Calvinism to Arminianism to liberalism" (p. 947). The merger of the Old School (Calvinistic) and the New School (Arminian) in 1869 was the beginning of the end. The descent into modernism quickened with the revision of the Westminster Confession in 1903 to express a universal love of God for every human and a desire of God to save all men (pp. 352-357). Westminster's predestinarian theology was gutted. The

decline became precipitous with the admission into the denomination in 1906 of some 1,100 congregations of the Arminian, vehemently anti-Calvinist Cumberland Presbyterians.

Crossed Fingers demonstrates that Arminianism is the first, decisive move of a church toward modernism. The reason, although North does not spell this out, is that by its denial of a sovereign God, Arminianism is modernism in principle.

One of the important lessons that North expressly draws from the history is that the confessionally Calvinist church must do battle with the first appearance of modernism in the form of Arminian doctrine. North refers in this connection to the history of the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church over common grace resulting in the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). North praises the PRC and holds them up to the churches for emulation, although he does not have the details of this history perfectly straight:

In 1923, the Christian Reformed Church accepted a similar creedal revision that spoke of "the favorable attitude of God toward mankind in general." Westminster Seminary's Cornelius Van Til would later write a book defending this revision: *Common Grace*.... But this revision led to a split in the denomination. The Protestant Reformed Church understood the threat to Calvinist orthodoxy posed by the revision; its 1924 Synod rejected it (p. 354). Unlike the members of the Christian Reformed Church who would depart on principle to form the Protestant Reformed Church in 1924 after the CRC added the plank on God's favor toward mankind in general in 1923, the Old School decided in 1903 to remain in the denomination by continuing to play the game (of "let's pretend" regarding the confessions). But how could the Old School speak judicially as self-conscious Calvinists in future denominational assem-

blies? Its members couldn't. This is why 1903 marks the institutional end of the Old School's resistance in the name of Confessional Calvinism (p. 356).

North is right that the modernists in particular who captured the Northern Presbyterian Church and all theological liberals in general are wicked men and women. Even more disgusting, though, to a man or woman of integrity are the "conservatives" who, in the end, refused to fight for the faith and church of Jesus Christ, but subsided quietly into their comfortable positions in the apostate church—the Clarence E. Macartney's. "After 1936, they kept their pulpits and then collected their pensions" (p. 31). These men gave the church to the liberals. The liberals perish. As North notes, there are sanctions after all: eternal hell. Can the compromising "conservatives" be saved?

Reformed and Presbyterian believers should read this book, especially the ministers and ruling elders. The same grim patterns that marked the apostasy of the Northern Presbyterian Church are evident in any number of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. If there is not yet found the attack on Scripture and the rejection of atonement in the blood of Christ that manifest full-blown modernism, there is the fatal undermining of predestination in the teaching of a universal love of God and a desire of God to save all men that will certainly end in full-blown modernism.

The book will serve Protestant Reformed readers well by keeping us on our guard. We have no modernists. (North would say that we lack both the size and the money to be of any interest to modernists.) We have no Arminians. But *Crossed Fingers* warns of an attitude in the church that clamors for toleration and peace on behalf of the church's work, especially her mission work, at the expense of sound doctrine.

Modernism was hostile to any screening of the Church in terms of the Westminster Confession. Modernists announced another standard: peace, toleration, and work. This meant peace and toleration for them while they worked to subvert the enforcement mechanism undergirding the Westminster standards (p. 895).

This attitude is a breeding-ground for doctrinal departure.

North has done his research. The work is documented. He writes history the way it ought to be written, not dispassionately but with zeal for the truth and righteousness.

Being North, his style is lively: "modernism's view of the true sacrament: power leading to control over church assets" (p. 22). Again: "When modernism's fat lady finally sang, she would have her foot on her opponent's neck" (p. 902). Yet one more instance: "The trinitarian confession basic to ecclesiastical success today is drums, guitar, and electronic keyboard" (p. 912).

North does grind his postmillennial axes. He imposes Ray Sutton's doctrine of the covenant on the Presbyterian history. He suggests that the Presbyterian

Church fell, in part, because the theologians lost their postmillennial vision. But these notions are easily spotted. They do not significantly affect the narrative.

The reader should not overlook the first appendix, "H.L. Mencken's Obituary of Machen." The praise of Machen and the skewering of modernism by this unbelieving, profane newspaper columnist must have pierced even the seared consciences of the liberals who had just savaged and then deposed Machen. It will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

If you have World Wide Web access to web pages, be sure to check out our Loveland, CO PRC's well-done home page. (Address: <http://www.iserv.net/~prc/prc.html>). It is an excellent source of PRC information and lists — among other things, over 76 pamphlets available through the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC. These pamphlets and other materials can be accessed and obtained by on-line computers, and printed out on your own computer printers. Giving the address to friends or relatives who go "on-line" is another way of promoting our churches' literature and making others aware of and appreciative of our reading materials.

Somewhat related to the above, we also pass along an item from the bulletin of our Randolph, WI PRC. Their pastor, Rev. S. Key, received a letter from a reader at Faith Christian School in Yuba City, CA who had seen Rev. Key's sermon from Matthew 19:9 concerning the subject of divorce and

remarriage on the World Wide Web. This teacher spoke about it to his 6th grade students, and the result was several questions. Again we are reminded of the many opportunities we are given today to give answers from Scripture to some of the questions that continue to come our way.

We also couldn't help but notice a letter sent to the Evangelism Committee of our South Holland PRC which pointed out in a striking way just how often the Spirit uses what seem to us to be insignificant means to spread His Word. This person, now living in Sale, Victoria, Australia, first became aware of our churches when he came across one of our Psalters while working in the city of Jerusalem. He was again reminded of our churches when he recently came across the booklet "Try the Spirits," by Prof. D. Engelsma.

The Bible Study Class at Grand Valley State University, sponsored by our Grace PRC in Standale, MI, appears to be progressing nicely. There are between 12 and 17 attending each week. Some of their weekly topics have been: "Roman Catholics and Evangelicals Together — is this a match made in heaven?"; "Virginity! who cares?";

"A Funny Thing Happened in Church Last Week ... or was it so funny?"; and "Heaven or Hell ... or going nowhere fast."

The Evangelism Committee of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI made plans recently to sponsor a special community service. An informational meeting for their congregation was held on March 9, and the service followed a week later on March 16. For this morning service, Rev. R. Van Overloop preached from Acts 4:12, under the theme, "The Only Name for Salvation."

Congregational Activities

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA approved a motion from their consistory to repair their church parking lot and at the same time also extend the parking lot to the north. This will give them more than 30 new parking spots.

Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, recently agreed to repeat his seminar on "The Writing, Compilation, and Translation of the Bible" for our Georgetown PRC on Wednesday evenings in April.

The Council of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL approved a request

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

from members of their congregation to hold a pre-school Sunday School class for 20 minutes after the morning services for those who are interested. There will be two classes: one for 2 and 3-year olds, the other for 3 and 4-year olds.

The Young Adults of the Loveland, CO PRC, with the help of their congregation, once again sponsored their annual Spring Retreat. Loveland's pastor, Rev. G. VanBaren, and Rev. R. Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, were this year's speakers.

Mission Activities

The Domestic Mission Committee of our churches now has its own home page on the Internet. The address is <http://missions.iserv.net>.

Prof. and Mrs. Decker, along with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Langerak, left on March 26 to labor for almost three weeks in Singapore. They were sent by our denominational Contact Committee and by our Hope PRC in Walker, MI, the calling church for Rev. Kortering. The 1996 Synod mandated this trip to investigate the work of Rev. Kortering and to determine whether to extend Rev. and Mrs. Kortering's stay in Singapore as minister-on-loan for another five years.

Minister Activities

Rev. John Heys, emeritus minister in our churches, was hospitalized in early March with pneumonia and other complications. However, later that month he moved to Hudsonville Christian Nursing Home.

Mrs. Helen Schipper, widow of Rev. Marinus Schipper, passed into

glory on April 3, at the age of 89. We extend our Christian sympathy to the family, finding our comfort in the assurance of God's Word as found in Romans 8:18.

Our South Holland, IL PRC will call another pastor from the trio of Rev. C. Haak, Rev. G. VanBaren, and Prof. H. Hanko.

Our vacant Hope PRC in

Walker, MI also formed another trio of the pastors C. Haak, S. Houck, and K. Koole, from which they too will call a pastor.

Food for Thought

"The more God blesses you, the less you shall be able to see of any adequate reason in yourself why you should be blessed."

—C. Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN MEMORIAM

On February 21, 1997 our covenant God and Father, in His inscrutable wisdom, was pleased to bring to his eternal home at the age of 46 years our brother in Christ,

ROBERT CHARLTON.

As consistory and congregation of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, we give thanks and praise unto our God for the years Bob was in our midst, for the exercise of the communion of the saints that Bob's illness afforded us, and particularly, for the good testimony that by grace Bob gave in life and in death: "For I know that my redeemer liveth..." (Job 19:25).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
George Tolsma, Clerk

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1996 appointed Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI the calling church for the 1997 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1997 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 10, 1997 at 9:00 A.M. in the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, MI.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 9, at 7:30 P.M. Rev. J. Slopesma, president of the 1996 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Cornelius Jonker, 4639 Ju-Le-On Dr. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Phone: (616) 453-1247.

Consistory of
Grandville PR Church
Mr. Cornelius Jonker, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 9, God willing, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. HILBERT KUIPER, SR., will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the years of covenant instruction, love, and care which they have given us. We pray that God will continue to bless and strengthen them.

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

- * Linda Kidder
- * Al and Donna Boven
- * Jay and Judy Kuiper
- * Daryl and Sharon Kuiper
- * Hib and Bev Kuiper
- 20 grandchildren
- 4 great-grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We are thankful to God for His faithfulness in giving our dear parents and grandparents,

JOHN and BETTY EKEMA,

60 years of marriage on May 12. We are thankful for their instruction of God's Word. May God continue to bless them.

"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (Psalm 36:5).

- * John and Tina Ekema
- * Bob and Kathy Ekema
- * Jim and Linda (in glory) VanOverloop
- * Jim and Sally Koll
- 15 grandchildren
- 2 grandchildren in glory
- 2 great-grandchildren

Redlands, California