



The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

In This Issue:

Meditation — <i>Rev. Cornelius Hanko</i> Life with God	2
Editorially Speaking	4
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i> The Reformed Worldview 5. Worldview, not World-flight ("Anabaptism")	5
Letters	7
Guest Article — <i>Rev. David Higgs</i> Introduction to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (3)	8
Contribution — <i>Rev. Ronald Cammenga</i> Introducing Our Second Home Missionary	11
A Word Fitly Spoken — <i>Rev. Dale H. Kuiper</i> Arrows	12
Contending for the Faith — <i>Rev. Bernard J. Woudenberg</i> "Conditions" and the Covenant	13
Church and State — <i>Mr. James Lanting</i> State Supreme Court Approves Vouchers for Religious Private Schools	16
Search the Scriptures — <i>Rev. Mitchell C. Dick</i> The Secret of the Fruit of the Vine (2) Much Fruit	18
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise VanBaren</i>	20
Report of Classis West — <i>Rev. Steven R. Key</i>	22
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	22

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Life with God

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation 21:4a

The redeemed child of God is pictured as coming out of the great tribulation and entering into heaven with tears running down his cheeks. God Himself takes him, as it were, in His arms and brushes away the tears — forever.



A vale of tears.

In the well-known shepherd-psalm David describes this life as “the valley of the shadow of death,” which we enter at birth and do not leave until we die.

A child enters this world crying. This is but the beginning of

the many sorrows that encompass the life of the child of God during his earthly pilgrimage. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Ps. 34:19).

We are conceived and born in sin, and sin characterizes our lives as long as we live. We enter the world as spiritual still-births, dead in trespasses and sins. And, although we are made new creatures by the Spirit with the life of Christ in our hearts, we are still by nature sinners who are incapable of any good and prone to all evil.

Though we are righteous in Christ, we still have but a small beginning of the new obedience. With the apostle Paul we cry out: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death?” (Rom. 7:18, 24).

We also experience daily the consequences of the sin of all mankind. Ever since the fall of our first parents in paradise, God’s curse rests, not only on a fallen human race, but also upon all creation. Adam was king in paradise. When he fell, his kingdom fell with him. Among the animals, birds, and fish the one preys upon the other. We wrestle with thorns and thistles, weeds and destructive insects, various sorts of viruses and germs. We suffer from diseases, sickness and pain, the breaking down of this earthly house of our tabernacle, as well as the loss of family and friends.

Wickedness abounds, lawlessness is on the increase as the end approaches. Wars, killings, rape, stealing, drunkenness, and drug addictions pervade the world we live in.

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

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EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: engelsma@prca.org)

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerck
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT42 2NR Northern Ireland

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Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes, declares, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." The apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 8:22, 23: "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Besides all that, there is the onslaught of Satan and his hosts, the enemy of God and of His cause upon the earth. He is cunning and deceptive, having years of experience in his duplicity and treachery. He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he also comes as an angel of light. He has a large host of demons who are at his service all over the world both by day and by night. Who knows but what we have a certain demon appointed to watch us, to spy out all our weaknesses, to attack at the moment when we are most vulnerable and least expect it. The devil and his cohorts prefer that we completely ignore them, as if they did not exist.

A demon may likely attack while we are in church, or while we are engaged in prayer. He may use members of our family, or even our closest friend, to tempt us and cause us to fall into his snare. He is most likely to whisper his deception in our hearts when we face some weighty problem or crisis. He knows the solution, which is always the wrong one.

We also live in "this present, evil world" (Gal. 1:4). This evil world is not found only in our large cities, in dance halls, on movies and television. It is present all around us, in our place of labor and wherever we turn. We are called to witness. But we also must be clothed with the armor of God, ready to stand in an evil day.

Jesus warns us: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." A dis-

ciple is not greater than his Lord. As they have hated Him, they will hate us. We are persecuted for righteousness' sake. False teachers are prevalent, false doctrines that appeal to the flesh are widely publicized. As the end approaches we can expect that this will only worsen. Scripture warns against false prophets that make merchandise of our souls. Jesus even warns us by asking: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" We begin to realize that already in our day.

Nor can we completely ignore the judgments of God that come upon the wicked in this present time, for we find ourselves in the midst of them. Jesus warns us that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.... Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matt. 24:7-10).

We do have the assurance that "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19). We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last day (I Pet. 1:5). We learn to confess: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71).

We can rest assured that this present vale of tears is the valley of the *shadow* of death. The light of the Sun of righteousness shines overhead, and at the end of the way appears the light of the eternal day. We have no fear, for our Shepherd is with us, His rod and His staff comfort us. Yet the fact remains that we leave this present life, which is nothing more than a continual death, with tears running down our cheeks.

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God will wipe away all those tears.

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57).

As we approach the end of the valley of the shadow of death the light of the eternal day shines ever brighter, beckoning us on to Father's house, where our mansion awaits us. We live unto the Lord and we die unto the Lord, for whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Our hope grows into a greater longing and eagerness as the time of our departure draws near.

Christ is the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Him will never die. Death is swallowed up in victory.

Our bodies are laid away in the grave, not only to return to the dust from which they were taken, but to await the return of Christ at the dawning of the eternal day.

I like to think that an angel accompanies our soul into heaven. When we enter, our first reaction likely will be: I might have known. We are still such fools and slow of heart to understand, but Scripture does tell us much about our future state. Besides, we already have peace with God in this life, and a joy unspeakable, full of glory — a foretaste of the eternal joy. This is especially true while we are in the divine worship service and while we pray.

One thing is certain, when we arrive in glory we will not feel out of place. It is true, and in this life I wonder about that, my parents will no longer be my parents, my wife will not be my wife, my children will not be my children. But that will not affect my blessedness. We will see and know each other

through the now invisible bond, the bond of love in Christ Jesus.

We will fit right in. Each of us will have his or her own place in the assembly of God. Scripture uses the figure of a temple, the habitation of the Lord, in which every stone has its own place. Scripture also employs the figure of a body. Every member of the body has its own place and its own purpose, each serving the other as a complete and perfect unity. Even the figure of the family is used; we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Each of us serves the other with our own gifts and talents, and together we serve unto the glory of our God.

What will fill us with boundless joy is the fact that *we sin no more*. Now every moment of our existence we fail miserably. For whether we eat or whether we drink, we must do it all to the glory of God; but every night we shame-

fully confess our sins, realizing that in this life sin mars every thought we think, every word we utter, every act we perform.

But heaven knows no sin. Our spirit is fully surrendered to God, so that with heart and mind and soul and strength we live solely and completely to the glory of God. Nor will there be any consequences of sin, as there are here on earth — no infirmity, no weakness, no pain. He who was blind sees perfectly, she who was deaf hears clearly, the lame walk, and the infirm are strong.

But most important of all, we will see the face of God in Christ Jesus. It is true that God is invisible. No man has seen or can see God. But in heaven He reveals Himself to us in all His perfections through our Lord Jesus Christ. We will stand in awe at His infinite glory, flooded with His dazzling beauty and blessedness.

When Moses saw the glory of God, only after God had passed by, his face glowed even after he returned to the people. But how far more glorious will be the revelation of God in eternity. His glory far exceeds the brightness of the sun at noontime.

There is no night there, no change, no end. Eternity means that everlastingly we shall continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ in our own creaturely measure. Even as there is no end to eternity, there is no end to beholding the beauty of the Lord, growing in the riches of His grace. For our infinite God is our Father in Christ Jesus; we are His family that lives in intimate covenant fellowship with Him forever. There the covenant of God with His people reaches its full realization, and God will be all in all!

It is the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb! □

Editorially Speaking

At their annual meeting in June of this year, the staff of the *Standard Bearer* (consisting of the writers and the managing editor) reappointed the editor, managing editor, secretary, general adjunct, and special issues committee. They are Prof. David Engelsma, editor; Prof. Robert Decker, secretary; Mr. Don Doezema, managing editor; Prof. Herman Hanko, general adjunct; and Prof. Engelsma, Prof. Decker, and Mr. Doezema special issues committee.

The staff also made decisions for the content of the magazine in the coming volume-year. The rubrics and writers will be much the same as the past year. There will be a few changes. Rev. Douglas Kuiper will write the rubric, "Ministering to the Saints," with Prof. Decker. This rubric explores Reformed pastoral labor. Rev. Daniel Kleyne will cooperate with Rev.

Arie den Hartog in "In His Fear." This column is devoted to the Reformed, Christian life. Miss Agatha Lubbers will collaborate with Prof. Russell Dykstra in writing on Christian education ("That They may Teach Their Children").

Welcome, to the new writers. Thanks, to those who are willing to continue writing for the *SB*.

Readers will have noticed that, having completed his popular series on outstanding figures in church history, Prof. Herman Hanko has begun a new series on the church's struggle with false teachers. These articles appear in the rubric, "Marking Zion's Bulwarks."

The Rev. David Higgs, minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPC), responded quickly to our request that he write, informing our readers about the EPC. Two of his articles

have already appeared. The concluding installment appears in this issue. We are grateful to Rev. Higgs for his readiness to write for our magazine. We hope that his articles are helpful to promote contact between the Protestant Reformed Churches and the EPC.

We have received assurances from others in foreign lands that they will submit articles on their churches or on the state of the Reformed faith in those countries.

The next issue of the *SB*—October 15—will be our special, Reformation issue. This time the special issue will be devoted to the Dutch reformer of the 19th century, Abraham Kuyper. We chose the life and work of Kuyper as our subject in part because of the current commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his famed (or infamous) Stone Lectures at Princeton University. These have been published

as *Lectures on Calvinism*. But there was more to Kuyper than these lectures.

With the issue that you have in your hands, we begin volume 75 of the *SB*. Volume 75! One has

informed us that the *SB* is now the second oldest Reformed periodical in North America. A significant distinction! By the grace of God, the magazine still faithfully and

unashamedly sets forth and defends the historic, creedal Reformed faith and life, as it did in that first issue of October, 1924.

Let us persevere. □

—DJE

Editorial

The Reformed Worldview

5. Worldview, not World-flight ("Anabaptism")

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) reject Abraham Kuyper's worldview of common grace. They reject it root and branch. The explanation of this rejection was the burden of the previous three editorials.

But this rejection of Kuyper's worldview does not stem from, or imply, a denial that the Reformed faith is, in fact, a worldview. On the contrary, inasmuch as Kuyper's Stone Lectures were, in the words of contemporary scholar Peter S. Heslam, "an attempt to answer one of the most crucial questions that has faced Christianity throughout its history, the question of the relationship between Christianity and culture," the attempt by Kuyper was legitimate and praiseworthy (*Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1998, p. 266).

The Comprehensiveness of Calvinism

Kuyper was right when he asserted the comprehensiveness of Calvinism, that is, that the Reformed faith, extending to all of human life, empowers and calls the

Reformed believer to live the distinctive Christian life in every sphere. "The Calvinist demands that all life be consecrated to His service, in strict obedience. A religion confined to the closet, the cell, or the church, therefore, Calvin abhors" (*Lectures on Calvinism*, Eerdmans, 1953, p. 53).

The Dutch theologian is not to be faulted for combating "the unhistorical suggestion that Calvinism represents an exclusively ecclesiastical and dogmatic movement" (*Lectures*, p. 78).

It is not Kuyper's insistence that Calvinism is a worldview that is objectionable, but his specific, peculiar description of this worldview as a worldview of *common grace*.

The Error of World-flight

We fully agree with Kuyper that the world-flight of Anabaptism is forbidden to the disciple of Jesus Christ. Indeed, world-flight is impossible. World-flight, as represented in the Anabaptist radicals and heretics at the time of the Reformation, is the attempt to live, as much as possible, in physical separation both from ungodly people and from the ordinances and

spheres of creation. It roots in a renunciation of creation itself, as though creation were essentially evil. It interprets the biblical call to separation as the command to have no contact with ungodly men and women, or as little as possible; physically to withdraw from society, in isolation; to have nothing to do with culture—education, business and industry, the arts, recreation, and the like. It is the thinking that sees the life of the Christian as "*met een boekje in een hoekje*" (sitting in a corner with a little [religious] book). The world-flight of Anabaptism is the rejection of worldview as such.

Kuyper may even have been right in his observation that there is an Anabaptistic tendency in some, pietistic circles among Reformed churches. Even today it is not unknown that in the name of the antithesis some Reformed people question education, especially advanced education; are doubtful that the library of a Christian school should contain books by unbelievers; and contend that a Christian has no business becoming a doctor, a lawyer, or a politician.

A False Dilemma

But Kuyper was wrong to posit Anabaptistic world-flight as the sole alternative to his own worldview of common grace. This is what he did in the Princeton lectures on Calvinism.

The avoidance of the world has never been the Calvinistic mark, but the shibboleth of the Anabaptist. The specific, anabaptistical dogma of "avoidance" proves this. According to this dogma, the Anabaptists, announcing themselves as "saints," were severed from the world. They stood in opposition to it. They refused to take the oath; they abhorred all military service; they condemned the holding of public offices. Here already, they shaped a new world, in the midst of this world of sin, which however had nothing to do with this our present existence. They rejected all obligation and responsibility towards the old world, and they avoided it systematically, for fear of contamination, and contagion. But this is just what the Calvinist always disputed and denied (*Lectures*, pp. 72, 73).

Kuyper did the same thing in his work on common grace, the three-volume *De Gemeene Gratie* (Hoveker & Wormser, 1902-1904). According to Kuyper, those Reformed, and even Protestant, people in the Netherlands who rejected his worldview of common grace and who declined to support his political activism in the Anti-Revolutionary Party thereby manifested themselves as guilty of the Anabaptist error of world-flight.

As though the alternatives were the worldview of common grace or no worldview at all, that is, the world-flight of Anabaptism!

The Christian Reformed opponents of Herman Hoeksema in 1924 employed the very same tactic against him. Did he reject the common grace worldview of Kuyper as perfectly sketched in their three points of common grace? Then he must be a modern proponent of

Anabaptist world-flight. So they charged against him. Spearheading the attack, the Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen wrote the booklet, *De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeerd of Doopersch?* (Eerdmans-Sevensma, 1922; the English translation would be, *The Denial of Common Grace: Reformed or Anabaptist?*). Van Baalen's answer to the question of his title was, "The denial of common grace is Anabaptistic" (p. 84).

Van Baalen did not want the church to be under any illusions concerning the seriousness of the sin of Danhof and Hoeksema in rejecting Kuyper's common grace. In the common grace controversy that was then opening up, the Christian Reformed Church was on the "eve of the most important struggle that it has yet known. That is the struggle between *Calvinism and Anabaptism*" (*Loochening*, p. 9; the emphasis is Van Baalen's). In light of the fact that the Christian Reformed Church had just condemned the premillennialism of Harry Bultema and the modernistic higher-critical views of Scripture of Ralph Janssen (whom Van Baalen was defending by his attack on Danhof and Hoeksema), this was a severe indictment of the denial of common grace indeed. Van Baalen's booklet received high praise from virtually all the leaders in the Christian Reformed Church.

Over the next year, Van Baalen warmed to his task as defender of the Reformed faith against encroaching Anabaptism. He produced another book attacking Danhof and Hoeksema, *Nieuwigheid en Dwaling: De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie* (Eerdmans-Sevensma, 1923; the English translation would be, *An Innovation and an Error: The Denial of Common Grace*). The title is sublime irony. Van Baalen borrowed the phrase, "*nieuwigheid en dwaling*," from the Canons of Dordt, which knows of no common grace in the Reformed system of theology, condemns

"common grace" by name as part of the Arminian heresy, and teaches only particular grace for the elect alone.

In this book the Christian Reformed minister waxed hysterical in his condemnation of the rejection of Kuyper's common grace worldview by his colleagues, Danhof and Hoeksema: "(They) deny common grace. (They) become Anabaptist; (they) end up in Pietism; (they) end up in hostility to culture, in a shunning of the world, in a hatred of the world, in everything that lies along that line" (p. 195). What these further bogies might be, Van Baalen did not tell his readers, but he left the impression that they were fearful indeed.

So the Christian Reformed Church has always represented the denial by the PRC of Kuyper's and their common grace worldview. They have parroted and perpetuated Kuyper's false dilemma: the worldview of common grace or Anabaptism.

Hoeksema on Worldview

The founding fathers of the PRC, particularly Herman Hoeksema, denied Kuyper's and the Christian Reformed Church's charge of Anabaptism. Hoeksema repudiated the world-flight of Anabaptism and affirmed that the Reformed faith is a worldview. Hoeksema gave this testimony well before the common grace controversy was underway in the Christian Reformed Church, when he was still a minister in good, indeed high, standing in that church. Writing in 1919, in the periodical, *Religion and Culture*, Hoeksema declared:

Also Calvinism, holding the original goodness of the world, and still professing that the world as kosmos is not essentially bad but good, being the product of an Almighty and Allwise God, infinite in perfection, strongly repudiates the erroneous separation of nature

and grace, and always maintained that the power of redemption through grace is not destined to remain a foreign element in the life of the world, but much rather to redeem that life in all its abundance and in every sphere. Calvinism has always sent its worshippers, equipped with a complete view of life and the world, into all the complex relationships of human existence to claim it for Christ our Lord. The truly Calvinistic Christian is a Christian everywhere and always. In the home and in the church, in society and in the state, in shop and office, in art and in science, in trade and industry, always and everywhere is the Calvinist a Christian, would he be consistent and in harmony with his own confession. All life and all relations of life he claims must be based on and permeated by Christian principles. In a word I know of no view that is broader in its vision, that is more kosmological in its application, that is more all-embracing in its powerful grasp, that is more truly liberating in its power than the Calvinistic view of life and the world; and it may safely be said that, if an indictment is brought against the Christianity of former ages, as if it meant to be an anabaptistic separation from the world, Calvinism should straightway be acquitted and may, indeed, go with a free conscience.

Hoeksema gave the same testimony in the heat of the controversy over common grace. Responding to Van Baalen in a booklet entitled, *Niet Doopersch maar Gereformeerd* (Grand Rapids Printing, n.d.; the English translation would be, *Not Anabaptist but Reformed*), Hoeksema

flatly denied the charge that his denial of common grace was Anabaptistic. He insisted that

exactly the opposite is our conception. We exactly will *not* to go out of the world. It is exactly our purpose to abandon no single sphere of life. We have exactly called God's people to occupy the whole of life. However, it is our will that this people of the Lord, which is His covenant people, in no single sphere of life shall forsake or deny its God. That people is called, in every sphere, to live out of grace, out of the one grace by which they are implanted into Christ and love God, so that they keep His commandments (pp. 67, 68).

He disdained Van Baalen's accusation of Anabaptism as mere "mud-slinging."

The mature Hoeksema likewise confessed the Reformed faith as a worldview. In his commentary on the book of Revelation, *Behold, He Cometh!* (RFPA, 1969), he wrote:

And thus the people of God have their own life-view with regard to every sphere of life and every institution of the world. The home is an institution existing primarily for the perpetuation of God's covenant in the world. The school is an institution for the purpose of instructing the covenant children according to the principles of Holy Writ for every sphere of life. Society, with business and industry, art and science, and all things that exist, must . . . be controlled by the principles of the Word of God and be made subservient to the idea of God's kingdom in the world. In a word, they have a

new life-view. They are members of God's covenant, His friends in the world, subjects of His kingdom. And, in principle at least, they want to live the life of that kingdom also in the present world (p 211).

Does this sound like Anabaptism?

Is this the call to world-flight?

Or is this the proclamation of the worldview of the gospel?

Whether Kuyper's and the Christian Reformed Church's false dilemma—common grace or Anabaptism—was due to ignorance, shrewd tactics (Kuyper wanted the support of the people for his political ambitions), or malice, we leave to God to judge. He will. But the dilemma was—and is—mistaken.

There can be no question whether Calvinism is a worldview. For Calvinism is simply biblical Christianity, and biblical Christianity is a distinctive view of all creation with its history and a distinctive life in all the ordinances that God has established for man in His world.

But the question for Reformed people today is: "which worldview?"

The common grace worldview of the fertile and ambitious mind of Abraham Kuyper in *Lectures on Calvinism*, which worldview is now embodied in the Christian Reformed Church's three points of common grace?

Or the particular grace worldview of the mind of Jesus Christ in the Holy Scriptures? □

—DJE

Letters

Radical to the Extreme

In Robert Decker's review of David Calhoun's two-volume work on the history of Princeton Seminary (*SB*, August, 1998), he quotes

A.A. Hodge as saying that the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism "is one of emphasis rather than principle," that Calvinism and Arminianism are "necessary to restrain, correct, and supply the one-sided strain of the

other," and that Calvinism and Arminianism "together give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music which utters the perfect truth."

Decker correctly states that "there was some very 'strange fire

on Princeton's altars.'" However, earlier in the review, Decker mentions A.A. Hodge in the list of Princeton men who were "strongly committed to the Reformed Faith." I beg to differ. From the above quotes alone, it is obvious that A.A. Hodge believed that Arminianism is just an unbalanced form of the true gospel. And he does not stop there. He does not merely tolerate the false gospel; astoundingly, he says that Calvinism is *also* an unbalanced form of the true gospel and that Arminianism is *necessary* for balanced gospel truth! He believed that Arminianism is *necessary* to "correct" Calvinism! "Strongly committed to the Reformed faith"? Hardly.

The true gospel is the good news of salvation conditioned on the blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone. Any other "gospel" that conditions any part of salvation on the sinner is a dam-

nable false gospel. Those who believe and preach this false gospel are lost, and those who tolerate, endorse, and promote this false gospel are just as lost. Previous articles in the *Standard Bearer*, such as David Engelsma's "Free Willism: Another Gospel" (May 1, 1997) and John Pedersen's "Confessions of a Harsh, Judgmental, Intolerant One" (May 15, 1997), as well as Pedersen's book, *Sincerity Meets the Truth* (reviewed in *SB*, December 1, 1997), compellingly bear this out. Far from being "strongly committed to the Reformed faith," A.A. Hodge showed himself to be an unregenerate agent of Satan in his promotion of the false gospel.

Marc D. Carpenter
Sudbury, Vermont

Response:

I have three comments in response to your letter:

1. My statement concerning A.A. Hodge and others, "These were men strongly committed to the Reformed faith," is qualified by my reference to "the very strange fire on Princeton's altars."

2. It will interest you to know that for many years Herman Hoeksema used Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* (Wm. B. Eerdmans three-volume edition) as required collateral reading in his Dogmatics classes. This in spite of the fact that Hoeksema differed sharply with Hodge on several key points of doctrine, the covenant and common grace to name just two.

3. Your statement, "A.A. Hodge showed himself to be an unregenerate agent of Satan in his promotion of the false gospel," is radical to the extreme. It is a judgment best left only to God Himself.

—Prof. Robert D. Decker

Guest Article

Rev. David Higgs

Introduction to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (3)

In the first article that I wrote for the *SB* I gave some information concerning the early settlement of Australia, and how I perceive this to have affected us as a nation. In my last article I wrote, briefly, about the history of our de-

nomination. Taking these things into consideration, what wonder of wonders that God should raise up the EPC as a denomination of churches! He has gathered His people from the midst of a wicked world: already this is a wonder that should cause us never to cease praising our great God. But then from the milieu of our national heritage, and from the midst of apostatizing churches, Jehovah established the EPC.

Too often, I fear, we in the PRC and EPC take for granted the fact

that God has established us as churches. We both know something of our history. We both acknowledge the truths which set us apart (almost alone in the world) as denominations. But there is the tendency, I think, to take these things in stride. Or, on the other hand, we are inclined to arrogance: we have the truth, but few others do; aren't we special! Neither of these attitudes should be in our midst. Rather, we should see the wonder of grace in our existence as denominations. Not only so, but

Rev. Higgs is a minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

as a consequence we should praise God, continually, for His work among us.

In this article I am going to speak, generally, of the EPC today, and more specifically of the Brisbane congregation in which I am the pastor.

It may be hard for many of you in the PRC to appreciate the smallness of us as churches. Our whole denomination, in terms of numbers, is less than one of your larger congregations. Let me give you some statistics to illustrate this. The statistics of congregational numbers are approximate, as the latest official publication to which I have access is two years old. I have adjusted some of these numbers if I have personal knowledge of changes.

We have five congregations, each with a minister and session (consistory). The first figure mentioned in each church will be the number of communicant members, the second the number of baptized members, and the third the number of adherents. Launceston: 32; 20; 2. Winnaleah: 16; 25; 8. Sydney: 10; 6; 5. Rockhampton: 34; 20; 10. And Brisbane: 35; 25; 30. In addition, we have three preaching stations, which come under the jurisdiction of session of the closest church. Under Launceston is the Burnie preaching station: 7; 8; 0. Under Rockhampton, Carins: 2; 3; 0. And under Brisbane, Chinchilla which has 3 communicant members. Finally, we have a mission work at Cohuna, which is operating like a preaching station under the Presbytery. We have a minister laboring in that work, which has 11 communicant members, 16 baptized members, and 5 adherents.

We have, then, six ministers serving a total number of approximately 350 members and adherents. Also, at the moment, our student minister, Mr. Mark Shand, is studying in your seminary. As you can appreciate, it is not always an easy thing to support our minis-

ters, financially, as fully as they ought to be. Having said that, however, I must acknowledge that God has by His grace enabled us, through a variety of means (not least of which has been the generous giving of the PRC toward all the students who have studied in the seminary), never to go hungry or to suffer want.

There is something else that you need to know about our churches: they are separated by large distances. The churches in Tasmania—Launceston and Winnaleah—are approximately the same distance from Brisbane as Houston, Texas, is from Grand Rapids. Approximately half way between Brisbane and Tasmania is Sydney: about a 14-hour drive south from Brisbane. An eight-hour drive north from Brisbane is Rockhampton. And then, about seven or eight hours north of Rockhampton is the Carins preaching station.

Our Presbytery, therefore, is vital. This is the broadest court of our denomination. Unlike your broadest court, all of our ministers attend—as well as a representative elder from each congregation. Not only is this court necessary, scripturally, but it provides the means for our ministers to fellowship with each other. As you can appreciate, to remain united in doctrine and purpose we ministers need to know each other, to talk about matters of doctrine, and to strengthen each others' hands in our most holy faith. Presbytery meets twice a year, usually in January and July. Following the last January meeting of Presbytery the Presbyters had a week-long conference. One of the main benefits of the conference was the opportunity it provided to get to know each other better in an informal setting. Given our scattered nature as churches such things are of great importance.

Not only are our churches scattered in distance from each other but, in Brisbane, our congregation is scattered. About two and a half

years ago I wrote for the *SB* and gave several examples that illustrated this: I won't repeat those examples. We are scattered as a congregation, and this provides some difficulties for us. Pastoral work is difficult. The communion of the saints in regular fellowship is extremely difficult. There are several things that we do as a church, therefore, to try to overcome these difficulties.

In the first place, every June in Queensland there is a long weekend. It has become a tradition with us to have a family-fellowship camp over this weekend. Most people from the Brisbane congregation, and often several from Rockhampton, meet together from Friday evening till Monday afternoon at a camp site on top of Mt. Tamborine. The scenery is magnificent. Bush walking tracks abound. Native flora and fauna are profuse. All of this sets the scene for a relaxing time of fun and fellowship. Often all that happens is that the saints just sit and talk. This is good. This helps us to get to know each other more, and appreciate each other better.

The theme of our most recent camp was personal witnessing. Both the texts on which I preached were appropriate to this theme. Also, on the Lord's Day evening I gave a lecture on the topic, and then there was a question time afterwards. After every meal one of the men communicant members leads in family worship. The passage of Scripture he reads is relevant to the theme of the camp. Apart from these instances of instruction the whole camp is devoted to fun, relaxation, and fellowship.

Secondly most of our meetings take place in people's homes, on a rotational basis. Now, partly this is due to the fact that we do not have our own church building, but partly also it helps to foster fellowship in our scattered congregation. In Australia it is fairly common for friends just to "pop in" on each

other (stop by, unexpectedly, to visit for coffee). In Brisbane this does not happen among some of us very often because our fellow saints may live an hour or more, away from us. To have meetings in our homes, though, encourages us to visit each other fairly regularly.

Let me tell you something about these meetings, and about our public worship on the Lord's Day.

Every Wednesday evening throughout the year, except for about six weeks during school holidays, we have a mid-week meeting. This is open to the whole congregation, although, due to children needing to be in bed, and for a variety of other reasons, generally only one member of each family attends. I normally lead these meetings. The occasional exception to this is when one of the elders leads if I am away. Just recently I have introduced another exception. Very occasionally I will ask one of the men communicant members to give an introduction to a text that we are studying. The normal format of these meetings is to work through a book of the Scriptures. We have just begun looking at Ruth. This meeting is fairly informal, with time for questions and comments from others.

Friday evenings are set aside for young people's meetings. Every alternate week is a social night for them. On these nights the young people do a variety of things ranging from trips to games to ice-skating. On the alternate Friday we have a night of instruction. The format varies. We have just finished working through Prof. Engelsma's *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel*. Next meeting I will take the position of one who holds to the well-meant gospel offer, and see how well the young people can refute me—to see, in other words, just how well they have taken in the truths expounded by Prof. Engelsma in his book. Occasionally I get one or more of the

young people to present papers on various topics. We then discuss these papers. Generally I give a follow-up paper on the same subject.

In recent times the ladies have been meeting together for fellowship and encouraging each other in their faith. Generally one of the ladies will present a topic for discussion that is relevant to them as women.

Also, throughout most of the year there is a pre-confessional class which I run. This occurs, generally, every fortnight, depending upon who is involved, how far away they live, and their circumstances as far as transport is concerned. We use Rev. Hoeksema's "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine" for this class.

Catechism classes take place after the morning service on the Lord's Day. To have these classes at any other time is too difficult, given the scattered nature of the congregation.

Every Lord's Day we have two worship services. During my whole time in Brisbane the morning service has been held in a central location, and the evening service has been held in the suburb where most of our people live. As of the first Lord's Day in July, however, we will be holding both services in the same central location. Our worship services are similar to yours. We open the service with a call to worship. We have congregational prayers; sing only the Psalms; read from the Scriptures (generally we have two readings though—one from the Old Testament, and one from the New); proclaim the gospel in preaching; and close with the benediction. In the morning service I preach through books of the Bible: at the moment we are in the Psalms. In the evening service I am preaching through the Westminster Larger Catechism.

The Lord's Supper is celebrated four times every year. It is our practice to have a fellowship sup-

per after the evening service on the day we have the Lord's Supper. Again, the primary purpose of this custom is to foster fellowship among us. Due to the smallness of our congregation we are able to hold baptisms whenever they are needed. We do not have to limit baptisms to a certain Lord's Day in the month, as some of your larger churches have to do.

There are many, many difficulties that we face as a small, scattered denomination in the midst of a wicked world. But there are also blessings innumerable. I have seen evidence of this in our own congregation. Since I became the minister here, there have been seven or eight baptisms and a similar number of new communicant members. This may seem to be a small number, but in a church our size this is cause for great joy and praise. I have seen the work of God in so many ways: in us as denomination; in our history; in my own congregation; in individuals; in our growth in the knowledge of the truth. And it is all of God. Let us as the EPC and PRC remember that all blessings come to us of God. Let us, therefore, bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. □



Introducing Our Second Home Missionary



Missionary Mahtani and family

One of the highlights of the 1998 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches was the decision taken by the synod, on the advice of the Domestic Mission Committee, to call a second home missionary. The decision called for this missionary to concentrate his labors in the eastern United States, complementing the work of Rev. Thomas Miersma, who is laboring as home missionary in the western part of the country. The work would begin in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The reasons for beginning in Pittsburgh were twofold. First, the Domestic Mission Committee has been laboring with a group of believers there for over two years. And secondly, the large city of Pittsburgh provides the PRC with many opportunities for labor in a place where the witness to the Reformed faith is relatively small. Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville,

Michigan was designated as the calling church.

Soon after synod's decision, the council of Southwest proposed a trio of ministers to its congregation. From that trio a call was issued to Rev. Jai Mahtani to serve as a second home missionary of the PRC. Believing it to be God's will for him, Rev. Mahtani accepted that call.

We rejoice that God has so graciously provided Rev. Mahtani for this labor. Pastor Mahtani is not only experienced in the work of missions, but has a heart for missions.

Aiding Rev. Mahtani in the work will be his devoted wife, Esther. The Mahtanis have been blessed with eight children. A residence has been purchased that can serve the Mahtani family well, but also the needs of the group. Their address is: 216 Thornberry Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235. Telephone numbers are: (412) 371-2277 (home) and (412) 371-2299 (study).

The group is meeting for worship services every Lord's Day at the Hampton Inn, located at 4575 McKnight Road. Sunday services are at 11:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. Besides the Sunday services, weekly catechism classes and Bible studies are being held.

Everyone living in the Pittsburgh area is cordially invited to attend the worship services. Feel free to contact Rev. Mahtani with any questions you may have.

Members of the PRC are encouraged to visit the work in Pittsburgh and become acquainted with the saints there.

May God bless the decision of synod 1998! May He prosper the labors of Rev. Mahtani! And may the work in Pittsburgh flourish! □



The Pittsburgh Mission

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

Arrows

The word arrow is not to be found in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it is used repeatedly, especially in the Psalms. It comes from the root Hebrew word which means to divide, to cut into two parts; then that which cuts in two, divides, wounds, destroys; and finally, an arrow with its cutting head. Arrows belonged to the offensive armament of the Israelites. Jehu drew a bow and smote Jehoram, "and the arrow went out at his heart" (II Kings 9:24). The followers of David were armed with bows, "and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows" (I Chron. 12:12). King Uzziah prepared a vast array of weapons with which to defend Jerusalem, among them engines to shoot arrows and great stones (II Chron. 26:15). But for the most part, arrows are used in Scripture in the figurative sense.

God has His arrows which He shoots. The arrows of God are the lightnings which cleave the atmosphere (Hab. 3:11), the calamities which He sends upon the enemies of Israel (Deut. 32:42), the famine and pestilence that disobedient Israel must experience (Ezek. 5:16). Because God is angry with the wicked every day, "He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors" (Ps. 7:13), and "shoots at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded" (Ps. 64:7). God also chastens His people with sharp arrows, as Job experienced, "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me" (Job 6:4), and as David complains, "For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore" (Ps. 38:2). Yet, even though God sets His people as a mark for the arrow at times (Lam. 3:12), those that have Him for their refuge and fortress need "not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day" (Ps. 91:5).

Words are like arrows in that they divide brothers and sisters, cut to the quick, wound, and kill. The children of God live among them that are on fire, "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. 57:4). They "whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words" (Ps. 64:3). In great distress David cries out, "What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" (Ps. 120:3, 4). What a fitting figure! Words, like arrows, cannot be recalled. They can both be used over again, but once in flight cannot be taken back. You can no more unspeak a word than you can unshoot

an arrow! If anyone doubts the power of the tongue, and the difficulty of controlling the tongue, let him read the third chapter of the Epistle of James. Repentance can heal the wounds caused by evil words, and prayer is needed to prevent the shooting of these sharp arrows.

Children are called arrows in Psalm 127. After setting forth the preciousness of children, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward," David states, "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of the youth." Arrows must be crafted very carefully. They must not be crooked or warped, but they must be straight and polished. They must have a sharp point, and then be aimed at a carefully selected target. So the child must be brought up straight, straight according to the Law of God. The child must be polished with instruction, correction, and discipline. And the child must be aimed: aimed at God and His glory, aimed at the kingdom of God and its welfare, aimed in the way of everlasting life! He must not fall short and miss that mark!

Psalm 127 goes on to speak of the "happiness of the man that hath his quiver full of them." Clearly, the number of children that we have is in view here. We take the quiver to stand for the home, and the home is to be filled with children. Normally, when God chooses to bless a man, He does so by giving him children (Ps. 128:3, 4). Quivers are of different sizes, and God decided that size, and when the quiver is full. With some it is full with one child, with others not until five or six, ten or twelve, are born. The God who killeth and maketh alive decides this, not man. Abortion is ruled out here, of course. The pill and other contraceptive devices are ruled out here, of course. Family planning, the decision of husband and wife as to how many children they are going to have, and just when they are going to have them, is also ruled out by this Psalm. The world's low view of children as a bother, as an unnecessary expense, as a hindrance to the good life; the world's low view of child-bearing and the labors of the mother in the home; the world's usurping of divine right in regard to the issues of life and death — all this may not influence or control believing parents in regard to their having children.

Children are the Lord's reward, and that reward is of grace, covenant grace. God gives children, in numbers that please Him, in order that the church may come forth, and heaven may be populated as it ought to be populated. God takes His seed from our seed. He established His covenant in the line of continued generations. He uses believing parents in that great work. What a heritage! What a reward! What grace! □

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“Conditions” and the Covenant

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:9

Anyone who lived through the Protestant Reformed/Liberated controversy of the late '40s and early '50s will remember the debates which took place over the word “conditions.” On and on they went over the question of whether one can properly speak of *conditions* regarding the covenant of grace. Seldom was there much consideration as to whether these were conditions to enter into the covenant, or within the covenant, or resulting from the covenant; but argue we did, rarely with a great deal of understanding, and at times approaching the banal, but interest and passion were there. So it is not surprising that Schilder in turn addressed himself to that question in his series of articles critiquing the *Declaration of Principles*. That was the question of the hour.

Striking, and worthy of note, is the fact that Schilder starts his primary treatment of this point in a chapter entitled, “Be Careful with Dictionaries.” It may well have been with good reason, when one considers that what he sets forth in delineating the term hardly meets the requirements of a formal definition, and would actually

seem to be a distinct avoidance of what the dictionary has to say. In fact, what he gives is more of a carefully fashioned series of rhetorical questions, set up to allow him to give his own rhetorical response as to what the term in his usage is not to be taken to say. His questions accordingly are:

- a. By *condition* do you mean something which would *bind* GOD? Then we say unconditionally: “unconditional is the password!”
- b. By *condition* do you mean something for which God has to *wait* before He can go on? Then we say unconditionally: “unconditional is the password.”
- c. By *condition* do you mean something *we* have to fulfill, in order to *merit* something? Then we say unconditionally: “unconditional is the password!”
- d. Do you mean by *condition* something which God has *joined to something else*, to make clear to us that the *one* cannot come *without the other* and that we cannot be *sure* of the one, unless we are at the same time *assured* of the other? Then we say unconditionally: “conditional is the password!”

As far as the Bible is concerned, it contains many of what are called conditional sentences; and, especially in New Testament Greek, their form of construction is carefully designed to identify the logical relationship which does or does not exist between two different hypothetical propositions. Each of these sentences is divided into two parts: the “protasis,” which is the hypothetical clause beginning, actually or by implication, with the conjunction “if”; and the “apo-

dosis,” which contains the conclusion and actually or by implication is introduced by the adverb “then.” Such sentences tell us that *if* a certain thing is true or not true, *then* there is another thing that will be true or not true in turn. It is a form of logical syllogism designating the relationships which exist between various realities in life. Few languages are as well adapted to such careful expressions as is the Greek, so that we may well conclude that it was with good purpose that God provided providentially that the New Testament should be first set forth in that language.

Of the large variety of conditional sentences found in Scripture, a good number relate to the matter of salvation and/or the relationship of man to God. They tell us when and how these can or cannot take place with all of the certainty of God’s Word. God defines for us what various relationships in life will or will not exist, as, for example, in John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” We are told very simply that those who have faith and believe in Jesus Christ are spiritually alive and will have this life forever, while those who do not believe are without such life and remain under the judgment of God. And so one can go on through the Scriptures to learn from them of the various relationships which God has or has not established for life. We are told that when certain things are or are not true, there are things in relationship to them which are or are

Rev. Woudenberg is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

not true as well. And it would seem that it is these which Dr. Schilder had in mind when he proposed his last rhetorical question, "Do you mean by *condition* something which God has *joined to something else*, to make clear to us that the *one* cannot come *without the other* and that we cannot be *sure* of the *one*, unless we are at the same time *assured* of the *other*? Then we say unconditionally: 'conditional is the password!' " No one has any problem with this.

The problem is that this is not what the controversy was about, nor does it reflect the use of the words *condition* and *conditional* in ordinary life.

If we go to the dictionary, we find in Merriam-Webster (perhaps the most generally accepted authority concerning American English) that the first definition of the word *condition* reads:

Condition ... *condicere*, to agree, fr. *com-* + *dicere* to say, determine

a: a premise upon which the fulfillment of an agreement depends: stipulation

b obs: covenant

c: a provision making the effect of a legal instrument contingent upon an uncertain event; also: the event itself.

And with that we gain a little feel as to why Dr. Schilder entitled this chapter of his book, "Be Careful with Dictionaries," for it is this very meaning which he rather pointedly avoids in his questions. Rather than meeting this meaning of the word *condition* straight on, Schilder confronts us with several implied meanings, carefully embedded in a series of rhetorical questions which by themselves are rather obscure. In fact, it is only when one goes on to his commentary on them, given in the following chapter, that one gains some feeling as to what he actually has in mind.

Take, to begin with, the first of these questions: "a. By *condition* do you mean something which

would *bind* GOD? Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditional is the password!' " One wonders. What does he mean by a "condition ... which would *bind* GOD?" But in the next chapter he goes on to explain:

a. God is *not* bound by anything but only by His *Own* determined will, His *Own* fixed decree or counsel, and His *Own* good pleasure which He fulfills in His *Own* way and time. In His sovereign good pleasure He has decreed that only the elect will effectively obtain the benefits which He has promised in the covenant of grace to those who believe in Him. He has elected certain people to salvation and *thus* to faith, hope, love, and all that can and has to follow. Election is election; it is free, unchangeable, and particular. God has chosen the elect to be drawn out of total death and therefore He cannot make *conditions* which had to *move* Him to elect them or would authorize Him to do it. He chooses on the ground of His good pleasure and for no other reason. Whatever the elect yield of faith, hope, or love, in short, of good works, they can only *yield* out of the power that He Himself has granted to them in free grace, according to His eternal good pleasure.

Apparently what Dr. Schilder has in mind is to affirm his agreement with the Canons of Dordt, and with the Scriptures upon which they are based, that the election of the children of God is freely determined by Him on the basis of His own good-pleasure, and that He is not bound simply to respond to the will of man. The way of expressing this is strained, almost strange; but the point he apparently seeks to make is well taken. No one would disagree with him on that, or with his chosen rhetorical response, "Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditional is the password!' " We would certainly agree with that.

So Schilder goes on to his next question with its similar response,

which is: "b. By *condition* do you mean something for *which* God has to *wait* before He can go on? Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditional is the password.' " Here again one is struck by the difficulty of the language, as he describes a *condition* as "something for *which* God has to *wait* before He can go on." Certainly this is not much of a definition, but it contains a thought he wants to get out nonetheless, as comes out in his explanation:

b. Therefore, God doesn't have to *wait* for anything. He doesn't have to wait for one who is dead to come. For a dead person does not come, unless he comes from death to life. And this making-alive lies only with God the Lord Himself, Who is the One who makes alive by His own unique (*proprium*) work. He doesn't have to *wait* for anything before He elects. He doesn't have to wait for anything before He, for instance, takes to *Himself* little children who die in their infancy, because He takes care of His *Own* work as is intended in the case of the children mentioned in the Canons of Dort I, 17. He doesn't have to *wait* for anything with adults, whom He has called by His Word, for when He, in their life, wants to say A, then He says A. When God wants to say B, then He does it, yet always considering the sequence which He Himself made for His *Own* work, where the B follows the A. That is, in all cases in which He has decided that an A should be written before a B. And if it pleases Him to write a B, a C, a D, or a Z, in a different way, then He does it, wherever He wills. We think of insane people for instance, who are not able to believe or confess in an ordinary way and whom He, as far as it pleases Him, will bring to salvation.

Clearly he is speaking to one of those problems into which he and his Liberated colleagues had gotten themselves with their view of a conditional covenant. In maintaining that the covenant is condi-

tional, they had to deal with the fact that there are certain baptized members of the church who never really come to that capacity where they are able in a self-determining way to fulfill these conditions by way of a conscious faith, such as little children who die while still infants, and retarded souls who never develop to a point of personal responsibility in life. And so the doctor would assure us that these conditional structures do not bind God in such a way that He cannot make exceptions. Regarding that, he would pick up his rhetorical refrain again, "Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditional is the password.'" And, at least for the moment, we will let that go as well.

It is in his third proposition that Schilder finally gets to the real point — or nearly so, "c. By *condition* do you mean something we have to fulfill, in order to *merit* something? Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditional is the password!'" And with his commentary he explains:

c. Since it all happens freely, *merit* is completely out of the picture. It wasn't there in Paradise and after that even less. It is actually foolish in this connection to think in terms of *more or less*; earning anything is principally excluded, also with Adam, the inhabitant of Paradise, who was righteous before God. Faith is therefore no *merit* and faith is never a *ground* for salvation and neither is repentance.

And with that, for us, the disappointment sets in. Here he comes to the heart of the whole controversy—and he sidesteps it. One can feel Hoeksema's frustration as well, when his first response to this whole series of questions was, "But I want to add one more proposition. It is similar to C with this difference that I want to stop at 'fulfill' and omit 'to merit something.' The proposition then reads: 'We do not believe in conditions

which we must fulfill.' Period."¹ His point is clear. By adding the idea of merit, Schilder was diverting the whole focus of attention from the real point. The fact is, of course, that no one was even suggesting the matter of merit regarding a conditional action. Actually not even Arminius had done that. For meritorious considerations one has to go all of the way back to the Semi-Pelagianism of Rome. No one was accusing anyone of that; and the introduction of it into this discussion could only serve to divert attention from the real question which cried to be discussed. The question was not whether man must merit something in order to receive the blessings of the covenant, but simply whether there are certain things which man must do, certain *conditions* he must meet, before the grace of the covenant is realized in his life; or, to put it in Hoeksema's terms, is faith a means used by God to bring His children into covenant relationship with Himself? That was the heart of the whole matter, and adroitly Schilder, by throwing in a few extra words which were extraneous to the real issue, had sidestepped the problem, forcing Hoeksema, by way of default, to lay down what he considered the real definition of what a condition is, which he did in these words: "A condition is a prerequisite which one must fulfill or comply with in order to receive something or have something done unto him."² But it was a definition, the discussion of which was never met.

What was being dealt with was not just a fine point of theological distinction, or a mere matter of proper terminology; it had to do with the very dynamics of the salvation with which God brings His people into the covenant of grace.

Herman Bavinck put the issue in this way:

After all, when the covenant of grace is separated from election,

it ceases to be a covenant of grace and becomes again a covenant of works. Election implies that God grants man freely and out of grace the salvation which man has forfeited and which he can never again achieve in his own strength. But if this salvation is not the sheer gift of grace but in some way depends upon the conduct of men, then the covenant of grace is converted into a covenant of works. Man must then satisfy some condition in order to inherit eternal life. In this, grace and works stand at opposite poles from each other and are mutually exclusive. If salvation is by grace it is no longer by works, or otherwise grace is no longer grace.³

And it was that with which Rev. Hoeksema and the *Declaration of Principles* was concerned. Is the covenant of grace completely God's work, or partially man's? And are the works of man within it conditions he must meet, or are they means given by God to bring His people into a living relation of friendship with Him?

For so many years Hoeksema had tried to bring about an opportunity to sit down and discuss this matter with Schilder and, if it might be, with his colleagues, as one can almost feel in his brief reply to what Schilder was writing:

"O, how sorry I am, that all these things were not discussed between us as deputies for correspondence, rather than to confer, behind our back, with the Revs. De Jong and Kok, who were not authorized, neither, judging from the letter of Prof. Holwerda, capable to speak for our churches! ..."⁴

But in the providence of God it was never to be. □

1 *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 27, p. 222.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

3 Bavinck, Herman, *Our Reasonable Faith*, Eerdmans, p. 272

4 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

State Supreme Court Approves Vouchers for Religious Private Schools

The [Milwaukee voucher] program does not involve the state in any way with the school's governance, curriculum, or day-to-day affairs. The state's regulation of participating private schools, while designed to insure that the program's educational purposes are fulfilled, does not approach the level of constitutionally impermissible involvement.

Supreme Court of Wisconsin, Majority Opinion (June 10, 1998).

Early this summer, the Wisconsin Supreme Court gave the school voucher movement its most significant legal victory. In a landmark 4-2 decision, Wisconsin's highest court surprisingly ruled that the controversial Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) passed constitutional muster. School choice advocates called it a watershed decision in the now bitter national debate over state voucher funds paid to private schools. Opponents, including People for the American Way, announced plans to appeal the decision immediately to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Milwaukee Program

The experimental Milwaukee school choice program was originally adopted by the Wisconsin legislature in 1989 to allow some

800 students from low-income families to escape the embattled Milwaukee public school system and attend "nonsectarian" (nonreligious) private schools using a state funded tuition voucher.

The original MPCP survived a number of legal hurdles, but in 1995 the legislature incensed choice opponents by raising to 15,000 the number of eligible low income students, and, more importantly, removed the limitation that the participating private schools be "nonsectarian," thus allowing parents to choose to place their children in Catholic, Lutheran, and Jewish schools. MPCP detractors immediately challenged the amended program, angrily insisting that tuition vouchers (\$2,500 per student) payable to private religious schools was a crass violation of the First Amendment prohibiting "establishment of religion."

The Lemon Test

The trial court and the state appellate court both earlier declared that the amended MPCP was a violation of the constitutionally man-

dated notion of a "wall of separation between church and state." But, on appeal, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overruled the lower courts, holding that the Milwaukee voucher program was constitutional, notwithstanding the use of public funds by religious schools. Reviewing U.S. Supreme Court church/state cases, the court noted that the appropriate standard was the three-prong test enunciated years ago by the Supreme Court in the case of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*: (1) does the challenged law have a secular legislative purpose; (2) does its principal or primary effect neither advance nor inhibit religion; and (3) does it create excessive entanglement between government and religion.

First Prong — Secular Purpose

The court quickly found that the amended MPCP satisfied this part of the three-prong *Lemon* test.

The [secular] purpose of the MPCP program is to provide low-income parents with an opportunity to have their children edu-

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

cated outside the embattled Milwaukee Public School System. "...State's efforts to assist parents in meeting the rising costs of educational expenses plainly serves this secular purpose of ensuring that the State's citizenry is well-educated."

Second Prong — Primary Effect of Advancing Religion

The court admitted that analysis of the second prong of the *Lemon* test — does the law's primary effect either advance or prohibit religion? — was more difficult. Acknowledging the requisite "wall of separation between church and state," the court nonetheless quoted a former U.S. Supreme Court decision cautioning that in maintaining this wall of separation, courts must be sure "they do not inadvertently prohibit the government from extending its general law benefits to all its citizens without regard to their religious belief."

Carefully reviewing numerous Supreme Court decisions that held that the Establishment Clause is not violated when the government offers a "neutral service" that is "in no way skewed towards religion," the Wisconsin court held that "educational assistance programs" do not run afoul of the Constitution if those programs provide public aid to *both* sectarian and non-sectarian schools (a) on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and (b) only as a result of numerous private choices of the individual parents of school-age children.

Since the MPCP gives participating parents the choice of sending their children to a neighborhood public school, a private non-sectarian school, or a private religious school, the program neither "favors nor disfavors" religion. Secondly, because the amended MPCP provided monetary aid by individual tuition reimbursement checks payable to the *parents*, the court found that "not one cent" of state aid ultimately flows to the religious schools "except as a result

of the necessary and intervening choice of individual parents."

Third Prong — Excessive Government Entanglement

Finally, the court faced the third element of the *Lemon* test: whether the amended MPCP would result in excessive governmental entanglement with religion. The court noted that although the participating sectarian schools would be subject to "performance, reporting, and auditing requirements," together "with nondiscrimination, health and safety obligations," these oversight activities were not a "comprehensive, discriminating, and continuing state surveillance" which would constitute constitutionally impermissible involvement. The program, declared the court, does not involve the state in any way with the religious school's governance, curriculum, or day-to-day affairs:

Routine regulatory interaction which involves no inquiries into religious doctrine, no delegation of state power to a religious body, and no detailed monitoring and close administrative contact between secular and religious bodies, does not of itself violate the nonentanglement command.

Other Objections

The court also rejected other challenges to the amended MPCP, holding that it was not an "abandonment of the public school system" and was still experimental in nature since it continues to allow the state to "measure the effects of choice and competition on education." Finally, the court brushed aside arguments that the tuition subsidy program violated the Wisconsin Constitution, holding that public funds may be placed at the disposal of parents so long as the program on its face is neutral between sectarian and nonsectarian alternatives and the transmission of the public funds is "guided by the independent decision of third parties (the parents)."

Comments

Because the Wisconsin Supreme Court is the highest court ever to uphold religious school vouchers, the ruling will undoubtedly give the school choice movement new momentum, although the opponents of the use of state funds for tuition at private and parochial schools are apparently determined to appeal this controversial decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. Perhaps the central issue of contention will be the "entanglement" prohibition. Although the Wisconsin court held that the state will not be involved "in any way" with the recipient schools' "governance, curriculum or day-to-day affairs," the fact remains that the participating religious schools will be subject to certain "performance, reporting and auditing requirements," as well as federal nondiscrimination laws. Although the court dismissed this state oversight as "minimal," many questions remain as to whether this kind of obligatory state surveillance will be fatal to the voucher program in Wisconsin and similar experimental programs in other states.

Historically, governmental oversight and intrusion have always followed governmental funding, and it is difficult to envision why such entanglement will not accompany tuition vouchers. This unavoidable consequence should be deplored not only by church/state separatists, but also by parents and teachers in the Christian dayschool tradition who are understandably wary of state oversight of private parental Christian schools. Health and safety regulations are perhaps unavoidable, but state interference in admissions, curriculum, and financial issues often sound the death knell for parental schools. For many reasons, Reformed Christian parents should carefully monitor the tuition voucher battle in the coming months and years. □

The Secret of the Fruit of the Vine (II)

“Much Fruit”

(John 15)

Last time we addressed the subject of “doctrine fruit.” This fruit is either absent from many so-called Christian and church vines, or hanging there, altogether rotten—doctrine which gathers flies.

Lest you think this writer is declaring doctrinal doomsday when in actuality this year and the last decades will be known by connoisseurs and historians as vintage years of truth, allow just one example. A preacher I know was confronted after a worship service recently by a person who happened to be visiting that morning, and who took offense at the preacher’s message. In the sermon the New Age movement was condemned. The offended party condemned the condemnation with words something like this addressed to the minister:

“Your understanding of the Reformed faith is so outdated. No really intelligent person would subscribe to those ideas anymore. Our minister has often said that the more in depth he studies the New Age ideas the less difference he sees between them and the Reformed faith. In fact, he firmly be-

lieves, and has proven it in his sermons, that New Age thinking is Reformed thinking which has finally, after all these centuries, arrived at theological maturity.... Haven’t you come to see this yet? This is the New Age of Enlightenment!”

Need I say more?

But on to another subject....

True believers, and true churches, will bear doctrine fruit. Sound doctrine. Much doctrine. Doctrine which is the revealed truth of the Bible. There will also be other fruit. Much more other

fruit. It is fruit which comes out of the doctrine fruit. Fruit which, together with doctrine-fruit, comes out of the vine. This much more fruit, and the Vine Himself, is the focus of our study today. As we enter into this, think on Jesus’ words: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15: 5, 8)!

For Study, Meditation, Discussion & Much Fruit!

1. The nature and manifestation of the fruit of believers.

List the various fruits mentioned in John 15 (don’t miss joy, v. 11; prayer, v. 16; and witnessing, v. 27!). Find at least ten other fruits of the Spirit of which the Bible speaks. What kind of fruit is this? Do all Christians bear all the fruit of the Spirit?

2. The source of good fruit

Show from John 15 and elsewhere how the triune God is the Author of the good fruit in the lives of His people. What is the Father’s

role? What is the role of the Son? What is the role of the Holy Spirit? There is something about the human race which makes the husbandry of God necessary for anyone to produce fruit. This “something” is called “total depravity.” What is this doctrine, and what are some texts which teach it? What is there about a person’s lineage, and what is true about Adam, which explains our natural fruitlessness, our depravity? Proof? Is it correct to say that an unregenerated, unbelieving person, though he may not be able to do a spiritually good

work, yet can do some good in the eyes of God? Why or why not (cf. Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6; Canons III/IV, 4)?

3. The way fruit is produced.

From one very important point of view good fruit in God's people is an absolute given. They produce fruit necessarily, just because they are in the Vine, Jesus Christ. It is impossible that they do not, for they are a work of God. What do Psalm 130:4, John 15:16, Romans 6, Ephesians 1:3, 4, and the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 32 teach regarding this?

At the same time that we say that fruit is a given we must be clear that God produces fruit in our lives not in a mechanical way, but in a living, personal way, in and through our persons. God does not work fruit in us as if we were machines—as if He pours in the gas and starts our engine and away we go! Rather, He works in us a response which is a decidedly human reaction, a moral reaction, a willing and thinking and heart activity. He works in our heart, and through our person, and that, to involve us in the fruit-bearing. That is why Jesus can say we bear fruit, and even much fruit (John 15:8)! Reflect in this connection on the relation between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, or the two "parts" of the covenant of grace. How does Philippians 2:12, 13 bear on this?

The God who works necessarily and personally to produce fruit also works mediately—He uses means. As the farmer works the soil and uses fertilizer, tractors, trellises, and whatnot to produce fruit, so God uses various means to produce the spiritual crop. How do John 15 and the rest of Scripture show how the following are means God uses to produce fruit: faith; preaching; chastising; our abiding in Christ; doctrine? Other means?

God works also to produce fruit in His church increasingly. He

does this by "purging" certain branches, and by "casting forth" others (John 15:2, 6). What is this purging and casting forth? Does this passage teach that there is a possibility that true believers will fall out of Christ, out of salvation? Why or why not, in light of Scripture? Have you been purged lately? Are you being purged now? How does God do this?

4. Strange fruit.

By "strange fruit" I refer to persecution. Jesus speaks of this in John 15:18ff. Such fruit is not, of course, something the disciples themselves bear. Rather, persecution is something that "crops up" as a result of believers' bearing good fruit. It is the unbelieving world's throwing rotten tomatoes (and worse!) at a good act. Why? What is there in the believer that occasions the wicked world's wrath? Find several passages in the psalms in which the psalmists speak of this persecution. How do the psalmists react to it? Some of the psalms are "imprecatory"—in them the psalmist calls down the wrath of God upon His enemies (e.g., Ps. 69:22-25). Would this be proper for us? What does the inspired John say in John 15, and what do the following passages say about the fact of persecution for the believer: II Corinthians 11:23-27; Philippians 1:29; II Timothy 3:12? How can James say we ought to rejoice in the various trials, which would include persecutions which come upon us (James 1:2ff.; cf. these references in I Pet. 1:6, 7; 2:19, 20; 3:14; 4:13, 14)?

5. Comfort for heavy-laden battered branches.

Both fruit-bearing and the fruit of persecution are reminders to the church of its connection with Christ. Christ bears fruit, Christ was persecuted, and therefore His people, His body, His branches shall blossom and be heavy-laden with good fruit. They also, because of Christ in them, shall be

whacked at by the brutish. For the wicked recognize, in the fruit of the church, the virtue and presence of the Son of God whom they continue to hate. In order to ensure the comfort of His body Jesus sends the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. How, according to John 15:26, 27, does the Holy Spirit comfort?

6. The purpose of fruit.

What does John 15:8 say is the purpose of fruit-bearing? What do Matthew 5:16 and I Peter 2:9 say about this?

7. Perspective: John 20:31.

The secret of the fruit is the secret of the vine, Jesus the Christ. When Jesus reveals Himself as the vine (John 15:1ff), He utters the last of the "I Am" statements in John. (The others are found in the following passages: 6:35; 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6.) How is Jesus' statement "I Am the Vine" further revelation of Himself as the Son of God our Savior?

This revelation of the Vine and the fruit of the Vine is written so that we might believe on the Lord Jesus and have life through His name. Certainly this is written so that we might have abundant life, bear more (and more) fruit (John 15:2), and much fruit (John 15:8), and that our fruit might remain (abide: John 15:16). Do you bear much fruit? During what seasons are we supposed to be fruitful? How might we be more productive? How do we measure, and ought we to set goals for productivity: as individuals, families, congregations, denominations? Three kind words a day? More time with the children? Twenty-five new members a year? Four hundred thousand by the year 2000? □

"Science Finds God" (cf. Romans 1:19-21)

One's attention is immediately caught by the cover of one of the national news magazines, *Newsweek*. The cover story, July 20, 1998, is titled, "Science Finds God." One is amazed by the statement!! Science now has come to the conclusion that there is truly God?? We are living in an age in which, so it seemed, the majority of scientists simply deny the existence of God—or else are admitted agnostics. But now, it appears, many scientists have come to the conclusion that God must exist. They can find no alternatives to this conclusion. The *Newsweek* article contains many reasons which lead some scientists to conclude that there must be God. The article is introduced by a paragraph which presents the conclusions of one astronomer:

The more deeply scientists see into the secrets of the universe, you'd expect, the more God would fade away from their hearts and minds. But that's not how it went for Allan Sandage. Now slightly stooped and white-haired at 72, Sandage has spent a professional lifetime coaxing secrets out of the stars, peering through telescopes from Chile to California in the hope of spying nothing less than the origins and destiny of the universe. As much as any other 20th-century astronomer, Sandage actually figured it out: his observations of distant stars showed how fast the universe is expanding and how old it is (15 billion years or so). But through it all Sandage, who says he was "almost a practicing atheist as a boy," was nagged by mysteries whose answers were not to be found in the

glittering panoply of supernovas. Among them: why is there something rather than nothing? Sandage began to despair of answering such questions through reason alone, and so, at 50, he willed himself to accept God. "It was my science that drove me to the conclusion that the world is much more complicated than can be explained by science," he says. "It is only through the supernatural that I can understand the mystery of existence."

Some of the reasons that certain scientists have concluded that there is "God" and that He has created all things are interesting as well. Certain things have been mentioned often in the past—which appeared to prove God's existence. But to affirm these in a national news magazine is particularly striking.

Physicists have stumbled on signs that the cosmos is custom-made for life and consciousness. It turns out that if the constants of nature—unchanging numbers like the strength of gravity, the charge of an electron and the mass of a proton—were the tiniest bit different, then atoms would not hold together, stars would not burn and life would never have made its appearance. "When you realize that the laws of nature must be incredibly finely tuned to produce the universe we see," says John Polkinghorne, who had a distinguished career as a physicist at Cambridge University before becoming an Anglican priest in 1982, "that conspires to plant the idea that the universe did not just happen, but that there must be a purpose behind it." Charles Townes, who shared the 1964 Nobel Prize in Physics for discovering the principles of the laser, goes further: "Many have a feeling that somehow intelligence must have been involved in the laws of the universe."

many scientists, further proves the existence of some divine being:

Ever since Isaac Newton, science has blared a clear message: the world follows rules, rules that are fundamentally mathematical, rules that humans can figure out. Humans invent abstract mathematics, basically making it up out of their imaginations, yet math magically turns out to describe the world. Greek mathematicians divided the circumference of a circle by its diameter, for example, and got the number pi, 3.14159 Pi turns up in equations that describe sub-atomic particles, light and other quantities that have no obvious connections to circles. This points, says Polkinghorne, "to a very deep fact about the nature of the universe," namely, that our minds, which invent mathematics, conform to the reality of the cosmos. We are somehow tuned in to its truths. Since pure thought can penetrate the universe's mysteries, "this seems to be telling us that something about human consciousness is harmonious with the mind of God," says Carl Feit, a cancer biologist at Yeshiva University in New York and Talmudic scholar.

Another scholar points to a related mathematical formula as proof for God's existence:

To Joel Primack, an astro-physicist at the University of California, Santa Cruz, "practicing science [even] has a spiritual goal" — namely, providing inspiration. It turns out, explains Primack, that the largest size imaginable, the entire universe, is 10 with 29 zeros after it (in centimeters). The smallest size describes the sub-atomic world, and is 10 with 24 zeros (and a decimal) in front of it. Humans are right in the middle. Does this return us to a privileged place? Primack does not know, but he describes this as a "soul-satisfying cosmology."

Mathematics, in the minds of

Some have even discovered a

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

kind of "providence" of God in creation!

To some worshipers, a sense of the divine as an unseen presence behind the visible world is all well and good, but what they really yearn for is a God who acts in the world. Some scientists see an opening for this sort of God at the level of quantum or subatomic events. In this spooky realm, the behavior of particles is unpredictable. In perhaps the most famous example, a radioactive element might have a half-life of, say, one hour. It has a 50-50 chance of decaying. And what if the experiment is arranged so that if the atom does decay, it releases poison gas? If you have a cat in the lab, will the cat be alive or dead after the hour is up? Physicists have discovered that there is no way to determine, even in principle, what the atom would do. Some theologian-scientists see that decision point—will the atom decay or not? Will the cat live or die?—as one where God can act. "Quantum mechanics allows us to think of special divine action," says Russell. Even better, since few scientists abide miracles, God can act without violating the laws of physics.

An even newer science, chaos theory, describes phenomena like the weather and some chemical reactions whose exact outcomes cannot be predicted. It could be, says Polkinghorne, that God selects which possibility becomes reality. This divine action would not violate physical laws either.

One is possibly surprised that science has now "found God." Striking that this is so today after several generations of scientists have simply ruled out the existence of God out-of-hand. Yet, is not this exactly that of which Paul speaks in Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The *Newsweek* article clearly confirms this.

What one must notice in an article such as that in *Newsweek* is that the theory of evolution is maintained. Even the "theologians" who are also scientists refuse to deny that. In fact, some even claim that evolution shows somewhat the very nature of God!

These scientists who have "found God," nevertheless refuse to believe the infallible and inspired testimony of Holy Scripture. The creation account, for instance, is simply a myth to these scientists.

Thirdly, these scientists who maintain the existence of God, are of all religions: Jewish, Christian, or Muslim—or of no religious faith. There is really no room in their discoveries for the wonder of salvation and the heart of the gospel: Christ and Him crucified.

There is also, however, a reminder of the fulfillment of Revelation 13—the rise of the two beasts. We have presented the probability of the joining of religion and science. This is not on the basis of the infallible Word of God, but rather on the conclusions of scientists who have "discovered" God in their scientific studies.

For other believers, an appreciation of science deepens faith. "Science produces in me a tremendous awe," says Sister Mary White of the Benedictine Meditation Center in St. Paul, Minn. "Science and spirituality have a common quest, which is a quest for truth." And if science has not yet influenced religious thought and practice at the grass-roots level very much, just wait, says Ted Peters of CTNS. Much as feminism sneaked up on churches and is now shaping the liturgy, he predicts, "in 10 years science will be a major factor in how many ordinary religious people think."

Not only is this forecast likely true, but already it is evident in churches of every sort—including many Reformed churches.

There was, I thought, one other extremely interesting comment in the article. This dealt with the re-

ality of the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. The observation of "nature" in which the individual saw something of the wonder of Christ's two natures could only be seen through the "spectacles" of Scripture. We believe and confess that Christ is fully divine and completely human. It is indeed a difficult concept for the human mind to grasp. Yet it is essential if there is to be salvation from sin and deliverance from the sentence of death. Scripture further declares not only that "God is light," but also that Christ is the Light of the world. In connection with all of that, I found extremely interesting one thought expressed in the article:

Take the difficult Christian concept of Jesus as both fully divine and fully human. It turns out that this duality has a parallel in quantum physics. In the early years of this century, physicists discovered that entities thought of as particles, like electrons, can also act as waves. And light, considered a wave, can in some experiments act like a barrage of particles. The orthodox interpretation of this strange situation is that light *is*, simultaneously, wave and particle. Electrons *are*, simultaneously, waves and particles. Which aspect of light one sees, which face an electron turns to a human observer, varies with the circumstances. So, too, with Jesus, suggests physicist F. Russell Stannard of England's Open University. Jesus is not to be seen as *really* God in human guise, or as *really* human but acting divine, says Stannard: "He was fully both." Finding these parallels may make some people feel, says Polkinghorne, "that this is not just some deeply weird Christian idea."

Obviously, those of other religions would not concede this relationship. Nevertheless, it is impressive: Jesus is the Light of the world. Light itself is created to *reflect* the truth that God *is* Light and Christ *is* the Light of the world. □

September 2 and 3, 1998
in Loveland, Colorado

The March meeting of Classis West was held in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday and Thursday, September 2 and 3. Rev. Richard Moore (Hull, IA) provided able leadership to the classis as the chairman of this session.

The delegates of Classis West gathered already Tuesday evening, together with the congregation of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, in a special worship service which was conducted by Pastor-elect Daniel Kleyn of Edgerton, Minnesota. The sermon he delivered was part of his classical examination. The meeting of classis on Wednesday was given to the examination of Pastor-elect Kleyn. With gratitude to God we may report that Mr. Kleyn passed his extensive examination for the office of the ministry, and that the Edgerton PRC was instructed to proceed to his ordination and installation into the office of the ministry of the Word and sacraments. That installation has since taken place, and Pastor Kleyn has taken up his labors in Edgerton PRC.

Committees of pre-advice met the rest of the day on Wednesday, to formulate advice for classis to consider Thursday.

On Thursday, classis faced several important issues. Two disciplines cases were carefully considered in closed session, one of which was there by appeal of a member under discipline. In the case involving the appeal, classis upheld the decisions of the consistory, recognizing their long, patient labors in the case, and rejected the appeal, exhorting the appellant to heed the call to turn from sin. Classis also gave careful pastoral instruction in the case, in an attempt to help the appellant see the urgency of dealing with the problem which is the cause of the discipline. In the other case, approval was given for the consistory involved to proceed in discipline, even to the last remedy, if necessary.

Classis also with gratitude to God received a letter from Rev. Jon Smith, in which he expressed a desire to be reconciled with our churches, having left several years ago in an improper manner. Because Trinity PRC, Houston, from which congregation Rev. Smith left, is now disbanded, Classis ap-

pointed the consistory of Loveland to investigate the case and to work with Rev. Smith toward the removal of all offenses, also determining to what extent he seeks to be reconciled to the PRC. Loveland's consistory was instructed to report with advice to the next classis.

Finally, classis gave consideration to an overture from Edgerton PRC which seeks several changes in the Church Order. Classis will send the overture on to synod 1999, having expressed approval of some of the changes, and disapproval of others.

We may thank God that the meetings showed a good spirit of unity and peace throughout, as well as much pastoral care in the deliberations concerning discipline. With advice carefully formulated by the various sub-committees, and oneness of mind in the matters deliberated, classis was able to finish a rather lengthy agenda by 2:00 on Thursday.

The March 1999 meeting is scheduled to be held in Redlands, California.

Rev. Steven R. Key,
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

For over five months the congregation of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL has waited patiently for various governing bodies in Cook County, IL including the highway department and the Army Corps of Engineers, to grant their approval to Bethel's building plans and issue a building permit.

Now, thankfully, all of that appears to be behind them, since finally in late August they were granted their much sought after building permit, for which we give God thanks. Actual construction at Bethel got under way about a week later, with footings for the walls going in as well as a temporary driveway.

To mark that milestone in Bethel's ten-year history, the occasion was marked with an official ground-breaking celebration on August 31. In the coming weeks

they look forward to the actual construction of a sanctuary for worship.

In other church building news, we can report that work at the church site of our Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI continues. Writing this in early September, we can tell you that Georgetown appears to mirror the pace of Bethel. Presently, the footings are all in, which gives a good idea of the overall outline and size of the building. And we also noticed, near the building site, stacks of ce-

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

ment blocks, which by now are probably part of the building.

The next time any of you visit our Randolph, WI PRC expect to see something different, since they recently voted to make some changes and improvements to their building and grounds. First, they voted to expand and pave their parking lot with asphalt and surround it with some new sidewalk. Second, they decided to replace the carpeting in their narthex and sanctuary and add a row of pews. Finally, they replaced the north door of their church building.

The consistory of the First PRC in Holland, MI recently reviewed their decision not to place Bibles in the chairs of their new church sanctuary. They realized the practical difficulties this created for their congregation and for visitors as well. Therefore, beginning August 8, Bibles were once again found under the chairs in First's sanctuary. However, the elders still believe the practice of taking one's own KJV Bible to a worship service is a sound one, and encourage their congregation to continue this practice begun when First was between church homes and worshiping in a school.

First also recently invited their congregation to keep abreast of current events and trends in the church world by checking out the selection of periodicals and magazines their pastor, Rev. C. Terpstra, leaves in their church library for them to browse through, take home, and read.

Evangelism Activities

After a one-year absence, the Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC once again sponsored a booth at the week-long Hudsonville Fair in late August. Hundreds of fair-goers passed by their booth. Some stopped and said hello, some also stopped and browsed through the large assortment of pamphlets and books displayed. But, more importantly, the truth of the gospel and our Re-

formed faith were prominently displayed before the eyes of many.

School Activities

Our Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA recently completed a building project which added a separate building consisting of two new classrooms and bathrooms. The project was completed in mid-August, with final inspection done on August 20, which meant that Hope's teachers could finally get into their rooms to begin preparations for the school year which began some ten days later. So the new building was completed just in time.

Denomination Activities

At the meeting of Classis West on September 2, Pastor-elect Daniel Kleyn was examined and approved for ordination as a minister of the Word and sacraments in our churches. Friday evening, September 4, he was ordained into the ministry and installed as the

eleventh pastor of our Edgerton, MN PRC. We can only stand in amazement at this great blessing. We give thanks to God for His provision of another servant to labor in His vineyard among us.

Some in our denomination were able to attend the recent conference in Northern Ireland sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship. The conference dealt with the theme of Eschatology, or the last times. Profs. D. Engelsma and H. Hanko were the principal speakers. The conference was held at Castlewella, Northern Ireland, and according to those who went from my church, it was very worthwhile, with over 100 in attendance, both from this country and from various places in the United Kingdom.

Food For Thought

"It is more necessary for us that we should make a discovery of our faults than of our virtues."

—C.H. Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church express their sincerest sympathy to our members, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Huiskens, Mr. and Mrs. Jack VanDyke, Mr. and Mrs. Jim VanDyke, and Mr. and Mrs. David VanOverloop and families, in the loss of Joanne Huiskens and Elaine VanDyke's mother, and Jim VanDyke's and Julie VanOverloop's grandmother,

FLORA VELDMAN.

May our gracious God comfort them by His Word, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. A. Spriensma, President
Mr. David Harbach, Clerk

YEARBOOK CHANGES:

(Back of Acts of Synod, 1998)

Please add a telephone number for First PRC (Holland): (616) 748-7645.

Rev. Mahtani's address in Pittsburgh is: 216 Thornberry Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235; Phone: (412) 371-2277 and study: (412) 371-2249.

Mrs. Roberta Harbach's address should be: 1035 Village Lane, Jenison, MI 49428. Her telephone number is: (616) 667-0847.

Bulletin Clerk of Georgetown: New address: 1015 Elmwood Dr. in Jenison.

The new clerk for Edgerton PRC is:

Mr. Allen Brummel

P.O. Box 446

Edgerton MN 56128

Phone: (507) 442-5931

CONGRATULATIONS!

Rev. Meindert Joostens has, by God's grace, completed twenty-five years in the ministry of the gospel. The Congregation of Lynden PRC extends congratulations to him in observing this milestone and, in particular, gives thanks to God that three years of that ministry have now been given to us.

"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15).

May God richly bless Rev. Joostens in the remaining years of his ministry.

Congregation of the Lynden PRC

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church extend their Christian sympathy to the children, grandchildren, and relatives of

MRS. FLORA VELDMAN

in her passing to glory. Mrs. Veldman was the widow of the late Rev. Herman Veldman and not only served as his faithful helpmeet, but also taught for many years in our Christian schools. May the bereaved family be comforted with the assurance of God's Word in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Rev. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Darrel Huisken, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Joan Mass in the death of her husband,

MR. PETER MASS.

May she be comforted by the words written by the prophet Nahum, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him" (1:7).

Rev. Charles Terpstra, President
John VanUffelen, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 16, 1998 our beloved parents and grandparents,

GORDON and EILEEN TERPSTRA, will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. We express our hearty congratulations to them and give thanks to our faithful, covenant Father for their enduring marriage and for their godly example and guidance. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless and keep them in the days ahead.

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- ❖ Suzanne Looyenga
Jim and Lisabeth Verhey, Brendan, Brianna, Caitlin, Meghan, Drew
- ❖ Tom and Luanne Schipper
Jason, Dirk, Nicole, Andrew, Betsy
- ❖ Rev. Charles and Verna Terpstra
Corey, Amber, Kimberly, Thad, Kyle, Justin
- ❖ Todd and Val Terpstra
Gordon, Jillian, Ian, Madelyn
- ❖ Jeff and Kathy Terpstra
Lindsey, Kelsey, Michael, Melanie

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Grace PRC of Standale, MI extend their Christian sympathy to Mart and Ann Daling in the death of her mother,

MRS. JANICE TOLSMA.

We pray that they may find comfort in God's precious Word. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Rev. Mitchell Dick, Pres.
Mrs. Clara VanDenTop, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church express their sincerest sympathy to our fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. Bernie Kamps and Mr. and Mrs. Titus Kamps, in the loss of Bernie Kamps' sister-in-law,

LISA KAMPS.

May our gracious God comfort them by His Word. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Psalm 18:2).

Rev. A. Spriensma, President
Mr. David Harbach, Clerk

LECTURE

The Evangelism Society of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church is sponsoring the lecture "Jesus Christ: Victor over Hell" to be held Friday, October 16, 1998, at 8:00 p.m. in Covenant PRC. The speaker will be Rev. Martin VanderWal, pastor of Covenant PRC. This lecture is the third and last in a series based on Matthew 16:18. The lecture will be followed by discussion and refreshments. The public is cordially invited to attend. The church is located at 283 Squawbrook Rd., Wyckoff, NJ 07481. For more information and directions, call the church at (201) 891-0902, or visit our website at <http://www.covprc.org>.

