

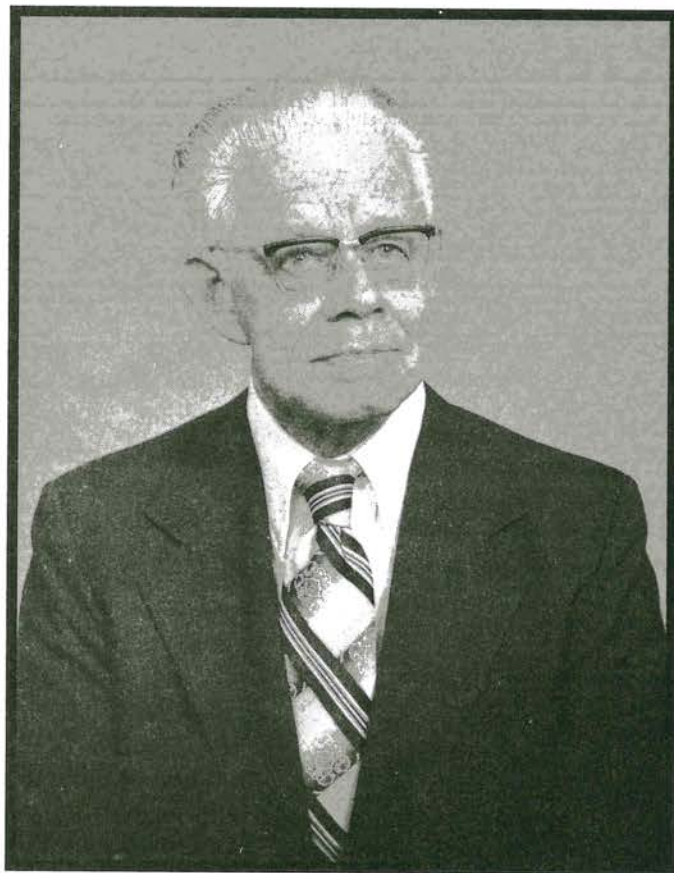


The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

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Rev. John A. Heys

See "In Memoriam" — p. 275

**Vol. 74, No. 12
March 15, 1998**

The Spirit's Testimony to the Christ of God*

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you through works of power, through marvels, and through signs, which God did in the midst of you, as also you know; Him (I say) being delivered through the definite counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hands of wicked men and have crucified and slain Him, Whom God has raised up, having loosened the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Acts 2:22-24

After St. Peter declared in his sermon that the promise contained in the prophecy of Joel had been fulfilled, in that the Holy Spirit was given to him and to his companions, as a testimony and as a pledge that God wished to communicate the Holy Spirit to His Church and to each believer, and that, however, great troubles must come, and that the faith of Christians must be proved; after all these things, I say, he calls the attention of the Jews to Jesus Christ. For since the Holy Spirit was given, they had to recognize the coming of Jesus Christ; because it said that this promise of Joel should be fulfilled only in the last

time. So then, when we see the Holy Spirit thus poured out, it is a certain mark that God has sent Jesus Christ in order to accomplish the salvation of men.

Now it is a beautiful manner of teaching and a very suitable order which we must especially note: namely, inasmuch as gifts which God gives us through His Holy Spirit are just so many means of leading and conducting us to Jesus Christ, in order to learn from Him all wisdom; for He is the fountain from which we must draw everything. In fact, firstly, since He was from all eternity the Word of God, He is the life and light of men, and because He has received all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in perfec-

tion, since He was made man, it is of His fullness that we shall receive grace for grace. It is, then, by Him that we shall find grace before God, for if we wish to address ourselves to His majesty without availing ourselves of this means, we shall not

* This is sermon 19 in the recently reprinted volume of sermons by John Calvin entitled, *Sermons on the Deity of Christ*. The book is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. I have broken up the lengthy paragraphs, shortened the sermon, and added the title. The sermon is published here with permission from Old Paths Publications.

—Ed.

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be able to have access to Him. We must, then, come straight to Jesus Christ, since we know that He received in such perfection the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that through Him we shall all be able to be partakers of them. Thus St. Peter here uses a good reason to admonish the Jews that the Redeemer has come: namely, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is poured out, we are in the last time.

Then he adds: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God among you through works of power, through miracles, and through signs, which God did through Him in the midst of you, as you also know; Him, I say, being delivered through the definite counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hands of wicked men, and have crucified and slain Him. It is He through Whom God has given Himself entirely to you, and nevertheless you have put Him to death. Yet you must know that it is He Who had been promised to you in the Law. He has come to be your Saviour, and you can recognize Him in that He has not remained in death, for God has rendered Him victorious over it, and He surmounted it." That is what St. Peter alleges in the first place to the Jews, to lead them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And we must note that he is not here still treating only of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For, first of all, the Jews had to know that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. And that is what St. Peter wished to prove by what he here proposes.

There are two things that we ought to know about Jesus Christ. The first is that we must believe that He is the Messiah, that is, the Anointed of the Lord promised in the Law, and of Whom the Proph-

ets have written, and that it is He Who has endured death for our redemption, and that nevertheless He was not held by it, but that He was risen in glory, triumphing over all His enemies. So much for the first point.

Then for the second, when we know that Jesus Christ has died for us, we must know Who He is and what benefit we are to receive from Him.

There are two things which we must note well: for if we had now to teach a Jew, we would have to begin by this to instruct him in Christianity, by showing him that Jesus Christ, Who was born of the Virgin Mary, Whom those who took rank over Him delivered to

death, is He Whom God has promised to them, and the way in which He has assigned to them the time He had to come into the world. Then how He bore witness to Him, that He was His Son, that He approved Him through signs and miracles which He did in the midst of them, and likewise that after He ascended into heaven He sent His Holy Spirit, following what had been predicted of Him. That, I say, is what we must tell a Jew to cause Him to know Jesus Christ.

Then we would have to make him understand that, when it is spoken in Scripture of the reign of the Messiah, it is a spiritual reign, in order that he may not be mistaken by thinking that He is an earthly king, as all the Jews imagine. That is what has made them deny Jesus Christ, inasmuch as they have not seen Him ruling over the people as they considered that He ought to do.

Now toward the Papists we do not have to insist upon the first point, but only upon the second. For they will confess with us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and

He Who was promised in the Law, that He was put to death and that He was raised from the dead. There is where we agree without difficulty. But they must be taught why He came, for they do not recognize Him at all for what He is. We know that we must believe that in Jesus Christ alone and through the merit of His death and passion, we have salvation. The Papists on the contrary attribute it to their works and merits, and to their foolish inventions, and it seems to them that through this means they can be sanctified. They seek, then, in their works that which cannot be found except in Jesus Christ. That is how it would not be at all necessary to teach the Papists anything touching the person of Jesus Christ, but only to show them what His power is, why He came, and what profit we can receive from it.

St. Peter here needed to declare both of these articles: for the Jews did not know that Jesus Christ was the Messiah sent by God, and still less the power which was in Him, and why He had come. Therefore he shows them that He appeared as Son of God among them in that He was raised from the dead and that by this resurrection they could know that He was such; because He was delivered from death and was victorious over it, and therefore we must seek in Him life and salvation. That is what St. Peter wishes to show in the first place; then he will show what fruit we have of His resurrection, and that will be declared afterwards in its place.

Now, since we know the intention of St. Peter, and what order he follows in his sermon, let us follow it, and let us learn to know that as soon as God has done us some good, it is inasmuch as we are members of Jesus Christ, and not that He is moved to do it through our works, nor for anything we can present to Him. Therefore, let us wander no longer in our imaginations, to persuade ourselves of this or that, but let us

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come straight to the knowledge of our sins to take no pleasure in them; as we see that St. Peter leads the Jews to this when he treats of the death of Jesus Christ.

He accuses them in the first place, saying, "You have murdered Him." It is clearly seen that this is not to flatter them. In fact, St. Peter had to put that before them to prick them at the heart, and to wound them to the quick; as we shall see later that they had such compunction and bitterness of heart, that they were converted through it. By this means he had to catch the attention of the men to humble them and to lead them to the knowledge of their faults. For if one preaches to them always pleasant and delightful things, he will only make them gab about it, and they will wish to be companions of God, and to enjoy Him like a mortal man.

We see what happened to the Samaritan woman when she speaks to Jesus Christ and He offers her living water, of which if she drinks she will never thirst, she makes fun of Him like the harlot that she is; but after He leads her to the knowledge of her sin, telling her to go and get her husband, and He declares to her all her iniquity, she speaks more humbly than she did at the beginning. When He put before her simply the gifts of God, she made fun of Him: "And whence the container to draw water, seeing that the well is so deep?" But when He said to her, "You are an impure woman, you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband," then she recognized her sin and calls Jesus Christ a holy Prophet.

So then, until men are terrified by their sins, they will never give place to the Word of God. That is why St. Peter accuses the Jews of having crucified and slain Jesus Christ; not that he takes pleasure in casting upon them this reproach, but it is in order that they should know that their condemnation was

at hand for their sins; and on the other hand the absolution for these through Jesus Christ if they will recognize Him and address themselves to Him.

Now the ministers of the Word of God have here a norm: namely, that they ought to touch men to the quick, and show them their sins, in order that they may know that God is their Judge Who will not leave the obstinacy of sin unpunished; and by this means they will be drawn to Him in repentance, which they would not do at all unless they had been reprimanded and treated rudely. Therefore we must allow God to rule over us and to condemn us, in order to be absolved by Him.

There are many who would surely wish that the Gospel might be preached, provided that it might draw them to their profit and fleshly desire, and that it might be for them a cover for their villainies. Now it is not to this end that we must preach; for our Lord Jesus Christ says that, when the Holy Spirit will come, He will rebuke the world of sin; He will be seated as a Judge on His throne and He will judge the world. So then, we shall not be able to treat faithfully the Gospel so that the world may not be led into this condemnation, unless each one knows what he is in order to rebuke himself.

Therefore, may those who flatter themselves, groan; may those who are satisfied with themselves, be frightened; and may those who are persuaded that they are righteous in themselves, look at themselves more closely, in order that all may be led to this knowledge of sins by which we shall be led to repentance and consequently to the grace of God.

That is why St. Peter reprehends so rudely the Jews, saying that they have crucified and slain Jesus Christ. Then he adds, "Being delivered through the definite

counsel and foreknowledge of God." As if he had said, "Although He has been delivered by the hand of wicked men and you have put Him to death, yet that was not done without the will of God." Now it is not without cause that Peter adds this word, "Through the counsel and foreknowledge of God." For the Jews could at

least reply, "If it is thus that

Jesus Christ of Whom you speak to us is the Messiah, why has He suffered to be thus tormented and put to death?" And it is a very difficult thing to persuade them of, as we still see today that they mock and say, "If Jesus were the Son of God, why did He endure this opprobrium of the cross?" So

wicked men disgorge this blasphemy because the cross is an object which seems to them to take away from the majesty of the Son of God. Yet St. Peter anticipates such fancies, which could hinder the Jews from giving credence to his teaching. And he says that not any of this has been done through chance (as they might have supposed) but through the will of God. Now when we shall fully consider the power of God, we shall escape all such fancies. We know that God is not at all disproved by sense and by reason, and that all that which He did was proper for the salvation of men.

There is also the resurrection which we must diligently consider. For although the death of Jesus Christ could scandalize us, if we considered it all alone, because of the cruelty and shame of it, also we see in the resurrection a glory and an admirable power of God, which ought to turn us away from all the troubles and fancies which could scandalize us. It is not, then, without cause that St. Peter declares that what Jesus Christ endured was through the providence of God. Jesus Christ had to be the sacrifice offered to God His Father

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When, then, we see such a purpose to the counsel of God, that we may know that all He does is for our benefit, we ought no longer to inquire why Jesus Christ suffered, because in that we see the infinite goodness of God, we see His love which appeared to us (as St. Paul says) in that He spared not His own Son, but has delivered Him to death for us. We see on the other hand the obedience which Jesus Christ renders to God His Father. Yet let us not be so presumptuous as to enter into these foolish cogitations by saying, "Why has God done this or that?" We know that all that He has ordained is founded upon this fatherly love which He bore toward us. So then, in contemplating this, we see why Jesus Christ suffered. And that is the reason for which St. Peter said that God had determined this in His immutable counsel.

Besides, this was not just left to be done through the hands of wicked men. By which we see that the wicked may well be able to injure the good, but they will execute nothing unless God permits it. And even we have not any better mirror of all that than in the person of Jesus Christ. For we must know that all that He endured was predicted by the Prophets. It is said that He was put on the cross even as it was predicted. There are the brigands of Rome who crucify Him (that is, the officers who had been commissioned for the execution); it was thus prophesied. They give Him to drink a beverage very hard and bitter, they divide His clothing, and all that just as it was written. Briefly, nothing is done except what God had ordained. By this we see that wicked men can do nothing, except insofar as God unleashes the bridle upon them; as it is seen that these wicked men do not pass the limits which God has given them.

Now what is said of Jesus Christ, we must also properly apply to our use. For He Himself tes-

tified that little sparrows will not fall without His ordaining it. If, then, the providence of God is such that it extends to these little beastlets, it follows that nothing will happen unless God has ordained it. Then He adds that the hairs of our heads are numbered. By which He indicates the care which He has for us, and since we are members of Jesus Christ and we are near enough to touch Him, He wishes that we may know that He holds us for His children. For although this world may be, as it were, the house of God, and though He may be to it the Father of a family, yet He has His Church by special recommendation, and for her He has a special regard.

So then, we see how we must think of the providence of God: namely, that St. Peter did not wish at all to put forward fantastic things and then to seek a thousand subtleties which do not serve for any edification. He did not wish to proceed in such a way, but He shows that God has so well proved our salvation, that we must not seek other means than Him Whom He has given us. Then he wishes to indicate that we are in such wise in the hand of God and in His refuge, that one can do nothing against us except what He has determined. Otherwise what would our lot be? If we were led through chance (as fanatics consider) our condition would be more wretched than that of brute beasts. But when we know that God governs everything, it ought to be a great comfort to us, and we can well lean upon it. We see, then, that it is a very necessary virtue that we know the providence of God. Therefore we must consider that just as Jesus suffered nothing without Divine permission, so all that will happen to us comes from God. That is what we must note from this passage.

We must still further parse the word "Counsel." It is true that some will speak well of the providence of God, but they will have only a foolish notion of it; for they think that He is resting high in the sky, and yet He leaves chance or nature to rule here below. On the contrary it is here declared to us that God ordains everything and disposes of things just as it pleases Him. It is true that this is unfamiliar to us and we cannot comprehend it, but we must be content to know that He is the Governor of it, and we must not do at all like some dreamers who say, "And God knows what will happen, and we do not know how to put it in order; of what use to us, then, is His counsel and advice?" That,

then, is the reason that such fanatics wish to give to their dreams, which are such great arrogancies that God will not leave them unpunished. For although God does not call us by His strict counsel, to declare to us His will, and what He has deliberated to do, yet we must know that we are governed by His hand, and that the wicked will be able to do nothing against us, except insofar as God unleashes the bridle on them.

Yet He does not cease, therefore, to have an order in nature; and that is not to say that, as for us, we must not make use of His counsel. For God has declared to us that He wishes that we should live by the bread which He gives us to eat, and that we should be cured of illness by medicine. It would then, be too great a presumption, if we wished to reject the means which God gives us to remedy our infirmities. And he who thinks he will get ahead by means of such presumption—it will be to his ruin and confounding. For when we say that the providence of God proved all things, it is not, therefore, that we must reject the

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means which He gives us.

This is what we must note touching what can be alleged from this passage; not at all that we should go speculate and invent a thousand sophisticated questions like the Papists know how to put forward; but in all humility let us consider that not only did God foresee things, but He disposes of them according to His will. Therefore let us learn to commend ourselves to Him when we shall endure great assaults of Satan and of the world, of which he is called the prince. And when it seems to us that the wicked ought to crush us, let us withdraw under the wings of our God, in order that He may give us wherewith to resist, and that being armed by His power we may be able to repulse all temptations which could happen to us. For when all the devils and all the wicked will have raised themselves against us, He will surely know how to bridle them and hold them tightly, provided that we have recourse to Him, putting ourselves in His safeguard. That is how we must contemplate the providence of God by faith, and not according to our senses.

Now, concerning our having said that the wicked will execute nothing except what God has ordained, many would be able to reply, "Why? If that is so, we would have to say that God is the cause of evil, and that the wicked should be excused." Now to answer we must know in the first place what the will of God is, and even how He declares it to us in His Law. We know that He prohibits us from stealing. If I, then, go steal, for example, do I do His will? Certainly when the wicked are given to doing evil, it is not doing the will of God at all; for they well know that God reproves all that. When, then, they do evil, there is a resistance to the will of God. By which it follows that God

does not wish at all that they do evil, but He permits them to do it, and they are not at all excused thereby, inasmuch as they do it against His commandment.

We must not say that God is the cause of evil, for He does not commit the vices that we commit. As also we see that He checks the devil by punishing those who are deserving of it. The devil commits evil and has no other regard but to do evil, and yet God does not let him serve any other different purpose. God will permit a thief or a brigand to rob a good man of something, even though he will be faithful and living well. Why so? To prove the patience of the latter, and in order that it may be known.

We see what Job said in all his persecutions, "God had given it to me, God has taken it away from me, His name be blessed." And always he was pillaged by brigands. How does he understand that, then? Does Job accuse God of robbery? No. We must not understand it thus; for we know

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that the brigands are wicked men, and they come not only against the will of God, and in the intention of doing evil; but he looks higher, that this is not done without the providence of God. So then, Job does not attribute the evil deed to God, but he knows the condition of the men. He sees that the Chaldeans and the Sabeans are as it were, the scourges of God. They pillage him, they rob him, they kill his servants, they lead away his beasts; briefly, they completely impoverish him, and nevertheless he always praises God, knowing well that this would not be done without His ordaining it. Thus we must do; for if the wicked persecute us, we must not regard them alone, but our faith must fly higher: namely, to know that the providence of God is over them. That is how we must judge the matter, and not enter into frivo-

lous speculations about it.

Now we see that Jesus Christ was surely crucified by wicked men, and yet it was not done at all without God's having ordained it. But God surely used it for another purpose. The wicked men wished to destroy Jesus Christ, and God wished that His blood and His death should be a perpetual sacrifice, and that our redemption should be fulfilled and accomplished. So then, when we contemplate that, we have occasion to glorify God, and he who will come to a contrary conclusion is rebuked in his own conscience.

Now St. Peter says that Jesus was raised from the dead, to show that we must always join the resurrection of Jesus Christ with His death. For if we contemplate Him only in His death we shall see Him there entirely full of shame and opprobrium, and disfigured like a leper; but when we come to the resurrection, we see how He was exalted by the hand of God, Who has given Him all power in heaven and on earth. So then, as soon as we have said, "Jesus Christ has died," let us know also that He is raised. He is dead according to the weakness of the flesh, but in that He is raised, He appeared Son of God. That is what St. Peter wished to indicate by saying, "Whom God raised up, having loosened the pains of death."

Now in that he says the pains of death, he does not intend the pains of physical death which Jesus Christ suffered; but the horrible anguish in which He was, because He had to be our Pledge, and to bear the pain of all our sins. So then, He endured not only in the body, but also in the Spirit; yet it was not to be conquered by it.

But we shall not be able now to deduce what is needful to declare the meaning of the pains of death; therefore we shall reserve it for another time.

Following this holy teaching let us bow in humble reverence. □

More Light on Divorce and Remarriage: Matthew 19:9

From a reader in Virginia Beach, Virginia comes a request for more light on divorce and remarriage. The request is a response to my series on the subject in recent issues of the *Standard Bearer*: "The Sad Case of Bert Zandstra" (Nov. 1, 1997); "The Scandal and Silence" (Nov. 15, 1997); and "The Remarriage of the Guilty Party" (Dec. 1, 1997). The request for more light asks particularly about the Word of Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9.

Prof. Engelsma's otherwise excellent editorial series on divorce and remarriage left me in a bit of a logical quandary. Unless I am totally misreading Matthew 19:9, the "adultery" exception seems to relate directly to the phrase, "and marry another," in which case the Westminster Confession is correct in saying, "In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead" (WCF XXIV.V). On the other hand, Prof. Engelsma's view that adultery is ground only for "separation" does not seem to take into account the phrase, "and marry another." However (and this is my quandary), both I Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:3 clearly imply that the death of a spouse is the only ground for remarriage.

The trouble that I have (and I am greatly troubled by all of this) is that these passages seem to present a contradiction. On the one hand, divorce and remarriage are apparently permissible in the

case of adultery. On the other hand, the only ground for remarriage is the death of a spouse. While Prof. Engelsma's arguments against divorce in the case of adultery are compelling, particularly in light of our adulteries against our Lord, I am still not clear on how he would exegete Matthew 19:9. Either Engelsma is correct and the WCF is wrong on this count (notice: I did not even ask about the "not under bondage" phrase in I Corinthians 7:15!), or the WCF is correct and Engelsma is imposing extra-biblical restrictions on divorce and remarriage. However, if the WCF is correct, I still have difficulty with I Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:3.

I certainly do not want to give any credence to the Christian Reformed and Van Tilian camps which so eagerly embrace the "paradoxes of Scripture."

I do not know whether this warrants one more editorial, but if the *Standard Bearer* can shed any more light on this subject, I will appreciate it.

Sean Gerety
Virginia Beach, VA

Does Scripture Then Contradict Scripture?

There is one text in the Bible that might seem to approve remarriage after divorce. One text! If understood as approving remarriage, this text would approve the remarriage only of the "innocent party," that is, the married person whose wife (or husband) has fornicated. All other remarriages are forbidden as adultery.

This one text is Matthew 19:9:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Against the seeming approval of the remarriage of the "innocent party" in Matthew 19:9 stand a number of texts that clearly forbid all remarriage after divorce, regardless of the ground for the divorce. These passages condemn all remarriage after divorce as adultery.

Mark 10:11, 12: And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18: Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

I Corinthians 7:10, 11: And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

I Corinthians 7:39: The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

Romans 7:2, 3: For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

The prohibition of remarriage in these passages is absolute.

Romans 7:2, 3 and I Corinthians 7:39 ground the absolute prohibition in the nature of marriage as a lifelong bond by virtue of God's sovereign ordination as Creator and Governor of this world.

One text apparently conflicts with this absolute prohibition of remarriage by a seeming approval of the remarriage of the "innocent party."

If Matthew 19:9 does, in fact, permit the remarriage of the "innocent party," it flatly contradicts Scripture's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the passages quoted above, especially I Corinthians 7:39.

Westminster's Admission of Contradiction

Even though it adopts the position that Matthew 19:9 permits the remarriage of the "innocent party," the Westminster Confession of Faith really admits that permission of the remarriage of the "innocent party," and, therefore, Matthew 19:9 (as the Westminster divines explained it), contradicts I Corinthians 7:39. It makes this admission when, having said, "in the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, and, after the divorce, to marry another," it adds: "*as if the offending party were dead.*" The delegates to the Westminster Assembly recognized that their permission of the remarriage of the "innocent party," supposedly on

the basis of Matthew 19:9, contradicted the rule of I Corinthians 7:39 that only death dissolves the marriage bond so that a married person is set at liberty to marry another. Therefore, the Westminster divines felt it necessary to concoct the strange, startling, and obviously false decree that adultery effectively renders the adulterer—the "guilty party"—dead in the sense of I Corinthians 7:39. Thus, they attempted to bring Matthew 19:9 (as they explained it) into conformity with I Corinthians 7:39.

The trouble with this is that I Corinthians 7:39 is not referring to a fictitious, virtual, "as if," unreal death. The apostle does not say, "but if she or someone else decides to regard her husband as dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will." The death in I Corinthians 7:39 that alone dissolves the marriage bond so that a married person may marry another is real, actual physical death—death that breaks all earthly ties, death that puts the man's body (that otherwise belongs in bed with his wife) in the grave.

The explanation of Matthew 19:9 that permits the "innocent party" to remarry contradicts I Corinthians 7:39. In this case, Scripture contradicts Scripture.

Is Matthew 19:9 Self-Contradictory?

Matters are even worse. If Matthew 19:9 permits the remarriage of the "innocent party," the text is *self-contradictory*. Intending to forbid the remarriage, among others, of the "guilty party" as adultery (this is what the text expressly teaches), the text actually *opens the door* to the remarriage of the "guilty party." It does this exactly by permitting the remarriage of the "innocent party." For if the "innocent party" may remarry, it must be the case that the marriage bond between the "innocent party" and the "guilty party" is dissolved. But if the marriage is dissolved, presumably by the adultery of the

"guilty party," it is dissolved for the "guilty party" as well as the "innocent party." And if there is no marriage, the "guilty party" has every right to remarry. Being unmarried, he is at liberty to marry (again).

Thus, Matthew 19:9 contradicts *itself* and plunges the matter of divorce and remarriage into utter confusion and chaos.

The Harmony of Matthew 19:9 with All Scripture

In reality, there is no contradiction between Matthew 19:9, on the one hand, and all the texts prohibiting remarriage, on the other hand. Matthew 19:9 merely *seems* to approve the remarriage of the "innocent party." To say it more accurately, the approval of the remarriage of the "innocent party" is an inference that some erroneously draw from Matthew 19:9.

The meaning of Matthew 19:9 is that all divorce except that due to the sexual unfaithfulness of one's mate is forbidden. In keeping with the Pharisees' question in verse 3, the main subject of the passage is the legitimacy of divorce. The phrase, "except it be for fornication," gives the one biblical exception to the prohibition of divorce. It does not give an exception to the prohibition of remarriage. To say it differently, the words, "except it be for fornication," give the one biblical ground for divorcing one's wife (or husband). They do not give a biblical ground for remarriage after divorce.

Christ does mention remarriage in the text. He mentions this because almost always the man who divorces his wife either intends to marry another woman or will eventually marry another.

What about remarriage after divorce? What about the permissibility of remarriage after divorce in Matthew 19:9?

There is no question about the remarriage of the man who divorces his wife unjustly, that is, the

man whose wife has not been guilty of fornication. Jesus states, indeed it is His main purpose with the text to state, that he commits adultery when he remarries.

But what about the remarriage of the man who divorces his wife on the ground of her fornication? What about the remarriage of the "innocent party" in Matthew 19:9?

If Matthew 19:9 concluded in the middle of the text, concluded, that is, with the words, ". . . and shall marry another, committeth adultery," there might be some excuse for uncertainty whether this text permits the remarriage of the "innocent party." Even then, the church would have to take into account the clear, explicit teaching of Scripture elsewhere that all remarriage after divorce is prohibited. Scripture interprets Scripture. The

doubtful passage must be explained in light of the clearer passages.

But Matthew 19:9 does not end in the middle. There is a second part: "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." "Her" is the woman of the first part of the text who has been divorced unjustly and whose husband then married another, committing adultery. She is the "innocent party." Nevertheless, whoever marries her commits adultery. Of course, she too commits adultery, if she remarries.

Matthew 19:9 condemns the remarriage of the "innocent party" as adultery.

Why?

Because the wife (or husband) is bound by the law to her husband (or his wife) as long as her husband (or his wife) lives. Only

death dissolves the bond. Adultery does not dissolve the marriage bond. Emphatically, adultery does not have the power to dissolve the marriage bond.

Matthew 19:9 is in perfect harmony with all of Scripture in the vitally important matter of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Divorce is permitted on the ground of fornication.

All remarriage after divorce is forbidden as adultery, including the remarriage of the "innocent party."

The reason is that God's honorable ordinance of marriage is a lifelong, indissoluble bond.

Let the saints practice it.

Let the church proclaim it.

And defend it with discipline.

□

— DJE

Letters

■ Timely Issue on Worship

My compliments to all the contributors to the January 15, 1998 special issue of the *Standard Bearer*. I found this issue to be quite instructive and thorough. As you mentioned in that issue, the subject of "Reformed Worship" is a very timely topic. It is also one that perhaps even the Protestant Reformed denomination doesn't emphasize enough. Our churches have been blessed with a long history of Reformed, scriptural worship services, and it's easy to forget that this is not simply the result of tradition. As each new generation arises, we need to be constantly reminded of what the true worship of God consists. Thanks to all the writers for doing exactly that.

Mike Potjer
Jenison, MI

■ Born of a Woman

I am writing about the article by Rev. C. Hanko, "Mary the Mother of Our Savior" (*Standard Bearer*, Dec. 15, 1997). Rev. Hanko

seems to present two different concepts concerning the doctrine of the incarnation: 1) the body of the Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit; 2) the conception was not a complete, single act of the Holy Spirit, but was an act of the Holy Spirit and Mary. Mary's ovary produced the ovum, and the Holy Spirit provided the sperm or semen to complete the act of conception.

I have these questions.

Rev. Hanko wrote, "The triune God in His Son joined Himself with us by implanting the seed of life in the virgin." Is Rev. Hanko speaking about the spiritual seed as fulfillment of the Messianic promise or of a natural seed as of Adam, Abraham, David, and us?

What scriptural evidence is there to support the statement, "The Holy Spirit laid the sperm of life in Mary. By the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit *this seed* developed into an embryo and a fetus and into a fully developed child"? Yes, the blood of Mary nourished the child, but is it implied here that Mary's ovary pro-

duction, her ovum, was needed or used by the Holy Spirit to complete the conception? Was Mary's ovum then part of the conception? No! Matthew 1:28 and Luke 1:32 do not even hint in that direction. Christ's body was not made as a man like one of us, but in the *likeness* of men (Phil. 2:7); the Word was made flesh (John 1:14); "a body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). God did not send His own Son in sinful flesh as a son of Mary, but sent His own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:20).

Scripture speaks of Jesus as born *of*, never born *from*, a woman. If the truth is so profound, beyond human comprehension, why delve deeper and try to explain that which has not been revealed?

The conception of Jesus was not 50%, but 100% the work of the triune God.

If, as Rev. Hanko wrote, Jesus was "like unto us in all respects except one," was Jesus then like unto us in having a human person,

as well as having a human body and a human soul? Was He a human being? Would you explain this in light of the doctrine of the Trinity?

Rev. Hanko also wrote: "He was without guilt since He had no human father." If Jesus was the offspring of Mary, can He be without guilt? Or are you implying that sin only comes through the father and not through the mother?

Our forefathers and the ancient church fought many wrong teachings and laid down in the confessions what Scripture teaches. We have the Apostles' Creed that states, "Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary." The Nicene Creed states, "and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost," meaning that Jesus was incarnate—endowed with human body, to give bodily form to. Do we need to add to this? May we add to this?

Audrey Mostert
Surrey, BC, Canada

Response:

The writer objects rather vehemently to the statement that the ovum of Mary was used by the Holy Spirit to complete the conception of Jesus. She states that "Christ's body was not made as a man like one of us, but in the likeness of men," etc. This is the error of the Anabaptists.

Our fathers declared in the Belgic Confession, Art. 18, "Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of his mother) that Christ is become a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children; that he is a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh; made of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary, made of a woman, a branch of David; a shoot of the root of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since he took on him the seed of Abraham, and became like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted, so that in truth he is our *Immanuel*, that is to say, God with us."

This is confirmed by such passages of Scripture as Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

Also Acts 3:22: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

Romans 1:3: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh."

See also: Luke 3:23-28; Galatians 3:16; Isaiah 9:6.

The writer wonders whether I believe that Christ had a human person. No, I do not, nor did I state that in my article. Christ is the person of the Son of God who took on our human nature, both as to body and soul. This is taught in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 14, question 35: "What is the meaning of these words—'He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary'? That God's eternal Son, who is, and continueth true and eternal God, took upon him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; that he might also be the true seed of David, like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted."

She apparently believes that her view protects Christ from original guilt. She rejects the idea that the guilt of Adam was transmitted along the line of generations through the father. The Scriptures teach that Christ did not participate personally in either the guilt or the sin of Adam. He was kept from both by the miraculous conception worked by the Holy Spirit without a human father. "For he hath made him to become sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

—Rev. C. Hanko

The Reader Asks

Polygamy in the Old Testament

King David is called a man after God's heart, and we know that he sinned grievously in the adultery with Bathsheba. But how can the number of wives and concubines that he had be justified in the light of God desiring one man and one woman to be the basic family unit?

(Dr.) Julian Kennedy
Bournemouth, England

Response:

Polygamy on the part of the saints in the Old Testament, such as King David, cannot be "justified." It was a deviation from the Word of God governing marriage that had been clearly revealed at creation: one man and one woman for life (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-16).

But it was a departure from the law of chastity that was of a different order than adultery. David's polygamy was tolerated as his

adultery with Bathsheba was not.

Although there was a certain tolerance of the saints' polygamy in the Old Testament, God did judge the evil in their lives. He judged it by the miseries in their family life that were the consequences of the evil, e.g., the strife in the families of Jacob and of David.

There is a difference in this matter of polygamy between the age of the old covenant and the age of the new. Under the old cov-

enant, the saints were immature children, living, comparatively, in shadowy darkness, particularly as

regards marriage. Now, in the gospel of the glorified Jesus Christ, the full light has shined upon a grown-

up church, particularly as regards marriage. □

—Ed. Committee

In Memoriam

Rev. Barry Gritters

The Reverend John A. Heys

In the early darkness of Monday, February 16, 1998, the Lord took a faithful servant to his eternal reward. Rev. Heys died peacefully after an 11-month stay in Hudsonville Christian Nursing Home where he was living because of complications from a stroke and pneumonia. Rev. Heys would have turned 88 on March 16.

By God's grace, Rev. Heys labored so that he could hear God say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Rev. Heys is survived by his dear wife, Esther (VanBaren); three children: Ardess and Burton VanProoyen, John and Sandy Heys, and Joyce and Sid Niemeyer; and their grandchildren.

John A. Heys was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on March 16, 1910, to Mr. and Mrs. John and Minnie Heys. John was one of five sons. His father was a carpenter, born in the Netherlands. Minnie was born in Pella, Iowa.

He went to Baxter Street Christian School, and Grand Rapids Christian High School, where he graduated in 1928. From there, John worked at a furniture factory. One wintry day when he was shoveling snow at First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, he encountered the Rev. Herman

Hoeksema. When HH asked him what he hoped to do, he said that he was thinking about being a teacher. Hoeksema is reported to have asked, "Why not become the ultimate teacher?" John took the suggestion, studied in the seminary under the tutelage of HH, and began his public ministry of the Word and sacraments in Hope PRC, Walker, in October of 1941.

Two months before his installation at Hope, Rev. Heys married Esther VanBaren. On August 20 last year, Rev. and Mrs. Heys celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary.

Hope PRC was his first charge. He remained there for 14 years, until 1955. From there, the Heys family moved with their three children to Hull, Iowa, where he served until 1959. Next the Lord led them to the hometown of Mrs. Heys, South Holland, Illinois, where he remained for 8 years. In 1967, the moving van went back to Michigan, this time to Holland PRC where Rev. Heys served for 13 more years until retirement in 1980. During this pastorate, Rev. Heys experienced severe heart problems, which led some to doubt that he would live to an old age. But the Lord spared Rev. Heys, enabling him even in his retirement years to be active for more than a decade longer in preaching, teaching catechism, and writing.

Rev. Heys' love for music is well known to the PRC member-

ship. Every child who knows the *Psalter* has noticed that the two musical arrangements of the Lord's Prayer (Psalter numbers 433 and 434) were both by Rev. Heys. An accomplished organist, Rev. Heys played the large organ at First PRC before he became a pastor. One of our older members in Hudsonville remembers taking lessons from the young musician.

A musician. An artist. A photographer. First of all, a pastor and preacher.

In the early 50s, Rev. Heys was asked to teach a course in the seminary in Homiletics, the art of constructing a sermon. One of our older ministers related his memory of Rev. Heys. "When the minister makes a sermon," Rev. Heys would say, "he must put a cross at the top of the outline, to remind him that Christ must be central in every sermon."

As a pastor, Rev. Heys loved children. The glorious truth of the covenant of grace, established with us and our children, gripped him, as it should every Reformed pastor. So it's not surprising that he was instrumental in the beginnings of both Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School in Walker, Michigan and the South Holland Protestant Reformed School in Illinois.

One of God's great gifts to Rev. Heys was the ability to make the Old Testament historical narrative come alive for the people of God. Rev. Heys' sermons were like his

Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Standard Bearer articles—colorful and easy to follow. One of the sermons he preached in Byron Center in his last years of preaching was from Jeremiah 48, where Jehovah warns that Moab has been at ease from his youth, has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied “from vessel to vessel.” The remarks of the members, for a long time after that sermon was preached, were evidence of their appreciation for Rev. Heys’ ability to turn a phrase and to make clear and interesting even a seemingly obscure passage such as that.

For many years he wrote articles for the *Standard Bearer*, especially in the rubric, “The Day of Shadows.” No one who read them will forget his memorable titles. “A Nameless and Shoeless Kinsman.” “The Viper’s Brood Strikes.” “Shameless Nakedness.” His love for the Old Testament brought forth a little commentary on the book of Ruth, a worthwhile addition to the library of anyone studying that book.

Probably the most lasting contribution of Rev. Heys’ pen are the brief devotionals he wrote, at the request of the Hudsonville Men’s Society (and still available from them): *Daily Meditations for Spiritual Comfort* and *Daily Devotions from the Psalms*. These meditations—one for each day of the year—are a brief Reformed explanation of the Word of God, similar to Spurgeon’s “Morning and Evening.” Many sets of these meditations have made their way across the continent and around the world.

A perennial delegate to synod, and many times its president (I stopped counting at five as I went backwards through the Acts), Rev. Heys was a servant of the churches, the denomination. Often he served the churches as classical church visitor, sometimes traveling by train to reach the distant churches. His colleague on many of these trips said that Rev. Heys always knew the schedule of every train

heading west. In this way, too, all the churches came to know and love Rev. Heys.

While Rev. Heys served the churches in the states, those churches shared his heart with God’s people in other lands. Our visits in his last years would bring out stories of his work in Jamaica and New Zealand. Both of these mission fields were dear to him; he was deeply saddened when the Jamaica mission field was closed. At least nine times he traveled to the Caribbean to help the mission work in Jamaica. One “Mission Contribution” he wrote in 1974 shows his love for the people and the work there. “Beautiful Feet Upon the Jamaican Mountains” relates his joy at the ordination of four young Jamaicans who had been trained by then Missionary Rev. George Lubbers.

What a day it was! I could not help but wish that my congregation (Holland PRC), which so graciously and often has allowed me to go to Jamaica (five times in seven years) could have been there to feel the enthusiasm of these young men, to enjoy their preaching which seemed to come out of their hearts, and to hear these of another race speaking the same glorious truth (and with such conviction) that we hear from Sabbath to Sabbath in our churches.

That trip was in 1974, with Rev. C. Hanko. Nine years earlier he had first gone to Jamaica with Elder Harry Zwak.

On the floor of the Heys home lies a sheepskin from New Zealand, another land that captured the heart of Rev. and Mrs. Heys. On at least three separate occasions, Rev. and Mrs. Heys traveled to the saints in New Zealand to minister to them. Mrs. Heys speaks of the great joy they had in working with the congregation in Wellington. With the love of a missionary heart, Mrs. Heys related: “This small group was strong in the faith and was very active in the study of

God’s Word.”

Sometimes little things stick in the memory. The bow tie. The puns. The plays on words. His unique sense of humor. “How are you feeling, today, Rev. Heys?” the nurses would ask. “With my hands, as usual,” he would respond. Two elders in Hudsonville congregation, both former members of Hull PRC, recall Saturday mornings when their minister would come to the basement of Hull church to heat the church for catechism. Dressed in his swallow-tailed black suit, Rev. Heys scooped the coal into the pot-bellied stove and then went about teaching the Word. Nor do they forget that—the Word. Who can forget his reminder that Easter is properly called “resurrection Sunday”? Or his instruction that we are not to pray for our sins to be “blotted out,” since Christ did that on the cross? The Lord used him in each of his pastorates to make a mark on many individuals. Rev. Heys’ ministry was effective but, to use his words, always and only because of the blessing of God.

One of the last sermons Rev. Heys preached (those who attended his funeral will forgive me for repeating this) was on Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.” The wonderful truth of God’s particular care, of His loving care, of His all-encompassing care, of His perfectly wise care, for all His children, was embedded on the brother’s mind. When I would visit him and Mrs. Heys and make mention of the difficulties of old age, the sorrows of physical deterioration, the struggles of earthly life, Rev. Heys would never fail to remind me, in his kind way, “But you know that all things work together for good!” What a text to let rule our lives.

If old age sometimes magnifies our faults and weaknesses, the Lord was merciful to Rev. Heys.

From the time I became his pastor, until early last Monday morning just hours before he died when he broke into a smile in response to the gospel the last time, the brother's kindness and quiet spirit made it a joy to minister to him in

his needs.

In his later years, Rev. Heys would have fun reminding me that his name was Heys (with an H,) and that he had served in Hope, Hull, South Holland, Holland, and now was a resident in Hudsonville. Another man who once heard him

explain this responded, "and your next will be Heaven." How appropriate.

May God continue to give our churches men who give themselves for the great gospel ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 9

The Setting of the Stage of History

God's Temporal Judgments

We must next consider the Lord's pronouncements immediately after the first announcement of the promise, as these are recorded in Genesis 3:16-19:

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

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

There is an important question that must be answered in connection with these verses. It is this: what is the idea, the significance, of the judgments which God pronounces in these verses?

Not infrequently these judgments are merely considered as punishments for sin in general. Scripture teaches, however, that the true punishment for sin is death in the full sense of the word, death in all its implications. It is clear from a simple reading of this passage that the full punishment of death is hardly embodied in these judgments which the Lord pronounced immediately after the announcement of the promise. What we find in these verses is the pronouncement of temporal judgments, judgments which affect man's earthly and natural existence and the creation round about him.

The question is, therefore, more particularly: what is the significance of these *temporal* judgments which are pronounced?

This question may be put negatively as follows: why were things not immediately destroyed after sin had become a fact? We intentionally phrased the question in this way because there are those who

like to emphasize this negative aspect for a special reason, meanwhile ignoring the fact of God's judgments. This is due, they claim, to a certain common grace of God. This view has it that even though a man should be lost forever, yet it is a matter of the favor of God upon him that he may live in this world the brief span of his earthly existence and that the creation was not immediately destroyed. God's common grace, they say, *spared* all things.

It is but a step from this position to another position very commonly held by some, namely, that God did not immediately destroy all things in order to give man a *chance* to repent.

Scripture teaches, however, that God's dealings with men are neither a matter of common grace nor a matter of chances. There are two glaring errors in both these views. The first is that this presentation of a kind of divine sparing of all things is but a half-fact. It ignores the important fact that although the Lord did not immediately destroy all things, He did something *positive*. First of all, the Lord had already made known the promise, according to Genesis 3:15.

Secondly, the correct biblical presentation is not merely that God spared things, but that He pronounced judgments upon all things. These judgments are quite a different matter from a common favor of God. The second glaring error in these presentations is the fact that God had His sovereign counsel and that it is only and always according to that sovereign counsel and purpose of the Lord our God that all things take place.

It is in this light, therefore, that the question must be answered: what is the significance of these temporal judgments after the fall and after the revelation of the promise?

Then we must remember, first of all, that the first creation did not represent God's final purpose, but that according to God's counsel the end of all things was the kingdom of glory and the perfection of His covenant in Christ Jesus and, in Him, with His elect people in the new creation. In the second place, it was not apart from and contrary to God's counsel and eternal purpose, but according to it that man, the king of the earthly creation, fell in willful disobedience and sin. For, in the third place, God had determined to reach that end of the kingdom of glory and the perfection of His covenant in Christ Jesus along the deep way of sin and death, on the one hand, and of grace and resurrection, on the other hand.

Now what is the meaning and the effect of all this upon God's dealings after the fall?

In the first place, it is certainly true that God by the almighty and everywhere present power of His providence keeps all things that He has created in existence. He sustains and upholds them by the Word of His power. He also sovereignly causes them to develop, and that, too, in all their inter-relationships. But this is not all. In the second place, according to that same eternal purpose and in harmony with the changed condition

of man, God now changes all of earthly existence, so that it might become the proper stage for the realization of His purpose in Christ Jesus and along the lines of election and reprobation. Hence, while God indeed providentially keeps all things in existence, that existence is changed. While, according to God's providence, all things develop, they develop from now on *under the influence of the curse*. But they do so, positively speaking, in order that this cursed world may serve as the scene, the stage, for the manifestation of the wonder of God's grace in Christ, whereby all things will be renewed and glorified. The "sorrow and conception" of the woman, her desire being to her husband and his rule over her, the curse on the ground, the bondage of corruption and the vanity to which the whole creation is made subject, the toil of man, temporal death—all these belong to the proper setting of the stage for the realization of God's purpose.

If you would speak of anything that is *common* in all this, then it must be noted that the temporal suffering, the toil and labor, the vanity and the temporal death which are the result of these pronouncements of God—these indeed are common to all men. Yet, while they are manifestations of wrath for the ungodly, they are not punishments for the elect, for God's people in Christ Jesus. For He bore all our punishments, and there is no wrath for God's people. All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose.

Now let us turn to the details of this passage and try to see how all this applies with respect to the text and how it is all worked out with respect to Adam and Eve personally also.

We may notice immediately that God curses the serpent, and He also pronounces His curse upon the ground. But He does not curse Adam and Eve. Notice carefully that this is literally true. To the

serpent God said, according to verse 14: "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field." According to verse 17, in addressing Adam, the Lord says: "...cursed is the ground for thy sake...." Yet we never read that God says in so many words to Adam or to Eve, "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou." We may ask the question: why?

The reason is to be found in the fact that though the curse is to operate in their natural life, that is, though they also, as well as all mankind, are to experience the effects of the curse, the effects of the operation of the wrath of God, in their natural existence, yet essentially that wrath of God was not upon them personally. They were blessed, and they were already saved from sin and death principally. They had the promise of the final victory and the final salvation. This indeed did not mean, as we shall see later in detail, that they were immediately free from the effects of the outpouring of God's wrath in creation round about them and upon human existence. On the contrary, they also would temporally, and in their natural, earthly existence, experience these effects. But the *meaning*, the deep significance, of those temporal judgments, also of those judgments which directly affected their own existence, the woman's great sorrow and conception and the man's toil and sweat—that meaning had been fundamentally changed through God's Word of promise. Though in themselves, indeed, by virtue of God's own Word in the probationary command, they were lost and alienated from God, and though in themselves they must needs be the object of God's curse, all this had been fundamentally changed for them by God's promise.

Let us clearly understand this.

All the temporal judgments mentioned in this passage must needs be seen in the context of the

protevangel: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Word of God, though addressed to the tempter, was at the same time the Word of God's promise, of His blessing, of His favor, for Adam and Eve and for all the seed of the woman. For that Word proclaimed enmity, spiritual enmity, between the woman and the serpent, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And just as surely that Word meant the implanting of the love of God in their hearts, that love which would be manifest in enmity against the enemies of God. Lost in themselves, Adam and Eve were immediately rescued by the power of sovereign grace. They were regenerated. In the light of the promise, therefore, they could not be cursed. In the light of God's Word of blessing, His Word of salvation, it was fundamentally impossible that they should ever hear the Word of His curse again. For the two, blessing and cursing, are opposites, diametrical opposites.

God's blessing is the powerful Word of His favor, the Word of His grace, rooted in everlasting life, proceeding to the creature and making that creature exactly what His Word says, "blessed." It makes that creature the heir of eternal life and causes all things to be in his favor and to serve the purpose of his everlasting salvation and bliss. That Word of God's blessing makes a man inexpressibly happy, even in the midst of trouble and sorrow, for he has the assurance that God averts all evil or turns it to his profit.

The Word of God's curse is the very opposite. It is the efficacious Word of the God who speaks and it is done, who commands and it

stands fast. But it is the Word of His *wrath*, rooted in His divine hatred. The curse proceeds from God's wrath, that wrath which is the perfect and constant reaction of His infinite holiness against all that stands opposed to Him. That attitude of wrath does not merely burn within God toward its object, but it *operates*. It proceeds from God in the Word of His curse upon its object. The sinner stands over against God. God in His wrath toward that sinner presses him away, operates against him. What is the result? Inexpressible misery, death. The result is to live apart from God, to have God—God who is really *God*—against you. If God is against you, all things are against you, and the end is destruction. Nothing is more inexorably dreadful than that, and nothing is more inescapable. The Word of God's curse penetrates its object, pursues it, haunts it, surrounds it, destroys it!

In that Word of His curse God maintains Himself and maintains His covenant. Man violated that covenant. He turned traitor, allying himself with the devil. He proposed to live apart from God, without God, and to make God a liar. But God is the sovereign of heaven and earth, and He is His own party. As such, in His perfect righteousness and holiness He maintains Himself and His cause over against the creature that opposes Him and exalts itself against Him. The negative result of God's maintaining His covenant is the curse on that which separates itself from Him.

The devil is cursed. The whole creation as it is fallen in man, its king, is cursed. All mankind, in itself and apart from Christ, must also needs be cursed.

But in sovereign grace God had made exception, according to His

everlasting purpose of election. That exception is the woman and her spiritual seed, the elect in Christ Jesus, in whose hearts God works enmity against the devil and love toward Himself. They, therefore, are blessed, eternally blessed. Toward them the Word of His curse does not and cannot proceed, for His own name's sake.

That explains why in all these temporal judgments there is no word of God's curse for Adam and Eve. The same is true for all the seed of the woman, through and in the Great Seed of the woman, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us remember that all this is very important with respect to the meaning of life, with respect to the question whether life is worth living, both for the seed of the woman and for the seed of the serpent. Bear in mind that the question whether life is worth living, since the fall and since the promise of salvation, cannot be answered without further qualifications. It all depends upon who asks it and who answers it, and what meaning is put into it.

Does a man mean by this question: Is just this present life, without any prospect, worth living? Does he ask this question as a materialist? Is this life, of which dust is the end, worth living? Then the answer of Scripture is definitely *No*. Even if there were nothing else, nothing after this present existence, this life in itself is not worth living. Its end, then, is vanity, and its present experience is nothing but the wrath of Almighty God, inescapable wrath. The best of it is labor and sorrow. Does a man mean: Is life worth living for the man who goes to hell hereafter? Then the answer of Scripture is plain: don't be a fool! Is there any pleasure in a boat ride at breakneck speed over the Niagara Falls to certain destruction? Is there any worth in a life in which God sets a man in slippery places and casts him down to destruction (Ps. 73:18)? Is there any joy in be-

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ing born and in developing for an eternity of sorrow? What shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Or does a man mean: Is a life

that is destined for eternal glory in God's everlasting tabernacle worth living? Then the answer of Scripture is: Yes, emphatically yes! Life with all its trouble and toil and sorrows and death is worth living.

For the glory is great, and all that belongs to this present existence, appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, is subservient to the attainment of that glory, in Christ Jesus, out of sovereign mercy. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

Cross & Double-cross!

(John 13:18-38)

It is well that we recall the setting. Jesus and the disciples are in an upper room in Jerusalem (Mark 14:12-16). They are keeping the Passover (Matt. 26:18ff.). Of the exact order of events at this time it is difficult to be sure. We suggest the order that Hendriksen does, whom we quote:

1. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and explains to them that he has given them an example to be followed (John 13:1-20).
2. He startles the disciples by telling them that one of their own number is going to betray him. Judas leaves (13:21-30).
3. He issues his "new commandment" and predicts Peter's denial (13:31-38).
4. He institutes the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; I Cor. 11:23-26). This important event, having been fully covered by the Synoptists and by Paul, John does not repeat.
5. He tenderly instructs his disciples and commits them to the Father's care (Farewell Discourse and Highpriestly Prayer, chapters 14-17 of John's Gospel)" (NT Commentary, John, vol. 2, p. 241).

In this passage before us (13:18-

38) is the announcement and revelation of the betrayer, Judas Iscariot. There is also the prediction by Jesus of the betrayal, of a sort, by His own disciples. For all will be offended because of Him this night (Matt. 26:31). And Peter, who boasts so of his allegiance, will deny the Savior three times (John 13:36-38).

The amazing thing about this history is how it all *serves* to fulfill the sovereign good pleasure of God. What is that good pleasure of God? That Jesus go to the cross!

Though He be double-crossed, and abandoned, and denied—*through* His being double-crossed, abandoned, and denied—Jesus will go to the cross!

See here: Jesus, Lord over the double-cross! See here: Jesus, gracious, tender, longsuffering Pastor of sheep who will be scattered, and even deny Him! Jesus: *showing* this all in spite of and through such treachery and little faith!

Another glimpse, this, into the heart of God! Into gospel. Into grace.

For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

1. Revealing the traitor in order to work faith in the true disciples (vv. 18, 19).

Jesus had spoken of the necessity of His disciples being washed by Him, and the necessity of their washing each other's feet (vv. 10-17). He says now that He had not been speaking of all the disciples. That is, not all would be washed by Him, not all will serve Him.

Our Savior is speaking here, obviously, of the traitor Judas Iscariot. He had hinted at this earlier (John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2,10). Now He will hint again. He says: *I speak not of you all. I know whom I have*

chosen. That is: Jesus knew Judas when He chose even him to be in His company and to be one of the twelve disciples. He chose Judas, in fact, that the scripture might be fulfilled that the Christ should be betrayed (v. 18).

What scripture was fulfilled? What in the Old Testament is a *type* of Judas' betrayal of Jesus? How will Jesus' telling of His prior knowledge of the betrayal encourage the faith of the disciples when the deed is done (v. 19)?

2. Senders and Sent (v. 20).

Jesus speaks here, emphatically

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(Verily, verily!), of a very close connection between the triune God and Christ and Christ's ministers of the Word: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me!"

What does this text say of Jesus? What does it say of ambassadors of Jesus—apostles then, and preachers today (cf. Matt. 10:40)? In light of this, what ought our response be to faithful preachers?

3. One of you shall betray me (vv. 21-30).

Jesus, at the thought of the betrayal, and no doubt of that suffering and cross to come, was troubled in spirit (v. 21). According to the Greek word, this meant Jesus was agitated, disquieted, struck with dread. According to our finite minds we are at a loss to explain how Jesus, Son of God, can be troubled! But troubled He was! Troubled in His human nature, which is like unto ours in all things, sin excepted. Troubled that one of His own familiar friends, one who ate with Him (cf. Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21), would be so dastardly as to betray Him. Troubled in this present hour of darkness, knowing that even His true disciples would abandon Him (13: 36-38). Troubled especially at the prospect of experiencing being forsaken by His heavenly Father (Matt. 27:46)!

"Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Upon this further announcement of betrayal the disciples themselves became troubled. We read in verse 22 that the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spoke. They were exceeding sorrowful at this (Matt. 26:22). Each began to say unto Jesus, "Lord, is it I?" Even Judas asks, "Master, is it I" (Matt. 26:25)?

What is the difference between the questions of the true disciples, and the question of Judas?

Simon Peter cannot take the suspense. He wants to know right away who it is of whom Jesus

speaks. Peter asks the disciple whom Jesus loved (v. 23), who was leaning, we are told, on Jesus' bosom as they all reclined around the table as was the custom in those days at special meals.

This disciple whom Jesus loved was John himself (cf. John 19:26,27; 20:2-9; 21:1, 20-23; 21:24,25). Does this mean that Jesus loved John more than the others? Why does John not mention his own name?

John, probably leaning back, asks Jesus with quiet confidence: "Lord, who is it?" (v. 25). Then Jesus tells that it is the one to whom He shall give the sop, or morsel of bread or meat, after He has dipped it (perhaps in the mixture of bitter herbs and/or a sauce made of fruit and other things).

It is Judas Iscariot! He is the one to whom Jesus gives the sop (v. 26)! John, thus, now knows, and Jesus had all along. Perhaps Peter found out too, that it was Judas, though we are not told.

4. Satan and the Sovereign (vv. 27-30).

After Judas had taken the sop, Satan entered into Judas (v. 27). The devil has already been directing the heart of Judas (13:2). Now he will possess him! The devil, diabolic one! Here called *Satan*, adversary! Arch-opponent of God, Christ, and the church! Now indwelling a son of perdition who has given himself wholeheartedly to the devil's work. Now seeking to perform the most devilish deed since the time he had occasioned the fall of man: he will seek to fell the Son of man!

But wait! Just who is in control here? Jesus! "That thou doest, do quickly!" (v. 27). Jesus reveals the betrayer, exposes the plot. He compels Judas to go and bring the Jewish leaders and their henchmen in for the kill. He orders him to be quick about it, even quicker than he would have liked. For Judas and the Jews did not want to do their wickedness to Jesus on the Passover, lest they cause an uproar

among the people. They would rather have waited. But Jesus will not let anyone take His life: He lays it down of Himself. And Jesus will also not let anyone determine when He shall die: He will die when it is determined of God. And that is *tomorrow*. Judas...subject of Jesus! Satan...pawn of the Sovereign!

The disciples are confused. They thought Jesus was sending Judas, the treasurer of the disciples, to go out and buy things for the feast (i.e. the feast of unleavened bread, a feast which began that Passover night, and lasted seven days), or to give something to the poor (vv. 28, 29). But we know where Judas was going, what he would do.

We know too what this means: "it was night" (v. 30). It is almost the hour and the power of darkness (Luke 22:53).

Devil's night!

5. Glorification of the Christ and God (vv. 31, 32).

What does Jesus mean when He says that *now* is the Son of man glorified, and God in Him?

How do these verses show the intimacy of God and the Son of man?

6. A new commandment (vv. 33-35).

Jesus announces His impending departure. At this time He gives them a new commandment that the disciples love one another.

The commandment is not new, as if nothing like it were ever said. Where in the Old Testament do we find a similar commandment? How then is this commandment "new"? What, according to the passage, is the purpose for the disciples loving each other? How do we show this unique love in the church today? How is our love for one another in the household of faith different from our love towards unbelievers?

7. Prediction of Peter's denial (vv. 36-38).

Impetuous Peter! He is disturbed at the prospect of Jesus' going away. He asks where Jesus is going, and then, why he may not follow Jesus. Jesus says Peter cannot follow Jesus now, but only later. Why is Peter not ready now? Does Jesus prophesy here of the manner in which Peter shall die?

What does Peter show about himself when he declares himself

ready to lay down his life for Jesus' sake? How does Jesus rebuff him (v. 38)?

8. Perspective (John 20:31).

Reflect upon and discuss the sovereignty and also the suffering of the Savior revealed in this passage (think of the *height* of the one, and the *depth* of the latter; think also of the relation between the

two: who can know it?).

How are we like Judas? Do you ever ask, "Lord, is it I"? How are we like Peter? How does Jesus here show His tender care of His disciples? Today...of you?

How does knowledge of the Christ revealed here, and of the disciples revealed here, enhance our faith in Jesus, and the richness of our life in Him? □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

"No Morals Anymore?"

Much has been written, broadcast on radio and television, and discussed concerning the president of the United States. Is there real scandal, and will it bring down the president? Or is there a "right-wing" conspiracy to destroy this president? What of the intern with whom he was presumably involved? Were there others who were involved in a "relationship" with the president? And if this president is guilty, and if he is lying, is he not doing exactly what many past presidents have done—howbeit without the close scrutiny of the press? And how does one explain all of this "news" to the young children of our households?

And then, there's the governor of Colorado—but that's another story.

This article, however, is not going to add to the confusion and proliferation of writings which speculate and evaluate and then express judgment. Time will tell what is the final outcome of these sordid affairs.

There is another aspect of all of this which some writers rightly have pointed out. The concern is not, first, what the president did or did not do. Rather, what do all

of these affairs say about the people, the citizens of the United States of America? How must we evaluate and judge them in light of all of these reports?

Cal Thomas, writer for *Los Angeles Times* Syndicate, in an article appearing in many newspapers, including the *Loveland Reporter-Herald*, February 3, 1998, presents his penetrating comments in an article titled, "Morally speaking, it's mourning time in America." He writes:

When King David of Israel committed adultery with the beautiful Bathsheba and sent her husband off to the front lines to be killed in battle, the prophet Nathan confronted the king and exposed his immoral behavior. This led David to confess his sins and repent. Today, David would have hired a good criminal defense attorney and used his palace staff to spin for him and smear the prophet.

...Virtuecrat William Bennett accused Clinton of corrupting the morals of the American people. This is a common lament among many who believe the cause of our decadence is in the White House. They reason that by replacing the leader, the followers will become more virtuous. If this were so, 12 years of Ronald Reagan and George Bush should have made us morally better. It didn't—because presidents lack the power to transform hearts toward good or evil.

Former Vice President Dan Quayle told the Conservative Po-

litical Action Committee convention last week that our nation is crying out for moral leadership. If it is, the cry is a muffled one. Polls show as many as 73 percent approve of the job President Clinton is doing, including a significant majority of women who might be expected to have been offended with his "of course I'll respect you in the morning" behavior. Along with Hillary Clinton, we've put our concerns about morals and character "in a box," and prefer to worship at the altar of the economy. If the economy is all that matters, then we really are stupid.

The prophet Hosea admonished the ancient Israelites when they governed themselves according to their equivalent of "polls" and how they felt rather than the laws of God. This was his indictment: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds.... Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away.... Israel is corrupt."

...If many of us saw ourselves, or at least saw how we would like to be, in Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton reflects who we really are. To indict him is to indict ourselves. He is a mirror that reflects our darkened souls.

Forget whether the latest charges are true. Bill Clinton's lack of character and candor is beyond dispute. Even his defenders talk like lawyers instead of prophets. Clinton will probably hang on to the end of his term,

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but his chance to be a moral leader, which is an essential component of the presidency, has been foreclosed.

Hosea pronounced a verdict on another nation that lived like this: "a people without understanding will come to ruin." It's mourning time in America.

Nor is Cal Thomas, a religious and conservative commentator, the only one concerned. The *Denver Post*, February 7, 1998, contained a front-page article titled, "Ethics worry theologians." At the very least, there are some who are observing the real moral meltdown in society. The article stated:

America's morals are breaking down and the public doesn't seem to care, Colorado religious leaders said Friday.

"I'm perplexed and disturbed about the breakdown of ethics that have been the fabric of our culture," said William Klein, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary. "And many Americans don't seem to be bothered by the peccadilloes or failures of their leaders because they want a lowering of the standards applied to them also."

Klein and other church leaders and theologians made their comments in response to Colorado Gov. Roy Romer's statements that he has had a relationship with a woman other than his wife for the past 16 years.

In the days since President Clinton was first suspected of having a sexual affair with an intern, many Americans have said they don't care what the president does in his private life, and some are already saying the same thing about Romer.

"There used to be a consensus about the bad things that moral people didn't do," said Klein. Churches "seem to have an increasing inability to influence people about moral issues," said Klein....

...The reaction to reports of public scandals "is a true assessment of people's real values," said Dave Thomas, graduate professor of community leadership at Regis University.

"Money has a higher value than marriage and family or people. There's been a terrible unfortunate shift in mores," said Thomas.

Thomas thinks Americans are losing the sense of "moral outrage." In fact, he thinks that people would be more upset if Clinton cheated on his income tax than on his wife and that they were more upset about selling the Lincoln bedroom than about his morals, said Thomas.

...Paul Jessen of Colorado for Family Values asks, "What's happened to sin?"

He said many teenagers have told him they like to hear about famous people using drugs or being sexually active "because that means they can do those things."

Jessen ... quoted Harry Truman: "If a leader is unfaithful to his wife, he will be unfaithful to you (the voters)."

...Doug Groothuis, professor of ethics and philosophy of religion at Denver Seminary, said he is "puzzled over the artificial separation between public and private life. That's a false dichotomy."

"Americans should care about whether a leader keeps his promises to his wife," he added. "The Ten Commandments are still in place. They haven't expired, and adultery is still on the list."

But should anyone be surprised at what President Clinton may or may not have done—and the current reaction of the citizens of the country? Should it be surprising that "prosperity" should be the standard of judgment of the person rather than "morality"? The writers above were very correct in evaluating the sad state of affairs in society today.

But no one ought to be surprised.

Consider how that for over a generation now the country has been bombarded with drama on television and movie that parades immorality for entertainment. Sexual "relationships" apart from or in addition to marriage are presented as the norm. Homosexuality is considered a "right" and

termed an "alternate life style." Many churches agree.

Consider how that for over a generation now divorce and remarriage has become the standard solution for a "bad" marriage. If over 50 percent of the people so freely can break their marriage vows, why should they condemn a president if he happens to do so too? Who cares anymore? Vows can be taken and broken at will.

Consider how that for over a generation now the churches have basically come to accept this "solution" to marital problems. Should church members be concerned with immorality in high places when they accept that commonly within their own membership? If church members can break their vows, if they can marry another (which Christ calls "adultery" —Matt. 19:9), who is going to condemn the wayward politician? Who will cast the first stone?

Consider how that for over a generation now the Bible has been excluded from the public schools and the ten commandments are not allowed on the walls of its classrooms. If a generation arises which knows not the Word and the law of God, on what basis would it condemn a wayward president? What then ultimately matters is not obedience to God's law, but how much food is available for my stomach.

The whole emphasis on eliminating the basis for true morality is illustrated by an article appearing in *World* magazine, October 25, 1997:

How far is a California school district willing to go to shield its students (and parents and baseball fans) from the Ten Commandments? A business man in Downey (near Los Angeles) says he'll match the district's efforts and will fight as long as it takes to get his sign re-posted.

Edward DiLoreto, the 83-year-old owner of an engineering firm, was approached by the Downey High School baseball booster club in 1995. The boosters were sell-

ing ad space along the outfield fence. Coca-Cola had bought space, as had some local businesses. Mr. DiLoreto wrote out a \$400 check and submitted his sign. It contained 10 "Rules to Live By," also known as the Ten Commandments. That was nothing new; he'd used the "Rules" in his ads in Downey High School football programs and in the year-book.

But this time, school-district officials balked.

First, officials stalled; they said they feared allowing the sign would be unconstitutional. Eventually, the state attorney general issued an opinion saying the sign was legal. "If a school district sells commercial advertising space on a fence surrounding its high school baseball field, it may not refuse to accept an otherwise appropriate advertisement which contains the Ten Commandments and clearly identifies the advertising party," attorney general

Dan Lungren concluded, nine months after Mr. DiLoreto paid for the sign.

Next, the district cited potential lawsuits from the ACLU or offended parents, but no one came forward. And even if someone had come forward, Mr. DiLoreto offered to hire three attorneys to defend the district. (Later, in fact, an ACLU attorney told district officials that if they rejected Mr. DiLoreto's sign, Mr. DiLoreto could sue and probably win.)

Still, the district removed all the signs from the outfield, rather than suffer the children to see the Ten Commandments.

"We are in existence to educate, not to get involved in religious demands," the school district's lawyer told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I can think of a lot of different entities that would like to come in and push their messages on kids. We felt the interests of the district were not being served."

Mr. DiLoreto has filed suit against the district on the grounds that they violated his civil rights, and his freedom of speech. It is thought that the case may go all the way to the Supreme Court. The school district now complains that this case forces them to use monies, which otherwise would be used for the education of children, to defend their position before the courts of the land.

One wonders if those who insist that "personal lives" and "morality" really do not matter, truly know what morality even is? Could they recite the ten commandments? Too many have never even heard of them. Yes, the country gets what it desires and must live with the consequences. This too is another of the signs of the times. □

A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

Desire

Every rational, moral being has the ability to desire and does desire. God Himself has strong desire: He desires not sacrifice but truth in the inmost parts (Ps. 6:16), and He desires to dwell in Mt. Zion (Ps. 68:16). Christ heartily desired to eat the last Passover with the disciples (Luke 22:15). The angels desire to look into the things proclaimed by the prophets (I Pet. 1:12). Satan desired to have Peter that he might sift him as the wheat (Luke 22:31). The wicked desire evil (Prov. 21:10) and boast of their heart's desire

while they bless the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth (Ps. 10:3). And the people of God desire none upon earth but God Himself (Ps. 73:25). It is even the case that the beasts desire, for God satisfies the desire of every living thing with meat (Ps. 145:16).

Although there are many words translated in both Testaments as desire, the most common word in the original languages means to set one's passion upon something, to crave someone or something ardently. The word is translated variously as desire, lust, concupiscence, covetousness, or envy. The total man is involved with desiring. The heart, the condition of the heart, gives direction in this matter for good or for evil.

The mind and the thoughts are activated, so that a person imagines something to be worthwhile and desirable, and plans begin to develop that will help secure the object of desire. The will is employed, so that thoughts about something are translated into actions that will obtain the object of desire for oneself. Perhaps it can be said that desire is the activity of the entire inner life of a man, the life of the soul, as it craves to possess that which it does not have. This is all summarized powerfully, in the negative sense, by James: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye envy, and desire to

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have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:1-3).

Because of the old man of sin that remains with us, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy (James 4:5). Thus the believer is warned against many sinful desires. We are not to desire silver and gold (Deut. 7:25); we are not to desire dainty meats (Prov. 23:6); we are not to desire to be first or to have the chief place (Mark 9:35); we are not to be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:26); we are not to desire again to be in bondage to the weak and beggarly rudiments of the law (Gal. 4:9); we are not to fulfill the desire of the flesh (Eph. 2:3). All sinful inordinate desire is forbidden by the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet...." This interpretation of the last commandment is given by Paul in Romans 7:7: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Coveting is sinful desire. Notice that the second giving of the Law in Deuteronomy 5 states that liter-

ally: "Neither shalt thou *desire* thy neighbor's wife...." The tenth commandment speaks to the inner life of the soul, of the heart, mind, and thoughts, the will and the desires. The Catechism gives to the commandment this meaning, "That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never arise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness." Positively, then, the commandment requires of us that we have *godly desires*.

The child of God desires that his (and God's) enemies be brought down and consumed, for the words of their lips, for their pride, for cursing and lying (Ps. 59:10ff.). His heart's desire and prayer to God is that Israel might be saved (Rom. 12:1). Rather than desire prominence in the church, the believer is to covet earnestly the best gifts (I Cor. 12:31), which are faith, hope, and especially charity. He is to have, with Paul, a desire to depart the earth and be with Christ, leaving the time for departure in the Lord's hands (Phil. 1:23). Brothers in the church are to know that desire for the office of elder is a godly desire, understanding that this is not a desire for vain glory but a

desire to *work* (I Tim. 3:1). Pastors and all believers desire that every believer show diligence in labors of love, labors of ministering to the saints (Heb. 6:10, 11). As we live as pilgrims and strangers in the earth, we show that we desire a better country, that is, an heavenly (Heb. 11:16). As newborn babes we are to desire the pure milk of the Word, in order to grow in spiritual life (I Pet. 2:2). We desire many things of God, we petition Him for them, and we have confidence that as we pray according to His will, our desires are given us (I John 5:14, 15).

All these godly desires are really summed up in Psalm 27, the fourth verse, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." *One thing* is the worthy object of our desire. *One thing* will we seek after. *One thing* forms the center and focus of our sanctified desire. That is God, as He is revealed in all His beauty, grace, and desirableness in His house. Nothing in all the earth do we desire beside Him. Not when we know Him, and have His law engraved upon our hearts! □

Book Reviews

Sermons on the Deity of Christ, by John Calvin. Tr. Leroy Nixon. Audubon, New Jersey: Old Paths Publications, 1997. 302 pp. \$34.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by the editor)

To what is fast becoming a very valuable and attractive set of otherwise out-of-print sermons by John Calvin, Old Paths Publications has now added this volume of 20 sermons by the Reformer on the birth, suffering, resurrection, ascension, outpouring of the Spirit, and return of Jesus Christ. The other

volumes are Calvin's sermons on Galatians; Psalm 119; and the predestination of Jacob and Esau according to Genesis.

Whereas the earlier volumes made available in modern English sermons that had been out-of-print for more than 400 years, this one restores a work that had been published in 1950.

As do the others in the set, this book gives us the preaching of Calvin to his own congregation in Geneva, as it was taken down by scribes at the time. All of the sermons in this latest volume are di-

rectly on the person and ministry of the Savior. The title of the book is taken from the first sermon, on John 1:1-5. In addition, the book contains one sermon on Jesus' birth; eight sermons on Jesus' suffering and death; one sermon on the resurrection; four sermons on the ascension; four sermons on Pentecost; and one sermon on the second coming.

Although as a rule Calvin ignored the Christian holidays in his preaching, he did once preach a special sermon on Christmas Day, and twice he preached special ser-

mons on Easter Sunday (1559 and 1560). The Christmas sermon and one of the Easter sermons are included in the book.

Elsewhere in this issue, we publish one of the sermons. This may serve as an example of Calvin's preaching and of the content of the book.

In connection with his explanation of the outstanding events that make up Christ's ministry, Calvin gives instruction to the people concerning various doctrines of the Christian faith: God's accommodation to us (His "stutter-

ing") in an infallibly inspired Scripture (sermon one); God's sovereignty over sin (sermon 19); the nature of faith (sermon 20). It is surprising to learn that Calvin regarded at least one phase of Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness as having taken place in an "illusion" (p. 157).

Like the other books of sermons, this one is especially profitable for edification. Reformed people should make such works as these their devotional reading. Much of the supposedly devotional

material that clamors for the money and time of Reformed Christians—the charismatic and the self-centered evangelical stuff—is junk food for the soul, worthless at best and harmful at worst.

Calvin, we discover, was a typical expository preacher. At the end of one sermon, he told his congregation, "This is what the Gospel-writer wished to indicate. I omit other things, because time does not permit us to speak of them further, and already I have spoken too long." And then he went on for two more pages. Ah, yes. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. G. VanBaren has declined the call he had been considering to serve as pastor of our South Holland, IL PRC.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Doug Kuiper and his wife Teresa on the occasion of the birth of their first child, a son, Daniel James, born February 9.

We extend our sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. John Heys and her entire family in the death of her husband, Rev. John Heys, who went to be with his Lord in glory on February 16 at the age of 87. Rev. Heys served our churches faithfully for close to 40 years as pastor in four congregations, ending his active ministry in 1980, although he continued to stay active after retirement writing for this magazine and producing two series of devotionals, one based exclusively on the Psalms and the other primarily on the New Testament. We echo the psalmist when he writes in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

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

Young People's Activities

You may have heard by now that the Federation Board of our churches' young people's societies has asked the young people and congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA to host the 1999 Young People's Convention. Since this is such a large undertaking for any of our churches, Hope asked their entire congregation to answer a survey indicating what direction they should go. We are happy to report that in early February, Hope signed a contract with Camp Cedar Falls Conference Center, a location nestled in the mountains outside of Redlands, in preparation for hosting next year's convention.

The Young People's Society of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI served as host society for a Young People's Mass Meeting on February 18. Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor at First, addressed the young people on the topic, "Whose Praise Do You Want: God's or Man's?" Special numbers were also given and refreshments were provided.

The young people from the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada got together with the young people of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada on February 13 for an outing to a hockey game in Red Deer.

On January 30 and 31 the congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI attended their third annual church conference. This year's conference was held, as in the past, at Camp Geneva on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Between 130 and 140 of Georgetown's members were able to attend part or all of this year's conference. They heard Dr. Henry Krabbendam, a professor at Covenant College in Lookout Mt., GA, give the keynote address on the theme, "The Believers' Calling to Witness."

About this time of year we who live in the northern hemisphere begin to grow weary of the seemingly endless winter, so we heartily agree with the Library Committee of our First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada who recently sponsored a supper under the wistful theme of "Bring Back Summer."

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Byron Center, MI PRC sponsored a community Bible Study Class during the month of February on the subject, "The Living Word of God." These classes were held on three consecutive Thursdays. The first class was led by Byron's pastor, Rev. Doug

Kuiper, and was entitled, "The Bible, Inspired by God, and the Standard of our Faith and Walk of Life." The second was led by Rev. Cammenga one week later and was entitled, "Bible Translations and Versions," and the third, entitled "Jesus Christ, the Central Theme of the Bible," was led by Candidate Daniel Kleyn.

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC offered a free copy of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema's book *The Mystery of Bethlehem* in a December issue of *World* magazine. As of late January they had received 119 requests from that ad. They also advertised "Modern Bible Versions" in a Janu-

ary issue and had 114 responses.

Food For Thought

"The church of the elect, which is partly militant on earth and partly triumphant in heaven, resembles a city built on both sides of a river. There is but the stream of death between grace and glory."

—Toplady □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We express congratulations to our covenant parents and grand parents,

AL and SHARON BRUMMEL,

on the occasion of their 30th wedding anniversary on March 12. May God continue to bless them.

- * Rev. Allen and Crysta Brummel
Dean, Allyn, Ethan
- * Nathan and Paula Brummel
- * Jeff and Jodi Baker
Daniel, Jeremy
- * Randy and Shari Vaalburg
Seth, Paul, Sarena
- * Tiffany Brummel

Edgerton, Minnesota

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Randolph PRC express their Christian sympathy to Ronald and Kay Huizenga and family in the death of Kay's father,

LOUIS WIERENGA.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 121:1, 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

Pastor S. Key, Pres.
Don DeVries, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Tom and Roberta Nelson and family in the death of Tom's mother,

NELLE NELSON.

"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalm 145:17-19).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

AL and DONNA BOVEN

will celebrate 25 years of marriage, D.V., on March 30, 1998.

We thank God for the years of Christian upbringing you have given us and for the many sacrifices you have made for us, to attain the high calling of Christian parents. It is our prayer that the Lord will bless and keep you in the years to come. "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (I Thessalonians 1:3).

- * Dean and Heidi Boven
Brianna
- * Terri Boven
- * Dustin Boven

Byron Center, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to our fellow members Vernon and Mary Postma in the loss of her father,

MR. JIM BLOM.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.
Char VanEgdom, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of the Hudsonville PRC mourn the loss of a fellow member,

MRS. JULIA PRAAMSMA,

whom the Lord took from our midst on February 6, 1998.

We express our Christian sympathy to her husband, Mr. Ray Praamsma. May he, with us, remember God's promise from Psalm 121:2, "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

Truett Hugg, Pres.
Donna Boven Sec'y.

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 1998, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to:

Mr. Don Doezeema
4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Sally tenElshof and family in the death of her husband,

JIM TEN ELSHOF.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Tim Pipe, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We extend our sincere sympathy to John and Sandy Heys and their family in the death of their father and grandfather,

REV. JOHN A. HEYS.

While we, on this earth, still look on the bottom side of the tapestry with all of its mixed-up threads, he sees the finished side which reveals the perfect work of God and the Lamb in the gathering and glorification of God's saints. Surely, to be with Christ is far better, surely too because God has said that it was no longer needful for him to be here on this earth.

The consistory and congregation of the Loveland PRC
Rev. G. VanBaren, Pres.
Mr. Larry Nelson, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 23, 1998, our parents and grandparents,

**PROF. and MRS.
RUSS DYKSTRA,**

will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, the Lord willing.

We thank our heavenly Father for the years of instruction they have given us, for we know how great a blessing it is to be able to learn from godly parents. We praise God for their godly example and the covenant home they have given us these past years. May God continue to bless them in their years to come.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

- * Craig and Heather Hoksbergen
Colton, Deanna
- * Michael and Heidi Poortinga
- * Christopher
and fiancée Laura Kamps
- * Ryan
- * Nathan
- * Jordan
- * Emily
- * Courtney
- * Holly

Grand Rapids, Michigan

TEACHER NEEDED

Adams Christian School of Grand Rapids, MI needs an elementary teacher for the 1998-1999 school year. Interested persons should contact Ted Pipe at (616) 452-9367, or the school principal, Peter Hoekstra, at (616) 531-0748.

PLEASE NOTE:

The home page of the RFPa can be found at www.iserv.net/~rfpa. Please take a moment to look us up. Or e-mail orders to rfpa@iserv.net.

TEACHER NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School of Loveland, CO is in need of an elementary teacher (grades 1-3) for the 1998-1999 school year. All interested parties should submit a resumé to Patrick Alsum, 3535 Donath Dr., Loveland, CO 80538 and/or contact either Leon Griess at (970) 667-8956 or Patrick Alsum at (970) 622-8367.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 8, 1998, our parents,
ED and JEANNE KARSEMEYER,
celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We thank the Lord that He has given them this many happy years together and we pray that He will continue to keep them in His care for many more years to come. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38, 39).

Their children,

Shaun, Renae, Todd, Ryan, Kyle
Redlands, California

TEACHER NEEDED

Hull Protestant Reformed School is in need of one elementary teacher for the 1998-1999 school year. Interested persons are encouraged to call either Pete Brummel (712) 439-2490 or (712) 439-1308, or Don Hoksbergen (712) 439-1610.

PUBLIC LECTURE

Covenant
Protestant Reformed Church

*Jesus Christ: the Church's
One Foundation*

by Rev. Martin VanderWal

Friday, March 27, at 7:30 P.M.

in the church auditorium
located at
283 Squawbrook Road
Wyckoff, NJ.

For further information,
please visit our web-site at <http://www.covprc.org>.

NOTICE: SB Index!!

The deadline for ordering is past. And, yes, the typeset copy is already at the printshop. But ... if you forgot, or weren't sure, and would still like to order — all is not lost. Anticipating belated interest, we did order more than enough to fill the orders received by March 1. But not a large number. All we can promise, therefore, is that we'll fill as many late orders as we can, from the extras.

The price, remember, is \$49.00 — a bargain from two points of view: the value of the tool (indispensable for research); and the cost of production (the RFPa is losing money on this one). The project was undertaken only with a view to providing a service for those individuals, churches, and schools which have a good number of the *SB* bound volumes in their library.

The index will come in one hardcover volume of some 600 pages. It will include subject, title, and textual indices. And on your bookshelf it will look like one of your *SB* bound volumes, howbeit a little thicker.

This is a while-the-supply-lasts proposition. We urge you, therefore, if you're interested, to act soon. The last index was printed 15 years ago. At intervals like that, the next one would not become available till 2013!