



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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Our Glorious Inheritance Reserved

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

I Peter 1:4, 5

An inheritance for the people of God, strangers in this world because of their election by God. They are citizens of another country, an heavenly country. For it they live and labor, strive and suffer, willing to lose their life for it. All because they have been begotten unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To them Peter gives encouragement and comfort with the hope of the eternal, incorruptible inheritance that fadeth not away. They are in the fiery furnace of affliction and they long for the realization of their hope. They know that the inheritance is theirs and that there is nothing that can take it away. Their

hope stretches into the inheritance.

A glorious inheritance it is. No human words can adequately describe its beauty. The future inheritance cannot be compared with anything here below. It is heavenly and cannot be adequately described in language that is of the earth. The only thing that we can do is speak of it in negative terms.

Incorruptible. Corruption is the destruction of anything by forces external to it. A thing is corruptible when it is exposed to these forces that tend to destroy it, its power and beauty, its life and being. In this world all things are corruptible and corrupted. In our bodies we carry these forces in our blood, bones, and flesh. They are in the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. We in no way can resist them. In contrast, our heavenly inheritance cannot be attacked by any such destructive forces.

Fadeth not. Corruption is from the outside; fading away is from the inside. Something fades away because of a lack of vitality, a lack of proper strength to endure forever. All things on earth possess a certain power to be and to live, but that power is limited, so that sooner or later they fade away. A flower dies when the wind blows over it, but it also dies because it has limited strength. No matter how beautiful, it will soon wither and fade away. So we also quickly fade away. Threescore and ten or four-score years measure the limits within which our vitality is consumed. We bend our head, incline to the grave, and pine away. But that inheritance possesses an inexhaustible strength, so that its beauty never fades, for it is inseparably connected to Christ, to the everlasting God.

Undefiled. The object of our hope, that inheritance, is not sub-

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ject to the defiling influences of sin. This cannot be said of the first Paradise. Even though it was created righteous and holy, it was subject to defilement. Since the moment of the Fall, all things are defiled, and we defile all things. By the words of our mouth, by the sight of our eyes, and by the touch of our hands we defile. As we walk through the world we leave a trail of defilement. But the inheritance to which we look forward in hope is beyond defilement. No sin enters there; it is eternally righteous. Indeed, for it is rooted in Christ, the Righteous One.

Of this glorious inheritance we are assured, for it is eternally reserved in the heavens for us. Already it is prepared. Already it is real. It only awaits to be revealed in all its beauty and to be given to its rightful heirs. This inheritance was prepared in God's sovereign and immutable counsel. We, as objects of His grace and mercy, are foreordained in that counsel to be heirs of that inheritance. The apostle Paul reinforces this truth in Romans 8:29, 30.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The ultimate reason why this inheritance is already prepared is that it is centrally realized in Jesus Christ. By His death on the cross He merited the inheritance for His brethren, thus making us co-heirs with Him. The beginning of His exaltation was His resurrection and His being received into that inheritance. Then, having ascended into heaven, and being seated at the right hand of God, He was filled with the Spirit and all the gifts necessary to realize our final salvation.

As that inheritance is reserved

for us, so we are preserved for it. We "are kept by the power of God." While on earth we have plenty of enemies. The powers of darkness, that triple alliance of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, would seek to destroy us. As a roaring lion the devil goes about seeking whom he may devour. He does not seek to be in the public eye, preferring to work behind the scenes, unnoticed, yet always active. Oh you may ignore him, forget all about him, or deny that he exists. He does not mind. In fact, he much prefers that, because he attacks us when we least expect it and where our protective armor seems to be weak.

Helpers he has aplenty. There are a host of demons at his command. As prince of darkness he also has all wicked men at his disposal, and they are only too eager to do his bidding. All the while he is working he is corrupting. He knows how to twist the truth, corrupt the Scriptures, and pervert the facts. As long as the church is on earth the devil will not rest. He is out to destroy us. Until our dying breath this battle will rage on.

As mentioned, the second enemy is the world of wickedness. God has called His people out of the midst of the world as a separate people to tell His praises. It is for this reason that we are strangers in the world. We have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; we are in the world, but not of the world. For this reason the world seeks to destroy us, for our very presence in her midst condemns her in her wickedness. The world hates us and tries to make our existence upon the earth impossible. Sometimes she does this in a very subtle way. She welcomes us into her places of entertainment, and in every other way will suggest a little tolerance and compromise. But her compromise always and only means that we completely sacrifice our principles to join her ranks. The world never gives up anything, but expects of

us that we give up everything.

When the believer stands firm against these attacks, he can expect open hostility. Already present in the world is the ever increasing power of the Antichrist. When this power reaches its height, there will be one last attempt to wipe out the cause of Christ from the earth.

Then there is our worst enemy of all, our own sinful flesh. The devil and the world could not be a threat to us if it were not for our old, sinful nature that is prone to all evil. The one access that the powers of darkness have to us is our own inclination to sin. We expose ourselves to temptation, often even invite it, and play with it, even though we are fully aware that our flesh is weak. No wonder that the apostle Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

From every human aspect we could never resist that triple foe. Left to ourselves we could never remain standing. Peter knew this from his own experience. Our daily experience teaches us that we not only can fall into sin, but actually do. We deserve by our constant unfaithfulness that God should give us over to our sins and cast us away forever.

Yet, in the midst of all these threatening dangers, we are encircled by an armor that no weapon of the enemy can penetrate. We are invincible, indestructible, always victorious. Positively, we are kept in the power of God. He surrounds us with His protective care, for we are His cherished possession. He has redeemed us unto Himself by the death of His own Son on the cross. He has exalted Christ to heaven, where He intercedes for us and prepares a place for us that we may be where He is. God has committed to Christ the preservation and salvation of the saints. That is Christ's chief concern, so that He exercises the power of God whereby we are kept.

That power is God's power,

therefore, an almighty power. Since all power belongs to Him, even the devil and wicked men are dependent upon Him. In spite of themselves, they can only carry out His purpose. So while, on the one hand, we have an enemy that we ourselves can never resist or conquer, it is equally true, on the other hand, that we are kept by the power of God in perfect security.

Peter describes the manner of this preservation as being "through faith." Faith certainly is not the work of mere man. God's protection is not dependent upon our believing and continuing in the faith, as if God's power were active in us only if and when we believe and stand in the faith. No, faith is the gift of God apart from which the Holy Spirit does not work. God does not treat us like robots, which respond only mechanically to the will of God. Nor does God protect us while we sit serenely by, unaware of the dangers that threaten us. No, God wants us to be confronted by the enemy. He wants us to realize our danger and experience the terrors of our battle against spiritual powers of wickedness that threaten to destroy us. He wants to prove and strengthen

our faith through these afflictions.

Thereby we realize our own weakness and our dependence upon Him, so that we cry to Him for help, and He hears us. He gives us grace to stand in the evil day. And even when we through weakness do fall into sin, God makes us sincerely sorry for our sins, brings us to repentance, and assures us of His pardon. Thus we grow in grace and become strong in the faith, even as an oak tree forces its roots deeper into the ground to resist the raging storms. We are kept by the power of God, enduring even to the end.

Does this make us careless and lax, so that we do not resist evil because we are confident that we will be saved anyway? The truth can never make us careless. How can we love sin, when we have learned to hate it? How can we become friends with Satan and the world, when we have become spiritually separated from them? Faith causes us to be enemies of all that is of darkness, even as we are made friends of God and heirs of salvation.

Thus Scripture urges us to put on the whole armor of God, for our

battle is not against flesh and blood, but against all the powers of darkness. In that battle we need an armor that can only be supplied to us out of the spiritual arsenal of God. We need the power of God working in us and through us, that we may stand in the evil day. We need a living faith, that can meet all the onslaughts of darkness.

Stand, therefore, not in your own strength, but in the strength of God, following the Captain of your salvation to victory. For our salvation is ready and waiting. Soon we will leave this battlefield with all its anguish and trials. Then we will enter into the glory of Christ with the saints who have gone before. The day will soon be here in which Christ will return upon the clouds of heaven, and then the final glory will be revealed in all its perfection.

Now we suffer for a time, in order to be glorified with Christ forever. We know that nothing can separate us from His love. God is for us. Who can be against us? In all these things we are more than conquerors. In that faith we stand. We watch and wait. For faith is the victory that overcomes the world. □

Editorial

The Running of the White Horse (1)*

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Revelation 6:1, 2

* The text of the address given at the graduation exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 14, 1999 in Holland, MI.

The white horse of Revelation 6:2 ran in the building of the First Protestant Reformed

Church of Holland, Michigan the week of June 6.

It was wonderful to behold.

For the white horse with its rider is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And a man who had been trained by the churches was approved by examination before the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches and was declared a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

Indeed, the white horse ran through all the deliberations of the Protestant Reformed synod, inasmuch as they all had as their purpose the preaching of the gospel, whether in the local churches, on the mission field, or at the seminary. This, at bottom, is what the Dordt Church Order means in Article 30 when it stipulates that in the major assemblies "ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted." "Ecclesiastical matters" are those that serve the preaching of the gospel.

Because the deliberations and decisions of the synod had to do with the running of the white horse, they were weighty.

Because the graduation of the seminarian is very really a stride in the white horse's gallop, this ceremony is the occasion of celebration.

For the white horse looms large in the history of the world. It dominates. Unleashed by the

Lamb's opening the first of the seals that seal the scroll in the right hand of the triune God on His throne, the white horse with its rider is huge in the time and space of our world. Sizable as the following three horses are—war! economic realities with all their social consequences! death!—they are overshadowed by the white horse. The titanic figure of the beast in Revelation 13 is a peanut in comparison with the white horse. Even the monstrous dragon, whose tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth and who establishes an impressive world-empire of daunting power and glittering splendor, is dwarfed by the white horse and its rider.

The white horse in its running is the great backdrop of the panorama of the present age as presented by the book of Revelation. Better, it is the central figure and event in this panorama.

Christ in the Gospel

The white horse with its crowned and armed rider is the power of the slain, risen, and exalted Lamb, Jesus Christ, in the world. This power of Christ establishes, maintains, and advances His kingdom. It also defeats and destroys the kingdom of man, which is the kingdom of Satan. The white horse is the *power* of the exalted Christ in the world inasmuch as it is His *very presence*—not a bodily presence, but a real presence nevertheless.

The alternative is to explain the white horse as antichrist, or as the antichristian Roman empire. The premillennialist Harry Bultema, following C. I. Schofield, identified the white horse as the antichrist (*Verklaring van de Openbaring*, 1921, pp. 122-124). The present-day Presbyterians who are aggressively promoting postmillennialism basically agree with their fellow millennialists by identifying the white horse as "the Roman army victoriously entering Israel toward Jerusalem" (Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.,

He Shall Have Dominion, 1992, p. 403). Thus, antichrist, or antichristian Rome, is acknowledged as the victorious hero in history, "conquering and to conquer." Where does this leave Christ? What does this imply concerning His power in the world, to establish and extend His kingdom? Is this not "pessimism" and "defeatism"?

That the white horse with its rider represents the powerful presence of Jesus Christ in New Testament history is evident. First, Scripture's witness to God's exaltation of the risen Christ makes it unlawful to say of any other person or might that he or it goes forth "conquering and to conquer."

Second, in light of what has just been revealed in Revelation 5 of the sovereignty and power of Jesus Christ, it is impossible to think of any other conqueror in the first verses of chapter 6 than Him.

Third, the similar figure in chapter 19 of a rider on a white horse, which rider is there plainly identified as Jesus Christ, requires us to explain this symbol of Christ, not of His enemy.

Fourth, there is the color of the horse. The horse is white. The color white in Revelation and elsewhere in Scripture is not simply symbolic of victory. But it is symbolic of *heavenly* splendor and victory. The white horse, as *white* horse, represents *heaven's* triumph, indeed, the triumph of the all-glorious God.

And, fifth, the Old Testament, which the book of Revelation builds on and develops, presents Jesus Christ as the mounted and heavily armed warrior, who rides victoriously in the world.

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh,
O most mighty, with thy glory
and thy majesty.

And in thy majesty ride prosperously
because of truth and meekness
and righteousness; and thy
right hand shall teach thee terrible
things.

Thine arrows are sharp in the
heart of the king's enemies;



Rev. Dale Kuiper, Candidate Eriks

whereby the people fall under thee (Psalm 45:3-5).

The question is, "What is the power of the exalted Christ in the world to establish His own kingdom and to defeat the kingdom of the beast? *How* is Christ powerfully present in this world?"

Revelation 6:2 does not say.

But elsewhere Scripture makes plain that the power of Christ is His Word, rendered almighty by His Spirit, and that this Word goes forth in and through the preaching of the church in the office of the ministry of the gospel. To refer only to the New Testament, this is the line of biblical teaching that begins with Jesus' own ministry as a preaching ministry; runs through the great commission to the apostles and New Testament church, the activity of the apostles in the book of Acts, and the injunction to the church in the epistles; and ends in the description of the calling of the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 (Mark 1:14; 16:15; Acts 1:8; II Tim. 4:2; Rev. 3:7, 8).

Inasmuch as Christ's Word is entrusted to the church, and is proclaimed by her, Zechariah 10:3 can say that the LORD makes the congregation "as his goodly horse in the battle," victoriously fighting the battle of the LORD in history.

White horse, rider, and bow—all together as one figure represent the preaching of the gospel, to

which are attached the sacraments and from which discipline may not be divorced.

But this is the reality of the white horse only because the preaching of the gospel is truly the Word of Jesus Christ—the Word that He Himself speaks from heaven, the Word that is energized by the Holy Spirit with all the power of His resurrection-life. Take *this* away, reduce the preaching to a mere human discourse *about* Jesus, and the preaching has no power to establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ against the tremendous force of Satan on behalf of the kingdom of antichrist. Then the doubtful question must arise: "What is the power of Christ in history?" And even: "Is there a power of Christ in history?"

Since the first of the four horses of the Apocalypse is the preaching of the gospel, it was a happy coincidence of providence that the name of the public house where the early English Reformers met to discuss the gospel and the need to spread it was the "White Horse Inn."

The preaching of the gospel by the church—this is first in the counsel of God for the present age, between the ascension of Christ and the end of all things at His return. Such is the significance of the truth that the opening of the very first seal of the scroll is the sending out of the preaching of the gospel.

The preaching of the gospel by the church—this is served by the other three horses that follow. War, economic realities of riches and poverty with their accompanying social conflicts, and death are only means by which, and ways along which, the gospel runs its victorious course.

The preaching of the gospel by the church—this results in the persecution, martyrdom, and then victory in heaven in the intermediate state of those who confess the truth of the gospel. Such is the teaching of the fifth seal (vv. 9-11).

The preaching of the gospel by the church—this, with the realities of the following four seals, continues right up to the end, immediately before Christ's return. Such is the idea of the sixth seal, which consists of the catastrophes and terror of the revelation of the wrath of the Lamb in the great day of His wrath (vv. 12-17).

And the preaching of the gospel by the church in the office of the ministry—this lends solemnity to the synod of the PRC and joy to the graduation ceremony of a candidate for the ministry in the PRC. Look closely at the white horse, and among all its detail you will see the 1999 synod of the PRC and the gift of Garrett Eriks to the churches as a pastor and teacher.

□

—DJE

(to be concluded)

Letters

■ More on Exclusive Psalmody

I am bewildered by Rev. R. Cammenga's response to Mr. Connerley's letter in the May 15, 1999 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

It is an either/or: either you have exclusive psalmody or you do not. You cannot say that you have exclusive psalmody when you permit (and sing) songs other than the psalms! Would it not just be sim-

pler to admit that Article 69 of the Church Order of Dordt does not promote exclusive psalmody?

Philip Rainey
Portrush, Northern Ireland

Christ, the Mediator of the Covenant

As we continue our study of the doctrine of Christ, we have yet to consider Christ's specific relationship to the covenant of God. Three passages in the epistle to the Hebrews underscore the significance of that relationship. All three speak of Christ as the Mediator of the covenant. They are Hebrews 8:6, Hebrews 9:15, and Hebrews 12:24.

In Hebrews 8:8-10 we read, "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

The subject of this particular section of Hebrews is the covenant of God, and particularly the superiority of the *new* covenant over the *old* covenant. So in Hebrews 8:6 Christ is called "the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

In Hebrews 9 the same theme is continued and developed, all the focus being on Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices and priesthood. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant, SK), that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

Apparently the translators of the King James Version were looking ahead to the next three verses when they translated the word "covenant" as "testament." For Scripture points out here that, from one important point of view, the covenant is similar to our legal testaments or wills.

It is a mistake to equate the covenant with a legal agreement or contract, as it is often defined. Essentially the covenant is very different from a legal testament or will. But there is one aspect of the covenant that bears the characteristic of a testament, and that is that a testament goes into effect only upon the death of the testator. That is, though I may already have prepared a will for my wife and children, that will goes into effect only after I die. It is that particular matter to which the inspired writer calls our attention in pointing to the fulfillment of God's covenant. The new covenant goes into effect only by the death of Him who has established that covenant.

Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant.

We must attempt to grasp the

significance of that truth. We must know our Savior as the Mediator of the new covenant. We must know His salvation not merely as a pardon of our sins, but as bringing God's covenant with us to realization. And therefore we must know ourselves as God's covenant people in Christ.

The Covenant

Let us review briefly the concept of the covenant. We also have to take note of the idea of the *old* versus the *new* covenant.

In the first place, the book of Hebrews makes clear, as does all of Scripture, that God is a covenant God. His dealings with His people are *covenant* dealings. The salvation that He gives is a *covenant* salvation.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds God's people of the essential meaning and significance of the new covenant when he writes in Hebrews 8:10, with reference to that covenant, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The covenant is that relationship in which God is God to His people, and the people of His covenant are *His* people.

To put it another way, the covenant is that relationship of love and fellowship which God establishes and realizes with His people in Christ, and in which He gives us to enjoy the intimacy of His own covenant life as the triune God.

Scripture points us to the truth that this covenant relationship between God and His people is pictured in Christian marriage. In marriage a special relationship is

established, the primary characteristic of which is *fellowship*, the fellowship of love. When God reveals Himself to us in Christ Jesus, He establishes with us a relationship in which we enjoy the fellowship and love of His own life, and we in turn love Him as our God and Redeemer.

The Old and New

We face a question, however, in that Hebrews refers to the *old* covenant and the *new* covenant. Does this not point to two different covenants? And how, if there is an old covenant and a new covenant, is it possible to speak of the covenant as a relationship of love and fellowship? Isn't the idea of a contract or legal agreement much more fitting to the idea of an *old* and a *new* covenant?

It would appear, from a cursory reading of Hebrews 8 and 9, that there are two different covenants being referred to, and that the first was set aside for some reason and replaced by the second. Is it, perhaps, that the old covenant is the covenant of the law, and the new covenant is the covenant of the gospel? Was the old a covenant of works, while the new is a covenant of grace?

But it is exactly this error of making separation between the Old and New Testaments and speaking of two essentially different covenants that has led to several other serious theological errors.

In fact, the failure to understand these passages of Scripture has contributed to the development of dispensationalism in its various forms. It has led to the idea that we must look for a future special work of God with the Old Testament nation of Israel. There are multitudes in this country and around the world who believe that the promise made in the old covenant was an earthly promise to the Jews which must yet find fulfillment in the earthly land of Canaan.

That error is especially striking given the testimony of Scripture

that Abraham himself knew better than to look for the fulfillment of the promise in the earthly land of Canaan. For we read in Hebrews 11 that Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And so that there might be no doubt that Hebrews 11:10 speaks of the *heavenly* Canaan, we read in verse 16, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

The same failure to understand this distinction that is made between the old and new covenant has also contributed in no small part to the denial of infant baptism. For if the covenant of God in the New Testament age is now essentially different from that in the Old Testament, then certainly the sign of the covenant, besides having a different form, will also have a different meaning and application.

So our understanding of "old" and "new" covenant is critically important.

In answer to those questions about the reference to *old* and *new*, we must understand that Scripture teaches only *one*, everlasting covenant. It is the covenant of grace.

That covenant was established with the one people of God, the true, spiritual children of Abraham. Galatians 3 summarizes the teaching of the entire Old Testament on this point. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

To Christ was the promise given. In Christ was the covenant established. All the focus comes together *in Him*.

What about Abraham's other children? The apostle goes on to explain in Galatians 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The *new* covenant is new not merely by virtue of being more re-

cent, not just because it follows the *old* covenant. But it is *new* in that it is *the real thing*! The covenant is now realized in its highest, most beautiful form — that is, on this side of heaven. For God has become flesh, to dwell among us, to take us into the fellowship of His own life! The tabernacle of God is with men!

Jesus Christ has become the Mediator of the covenant!

Christ as the Mediator of the Covenant

How extremely important is this work of Christ as Mediator of the covenant! He is the One who alone can bring about the covenant fellowship between God and His people. He is the One who alone is able to realize the blessings of the covenant, and make them ours. Without Him as *Mediator* there can be no covenant of God with men.

Any fellowship of friendship and love between the majestic and perfectly holy God and fallen and depraved men is absolutely impossible without a Mediator — without *God's* Mediator, Jesus Christ. The reason is clearly expressed by Isaiah in Isaiah 59:2, when he tells the church, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

When two have become estranged to this degree, there can be no reconciliation, there can be no fellowship, there can be no peace, apart from the work of a mediator.

Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. He is so by appointment of God. He is so as a wonder of God's sovereign grace.

The covenant is indeed a covenant of grace.

God appointed Christ as Mediator of the covenant. We had nothing to do with that, nothing at all.

God sent Christ in the incarnation as Mediator of the covenant. We had nothing to do with that,

nothing at all.

And as the Mediator Christ has reconciled us to God and realized that everlasting covenant of grace with us, in which we now stand and are called the *sons of God*, His *friends*.

In order to accomplish that work, Christ had to die. Hebrews 9:15 emphasizes that amazing work of Christ our Mediator. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are

called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Jesus Christ sealed the covenant with his own blood. He satisfied God's justice in our place and on our behalf. He delivered us from the curse of the law, that law that was so prominent under the old covenant. That belonged to His work as Mediator, Mediator of the covenant, Mediator between God and His elect people.

And upon this particular, redemptive sacrifice as Mediator of the covenant depends all Christ's

work as Mediator today.

The exalted Christ still works as Mediator of the covenant today. On God's behalf He is teaching us as our Prophet; He is interceding for us as our only High Priest; and as King He is ruling us by His Word and Spirit.

Through Him and Him alone we enjoy the riches of God's fellowship, the life of His love.

All that awaits us is the perfection.

It *surely* awaits us, because of Christ, the Mediator of the covenant. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

Just 7006 Miracles

(John 19:31-42)

"Nobody Ignores A Tornado" is the title of an article by Keith Sikkema, published in the April, 1999 issue of the *Reformed Perspective*. Nice article about tornadoes. Important advice given in it about how we should seek shelter when a tornado threatens. Glory given to the God of tornadoes before whose power and wisdom we must bow when we behold His right arm's might revealed in the devastation of such storms.

Nobody ignores a tornado. I guess that's right. It is hard, when skimming through such an article, to refrain from an audible "wow." If you see and feel on a sultry spring day when the sky turns green that the conditions are right

for a tornado, you start thinking "Which corner of the basement?" And if you've been in one—I mean if you in your shuddering about-to-be airborne pick-up just barely beat out a funnel cloud when it roared through Standale, or if you've been asleep in bed once when the roof was taken off, or been taken up and whirled around with the bathtub and the house cat and the gladiolas and then deposited a few miles down the road, and lived to tell about it—well, then you certainly do not ignore tornadoes. All you need is for someone to say "Dorothy" (or "Mitch," I suppose) and you're outta here...!

Fact: nobody ignores a tornado! Some people might not know anything about them. But then they are just ignorant of them. If they knew anything, just something, of the reality of tornadoes, they would and could never ignore them.

Strangest thing, though, when it comes to miracles. When it comes to things which act according to no law of nature, events in which God by His arm or finger or prophet or incarnate Son moves or speaks directly, and extraordinarily ... then there is this ignoring. You see it all through history, this widespread ignoring of the miracles of God. Pharaoh is a case in point. He ignored them all the way to the bottom of the sea. Before that there were the scoffers in the days of Noah. They ignored God's prophetic Word-miracle, and His ark-miracle, until His flood-miracle took them all the way to the bottom of the sea. The Jews in Jesus' day are another case. "Show us a sign!" they demanded of Jesus, after He had abundantly proven by His Wonder-presence, wonderful words, and wonderful works that He is Messiah. Their ignoring The Wonder got them free passage to the bottom of hell.

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And so it is today. People will not and do not ignore a tornado. But they carry on, business as usual, doing the dishes, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, saving rain forests, fantasizing and lining up to see wars among the stars, selling us faster computers, drinking beer, fornicating, and shooting up the place with no fear, no wonder, and generally uninterested and unimpressed when apprised of the truth of the Wonders of God.

Especially is there this blatant and widespread ignoring of the miracle of Christ Jesus of Nazareth — the *Wonder of God*. "Once upon a time there was a kind, loving, and noble man who was killed for standing up for what he believed. It wasn't very nice of those people to kill him. He was such a nice guy. The end." To the unbeliever, that's the message of Christ and the cross, the gospel, and ethics. Hardly an F5. Hardly worth a "wow," or running for cover. Not something that's going to lift you up and turn you around. True, some across the ages and around the planet say they have been moved by this Jew from Galilee. And these promote his cause. But his cause/their cause — how is it so different, so earth-busting different from this, that, and the other cause the religious meteorologists tell us has now come rolling in? We've seen people get hyped up about this person, this philosophy, this book and that. They all claim to be something great, and THE way, and to offer the brightest of hopes. Christianity? It bores. Seen one religious storm, seen them all. Seen one intolerant bigot, seen a hundred. Heard one Christian prophet (just out of the slammer for bilking the flock of millions) tell us a comet is soon going to crash into the earth, and if I hear another I'll fall asleep. Seen one Jesus, heard ten. Not one has moved me.... Not like they do in Kansas!

What fools. What sinful ignoring. We know the reason: ignore the Christ of God and you ignore God, and sin, and the call to holiness and love and such hard things — all of which sinners love to ignore! And, ignoring, and therefore denying God and His name, Wonderful, you get to focus on man, and man's goodness. And you get to pretend you can have a meaningful life and a place in heaven by establishing your own religion consisting in saving whales, and feeding the poor, and accepting everybody and everybody's views as equal, and volunteering to clean up after tornadoes.

But this ignoring of God's miracle-Christ and miracle-cross is not, I trust, for you, dear reader! Grace has made you a believer. Believing, you ignore no miracle. After all, the miracle of grace has lifted you up, and spun you around, and landed you, safe and sound, in the land of the kingdom of heaven. All because of that cross-storm when and where the wrath-wind of God came God-miles an hour bearing down upon the Son, and crushing Him, but also crushing your sin into nothing.

Now grace, and the Spirit-wind of God, have given you to fear no wrath even from the holy Lord of the universe and to know and to love the Wonder, and the Father of the Wonder!

Our study today is all about not ignoring the Calvary tornado. Indeed, it is about *adoring* that Wonder which blew away sin and laid the foundation for an amazing house, the church. The cross itself is the focus of our attention as we examine the record in John and the other gospel accounts. I know you will not ignore it, or pass lightly over it. For that Wonder is for your life! Nobody who knows the love of God ignores that cross, that saving storm, and that awesome peace after the storm!

The cross itself. The salvation storm of our attention. The object of our boast. Wonder of God. But what is this? Other miracles too, accompanying, attending, articulating our Savior's death. God knew even His own would need them to enhance their faith and increase their godly excitement about the salvation of God. Do you know the others? I count 7006.

For Study, Meditation, & Discussion

1. The darkness

(cf. Matt. 27:45; Luke 23:44, 45)

In an earlier article (April 15, 1999) we mentioned the darkness which occurred on the cross at about noon, after Jesus had hung there three hours. Let us review. What indications were there that this darkness was no eclipse or other natural phenomenon, but a miracle of God?

What words did Jesus utter at the end of the three hours of darkness? What is the significance of these words (Hint: What do they teach of the holiness of God? Of

sin? Of the humanity and suffering of the Savior? Of the love of God?)

How do Scriptures such as Psalm 22:1; Psalm 89: 38ff.; Isaiah 53; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; I Peter 3:18; and others confirm the sermon of the darkness?

What would you say is the real *wonder* of the darkness?

2. The rending of the veil of the temple (Matt. 27:50, 51)

Most likely the veil that was torn from top to bottom when Jesus

died was the veil in the temple which separated the most holy place from the holy place. What description of this veil does Exodus 26 give? What was the purpose of the veil? The significance?

How do we know that this rending of the temple veil at Jesus' death was a miracle?

What does Hebrews 10:19,20 teach is the significance of this rending of the veil?

3. The earthquake (Matt. 27:51)

At the moment of Jesus' death the earth shook and rocks were torn apart. What proof is there that this earthquake was a miracle?

What might be the significance of this earthquake (Hint: compare this earthquake with the earth quaking at Mt. Sinai. If the shaking of the earth at Mt. Sinai was to show the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of sin, and the hopelessness of being a sinner under the law [and I believe it did show this!], then what about the shake-up of the earth at Mt. Calvary?)?

4. The miracle of the open graves and the resurrection of saints (Matt. 27:52)

There is a lot of mystery to this one! Seems that at the time of the death of Jesus certain graves, graves probably sealed with stones, were opened miraculously by means of the earthquake. Where the graves were that were opened we are not told — maybe just in the vicinity of the cross where Christ Himself would be buried. Also *whose* graves were opened we do not know — the graves of certain patriarchs? Saints who had seen Christ and were known by those yet living? Martyrs? The only thing we are told is that the bodies that were raised from the dead were the bodies of saints (Matt. 27:52), and that, after they rose they went into the holy city, Jerusalem, and appeared unto

many, verse 53.

About this, Hendriksen makes the following observations, observations with which I think we can agree. First, these resurrections were real; there was not an appearance of corpses to those in Jerusalem, or just an *appearance* of real people. Second, these resurrections occurred at the moment of Christ's death, along with the various other signs, and pointed to the significance of Christ's death. Third, just when these saints arose depends on either of two possible translations of verse 53. Here they are: "And having left the graves ... after his resurrection they went..." or "And having left the graves after his resurrection, they went...." Fourth: these resurrections probably were not like the resurrection of Lazarus. They probably did not have to die again but, having appeared a short time in Jerusalem, they went, body and soul, into heaven to be with Jesus.

What is the significance of these resurrections? What is the relation between Christ's death and the resurrection of all God's people (cf. I Cor. 15 & Lord's Day 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism)?

5. The miracle of Scripture fulfilled

We read in John 19: 31ff. that, at the request of the Jews, Pilate sent soldiers to break the legs of the ones crucified in order to hasten their death and prevent the desecration of the Sabbath (Should the Jews also have been thinking of Deuteronomy 21:22,23?).

But Jesus was already dead! Instead of breaking Jesus' legs, therefore, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with his spear so that blood and water came out.

This all, according to verses 35-37, was to fulfill certain scriptures. Which ones? What do these fulfilled scriptures preach concerning Jesus? Concerning His death? Concerning the scriptures themselves?

6. The miracle of Joseph, Nicodemus, & company

The dying of Jesus and the miracles accompanying His miracle-death served to work fear and/or faith in many people who witnessed these things.

There was the Roman centurion (Matt. 27:54), and others, who at Jesus' death declared, "Truly this was the Son of God." And according to the narrative in Luke 23 there was a multitude which returned from the cross smiting their breasts. In John 19 we read of one Joseph of Arimathaea, who begged the body of Jesus from Pilate, and took it to bury in his own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock (Matt. 27). And then there was Nicodemus, the once "by night disciple" who came also to anoint the body of Jesus with spices.

Comment on the various reactions to Jesus' death. Which reactions were fruits of faith? What caused these people to be so moved?

7. 7000 who cannot ignore the death of Jesus the Christ

The wonder of the cross! Tornado winds gyrate at 300 mph in Kansas or Oklahoma, or Arkansas, tear shoes off children, pierce fences with straw, and toss houses as if they were mere rose petals. But what greater wind is Calvary! Sin-destroying wind! Wind killing the Son of God! God's wrath-wind! God's mercy-wind! Church house-building wind!

Yes! So that even *today* there is this: a people who never *saw* the crucifixion, and yet who believe. It is God's remnant according to the election of His grace. Yes! After the wind of Calvary has died down, and the Savior has been laid down in the grave, there's this church-town, population 7000, I believe, which is discovered to have been spared the judgment of the Wind of God. Indeed, this Church-town, the city of God, *built* by this Wind!

Well, then, are you in the

town? The town for which One died in the F-infinity storm of the ages, so that *all* the town might live? Are you thankful?

Is it not pitiful, shameful, when we are not? We sometimes forget. We sometimes read of that tornado-miracle cross of Christ *without being moved at all!* Maybe it is all the bungee jumping, or the professional wrestling we watch on the television. Maybe we have been looking over into the "other" town by night and marveling at the entertaining Hollywood-gospel of Lukas rather than pondering the

gospel of the blood of the Lamb slain for sinners. Maybe we have been regularly and lustily lounging in our microsoft reality. So in our life, in our prayer-life, home-life, church-life, work and play-life it is as if the Tornado of which the Bible speaks never touched down for us and by us....

Tell me, friends: *how shall we and our children in this age be strong in faith in order to look past the screen, beyond Kansas, beyond fairy tales and vain joy, to see and to glory in the Wonder of God on Calvary?* What place will preaching have? Personal spiritual discipline? How can we help each other? How does the

Spirit of God, who is, after all, the One who is not found in ordinary winds (I Kings 19:11), and who is not impressed by the power and might of men (Zech. 4:6), work to comfort and keep us?

The Tornado of tornadoes has hit the earth. *God is in Christ in that whirlwind of the cursed cross reconciling sinners to Himself.* Many ignore. They even run from it, and warn others to steer a world away from it. And you? Extreme folly it is to run into the path of a tornado. *Wisdom and life to flee to the cross of salvation!* □

Special Article

Rev. Dale Kuiper

The Christian and Entertainment (2)*

The Antithesis

It is time to ask the question, Does the antithesis enter in here? What does the truth of the antithesis say to you and to me about entertainment and its proper place in our lives?

The antithesis is a truth that is dear to the Reformed believer. It is especially precious to the Protestant Reformed believer. It is dear to the Reformed believer because the antithesis spells his spiritual safety; and it is dear to the Protes-

tant Reformed believer because a battle for this truth was fought and won in 1924. That God's grace is particular, always saving, for the elect alone and never for the reprobate, is of extreme importance for the living out of this vital doctrine.

The antithesis is the absolute spiritual separation that God has established between the church and the world, between those who are in Christ and those who are outside of Christ, between the believer and the unbeliever. God has called us out of the darkness of unbelief, misery, and death, into His marvelous light. God has made between the church and the world a cleavage of such a nature that it can be bridged by nothing! Having made righteous discrimination between men in eternal predestination, God establishes this cleavage by the power of His grace down through the history of the human race. What a power that

is, that God sets vast elements of the children of Adam at enmity with one another! This is not a physical separation, but a spiritual one — though, to be sure, it implies a certain measure of physical separation as well, in that the child of God is not found in all the places where the child of darkness is found.

The life of the antithesis does not call us to world flight. We are called to be in this world, but not of this world. As children of light we are called to be God's party in the midst of a dark, perishing world. The only fleeing we engage in is the fleeing from sin and the very appearance of sin.

In Psalm 16:5-6 we read, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." The child of God has a wonderful in-

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* This is a continuation of the text of a lecture given in First Church, Grand Rapids, MI on April 22, 1999.

heritance, and that inheritance is God Himself. God gives Himself to us in Jesus Christ, in all His majesty, power, riches, and splendor. And God has drawn lines for us in our lives. Those lines in the Old Testament were the property lines that defined the exact piece of ground that each Israelite inherited in Canaan. God forbade that those lines be changed or that property be sold. For us, those lines which have fallen to us in pleasant places are our children, our doctrines, our practices drawn out of those doctrines, our place in the church of Christ and in the congregations, and ultimately our place in the heavenly Canaan. God has drawn lines for us. They have been measured out unto us with gracious care! And this means that we must always be busy drawing lines in our lives and in the lives of our children, lines of very definite demarcation.

The question is, Where do we draw the lines? The question is not, Where does my church draw the lines? We know the answer to that question. The preaching we hear every Sabbath Day draws the lines of doctrine and life biblically and sharply. Besides, you can read all about these things in our magazines and pamphlets. But where do *you*, and where do *I*, draw the lines personally and daily in our lives and the lives of our families?

It goes almost without saying that we must draw the lines of demarcation sharply, indelibly, and without compromise exactly where God draws the lines in His revelation to us. And then we must *stick* to those lines, and make them stick, without removing the ancient landmarks. James writes (4:4) that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and whosoever is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Paul writes in II Corinthians 6:14-18 (the classic text for the antithesis) that we are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, that we are to come out from among them and be separate,

that we are not to touch the unclean thing. There you have it. God, Christ, the elect angels, and elect believers — all these stand on one side of the line of the antithesis as covenant friends! On the other side is the devil, fallen angels, unbelievers, all that love and make the lie.

Now, whom are you going to invite to cross over and stand with you? Who will be your friend? With whom will you have fellowship, communion, concord, part — to use the words of the apostle. That is the great issue in dating, courtship, and marriage, is it not? But that is also the issue in this whole area of entertainment. Whom do you invite into your home to entertain you and your children electronically? “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes,” says David. Whom are you always going to be talking about and admiring? “Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,” says the man after God’s own heart.

Our conclusion is that the enmity that God has placed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent at the very beginning, the antithesis that God maintains between the church and the world down through the ages, must be *applied* by the Christian in every area of life, and in these last days increasingly to the area of entertainment. The place of entertainment in the Christian life is really very small, in that we are placed on earth to work. The problems that entertainment present us are really not so difficult if we remember that we are not citizens of this world, with worldly expectations, goals, and values; we are pilgrims and strangers on the earth as our fathers were. Our citizenship is in the kingdom of heaven. We declare plainly that we seek a better country, that is, a heavenly, and do not even expect to find any

satisfaction in these desert wastes. And because God is not ashamed to be called our God (Heb. 11:16), we confess, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee!”

Biblical Guidelines

As for biblical direction in the matter of entertainment, we offer for your consideration three broad guidelines. First of all, everyone recognizes that in regard to some of the things that have been mentioned (but not all of them) there is room for the exercise of Christian liberty. Members of the body of Christ differ as to wealth, abilities, and callings in life. With these differences come varying opportunities, and no one may make rules to force everyone into the same mold. The people of God are alike in two respects: everyone must confess the same truth and everyone must walk according to God’s commandments. For the rest, there is abundant room for variation and liberty.

Two passages come to mind in this regard. Paul writes to the Galatians (5:1), “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” He is combating the legalism of some in the churches whereby they were trying to establish part of their righteousness before God by the works of the law, especially circumcision. But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; He has fulfilled *all* righteousness, and therefore we are called to walk in the glorious liberty of the children of God. On the other hand, there is the warning of Galatians 5:13, “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another,” and the warning of I Peter 2:16, “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”

In other words, Holy Scripture warns us against two great errors, legalism and antinomism. Legalism is the scrupulous keeping of law and precept with the idea of establishing one's own righteousness before God. And antinomism is total disregard for the law of God. The law of God must not be read in church or preached on according to the Catechism because Christ has fulfilled the law, and I am completely free from the law! Both positions are wrong, and both are wrong as guidelines in the areas of entertainment. But the great danger for the church and for the believer in this present time is not legalism. Do not ever think it. The great danger is antinomism. No law for the Christian! Lawlessness is the spirit of these last times, and that spirit must not infect the churches. We are not free *from* the law, but we are free *under* the law! That truth is so beautifully expressed in Psalm 119:45, "And I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts." That is the first guideline. Walking at liberty with the law of God in our hearts as our faithful guide.

Secondly, because of the emphasis that Psalm 101 places upon the home and the sanctified character of the Christian home, somehow we must reclaim our homes and bring them more in line with the biblical example. Many of our homes have entertainment centers, a big cabinet or set of shelves, on which are placed a television set, a VCR, a tape deck, a CD player, and perhaps a computer with a pile of electronic games. Two things stand out here: first, the very presence of these centers suggests way too much emphasis on entertainment; and secondly, they encourage the wrong kind of entertainment. Also, the use of these things draws us away from each other and from having fellowship with each other. Television viewing and endless computer games are very individualistic. Interaction of parents with children, and children with

the other children can be very severely damaged.

The table with the family gathered around it talking — that used to be the center of the home. The bookcase with good books and religious magazines — that used to be the place to which we turned when we had a few extra minutes. But more and more our children and young people are not reading and are not studying. They tend to view the home merely as the place to be if you do not have any place else to go. Home is the place of last resort. Being home is *bad*; being on the go, that is really living. Oh, no! God puts you in a home with your family. *There* God will nurture, teach, and bless you. *There* He will give you joy and pleasure. So the second guideline in the matter of entertainment is having a strong Christian home and family where God is known, feared, and served.

Thirdly, something ought to be said about role models, since that is a word that keeps coming up in the media. Who will be the models after which we and our children pattern ourselves? To whom do we look up, and to whom do we point our children? God does not allow a professional athlete to be a role model for the Christian of any age. God does not allow an actor, actress, or worldly musician to fill this function for us either. We do need worthy examples to follow. We are to be followers (imitators) of God as

dear children (Eph. 5:1). Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps (I Pet. 2:21). We are to follow the apostle Paul and those who are like him (Phil. 3:17). Clearly, the role models we must follow are found in the church, not in the world. The elders, the deacons, the pastors, the saints! Closer to home, godly fathers by word and example show the boys and young men what the Christian life is all about. Mothers of meek and quiet spirit reveal to the girls and young women how they are to conduct themselves. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land," says David. "They shall dwell with me."

Can the Christian have fun? Yes. Really, he is the only one who can enjoy life and see good days. God has put him on the right side of the antithesis, and God keeps him there. He has a good conscience as he experiences the liberty that is in Christ Jesus. He is a member of the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

... to be continued. □

God's Children's Perspective

Thy name, O Father, blessed be!
May we, Thy children, bend the knee.
As earthly chores claim so much time,
Give grace to see Thy way sublime.
These finite tasks are not our goal:
God's glory — may it fill our soul.
Because we're creatures of the dust,
Set not our minds on things that rust.
Our interests here are preparation
For our eternal destination.
Grant we may not with might and main
Seek earthly glory to obtain;
But fill our spirits with Thy love,
Our hope — Thy kingdom up above.
May our perspective always be
Not here, but in eternity.

Thelma Westra

The History of the Diaconate (3)

Its Place in Christendom since the Reformation

We have seen that the office of deacon as instituted in the New Testament church fell into disgrace during the Middle Ages, when it was considered inferior to the priesthood, and when the deacon was assigned liturgical, pastoral, and administrative duties, but not the care of the poor.

Out of the Reformation came new branches of churches — Reformed, Lutheran, Anabaptist, and Anglican. Each had its own view of church government, and consequently its own view of the place and work of the diaconate. By a general historical survey of the diaconate in these churches, we will see that the Reformed churches have done more than the other branches of the Reformation to restore the office to its rightful place in the church.

In both the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, the view of the diaconate which was popular during the Middle Ages continued to be held for centuries after the Reformation.¹ The deacons were considered to be superior to the laity but inferior to the priests and bishops. The

diaconate was a steppingstone to the priesthood. One writer says that “the great majority of Anglican deacons spend no more than a year in the diaconate.”² The work assigned to them was, and still is, highly liturgical — assisting at the sacraments; bringing the Eucharist to the sick; and, in the place of an absent priest, officiating at baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other prayer services. They are also given pastoral and educational duties — teaching catechism, giving instruction to new members and those preparing for marriage, working with the youth, counseling those with problems, and working in the community to promote social and moral changes. Their works of charity include caring for the sick, poor, lonely, and homebound.

Within the past fifty years, however, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church have made a notable change in their view of the office. At Vatican II (a Roman Catholic council which met in the early 1960s), Romish clergy approved in principle the restoration of a permanent diaconate — that is, one in which men functioned for a lifetime, without seeking to be promoted to the priesthood. The council gave authority to local church leaders to make the ultimate decision whether or not they wanted permanent deacons. The same council permitted married men to hold the office of deacon, provided they had reached

the age of 35, but continued to require celibacy of an unmarried man who sought the office. For the unmarried, the minimum age was 25. Such changes the Jesuit Echlin considers to be a “restoration” of the diaconate.³

Similarly, the 1958 Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Churches recommended that the local parishes “consider whether the office of Deacon shall be restored to its primitive place as a distinct order of the Church, instead of being regarded as a probationary period for the priesthood.”⁴

We agree that the diaconate ought to be considered an office in its own right, and not merely a

1. For a treatment of the diaconate in the Anglican Church, cf. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, authored by James M. Barnett. (New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1981). For a treatment of the diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church, cf. *The Deacon in the Church: Past and Future*, authored by Edward P. Echlin, S.J. (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1971). To both these books I am indebted for much of the information in this section.

2. George Every, “The Diaconate in the Anglican Communion,” as compiled in *The Ministry of Deacons* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1965), page 49.

3. Echlin, *op. cit.*; chapter 4 (pages 95-124) is entitled “From Trent to the Restoration: The Deacon Returns.”

4. Resolution 88 of the conference, quoted in Barnett, *op. cit.*, page 149.

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steppingstone to the priesthood (or, in our case, to the eldership). For this reason the proposed change is an important change in the right direction. However, this change can hardly be considered a restoration of the office, for it accomplishes far too little, both with regard to the work of the office and with regard to the position of the diaconate in the church.

This proposed change does nothing to restore to the diaconate its rightful and basic work of administering Christ's mercies to the poor and needy. Too much emphasis is still placed on the liturgical and educational aspects of the office, work which Scripture does not assign to the deacons. Admittedly, in these churches the deacon is assigned various works of charity including the care of the poor. He is, however, instructed to "administer charity in the name of the hierarchy."⁵ That is, the bishops and priests are considered responsible for caring for the poor; the deacons merely assist them in this matter. That such is the deacon's fundamental work is ignored.

This proposal also does not change the thinking that the diaconate is subordinate and inferior to the priesthood in a hierarchy of offices. Having men remain in the diaconate longer will, perhaps, emphasize the importance of a certain rung in the hierarchy. After all, a ladder needs every rung to be useful and effective. However, the hierarchy is not abolished. The Romish and Anglican churches must do at least two things in order truly to restore the diaconate in their midst. First, they must reexamine their whole system of church government. They must begin to view each congregation as an autonomous body of Christ; the *congregation*, not the *denomination*, is the church. Furthermore, the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon ought to be found in each congregation. These offices must be considered on a par with each other, and each office must devote itself

to the work to which Scripture assigns it — the pastors to teach, the elders to rule, and the deacons to administer Christ's mercies. Secondly, they must reexamine their whole manner of worship, and see that much of their high liturgy is irrelevant, even wrong, in light of God's command to worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Were the deacon to be excused from these unnecessary liturgical duties, he could concentrate more on the work of mercy.

The office of deacon cannot be fully restored in these churches if such things are not done.

While the Romish and Anglican churches have done little to restore the office of deacon, the Lutheran branch has been responsible for its further demise. The fact is that the office of deacon, as Scripture speaks of it, is virtually non-existent in the Lutheran churches.

Martin Luther, who desired to bring the church back to the Scriptures, also wanted to reestablish the office of deacon, claiming that "the diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church's aid to the poor."⁶

It was the Lutheran form of church government which prevented this ideal from being realized. The Lutheran churches historically have allowed the state to rule the church. So long as the government was sympathetic to Lutheranism, Luther himself was content with this arrangement. As a result, the government also took over the work of caring for the poor. The men in the church who were given the title "deacon" were given the task of preaching, not of caring for the poor.⁷

Today, in the Lutheran churches in Europe, a "deacon" is a member of an organization which is not directly connected to the church, but which undertakes some work of mercy, such as nursing, so-

cial work, and mission work (the latter being largely viewed as a form of social work). This work is often his full time, salaried work, requiring professional training and state certification. We are told that

a deacon is understood to be a man who, as a member of an institution usually called a *Bruderhaus* (Community), has been trained in specific services — social, educational, administrative, medical, or purely ecclesiastical. He then practices these forms of service professionally, on behalf of his Church, of a church organization, of a Christian association, or of the public administration, but always in agreement with his *Bruderhaus*.⁸

This deacon is not ordained, nor does he even hold an office in the church: "the deacon has been given no place which would integrate him organically" into the church.⁹

In evaluation, little need be said. This concept of what a deacon is and does is far different from that set forth in Scripture, which clearly teaches that a deacon holds an office in the church (Acts 6:1-6, I Tim. 3:8-13, Phil. 1:1), and that his work is that of caring for the poor and needy of the church (Acts 6:1-6).

The Baptist churches have done better than the Lutheran, Romish, and Anglican churches in regard to the work of the diaconate. Originally the Baptist churches were concerned that the deacons care for the church's poor and needy, and manage the church's finances. In the latter part of the 1700s in America, the view began to be popular that the deacons were the church's administrators and business managers. Even then, they continued to serve the tables, which meant caring not only for the poor but also for the needs of the pastor and serving at the Lord's table. This latter duty included distributing the elements to the mem-

bers, as well as "admonishing those members who failed to attend the ordinance, and reporting to the church anyone who refused to heed such an admonition."¹⁰ Although it is still common today in Baptist circles to view the deacons as the church's executive officers, more emphasis is again being placed on the spiritual tasks of the diaconate, those of caring for the poor, the sick, and the minister, and being busy with "witnessing, preaching, counseling, worship, education, community projects," and the like.¹¹

The fact that the Baptist churches do not have elders (except for their pastors) means that the deacons are really the only other people to carry out the official work of the church. Perhaps this detracts somewhat from doing the real work of the diaconate; yet it is clear that the Baptist churches have the office of deacon in their midst, and are generally concerned to care for their poor through that office.

We ought not view our deacons as simply business managers, or church administrators, as has been done in Baptist circles. However, Reformed churches are not immune from this same pattern of thinking. Because the deacons are included in the council of the church (and rightly so), they do have some responsibility to oversee temporal matters, such as the church's building and finances. But we must be careful that these works do not detract from the work of charity with which our deacons must be busy.

This survey has demonstrated that a right (biblical) conception of the diaconate requires a right conception of church government. Because the Reformed (Presbyterian) system of church government is more consistent with scriptural principles than are the other systems, Reformed churches have had a good foundation on which to restore the diaconate to its rightful place.

The Reformed system of church government is based on the scriptural principle that the local congregation is in itself a complete manifestation of the body of Christ, in which functions the office of all believers, as well as the three special offices — pastor, elder, and deacon. Though uniting in a denomination with other churches of the same faith to manifest the unity of Christ's body, each individual congregation has the authority to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, exercise church discipline, and care for its poor and needy. The churches do this work through their pastors, elders, and deacons, believing that Christ Himself works through these men. Following from these premises, we argue that the office of deacon is essential in the church, and that the diaconate is equal to both the pastorate and eldership in its authority, although its work differs from that of the other offices.

John Calvin was instrumental in restoring the diaconate to its rightful place in Reformed churches. He deplored the low state into which the diaconate had fallen.¹² Convinced that the church ought to have the three special offices in it, and that the office of deacon was that of administering Christ's mercies, he proceeded to organize the church along those lines.

That the Reformed churches after Calvin followed his thinking about the place and work of the diaconate in the church is evident from official statements of the Reformed churches regarding the office. We refer particularly to the Belgic Confession, Articles 30 and 31; to the Church Order, Articles 2 and 24-27; and to the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons. The view of the diaconate set forth in these documents is still held and practiced by the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, as well as many other Reformed denominations today. These documents show clearly that the office

has a place in the church, and that its work is the care of the poor and needy.

We have begun to show that the Reformed churches have done more than other branches of churches since the Reformation to restore the diaconate to its rightful place in the church. We ought, however, not simply assert this generally, but demonstrate it more specifically. To do that, we will devote the next article to a more detailed treatment of the history of the diaconate in the Reformed churches. □

5. Echlin, *op. cit.*, page 121, summarizing the papal document *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* (*The Holy Order of Deacons*), which appeared in June of 1967.

6. Quoted in Charles W. Deweese, *The Emerging Role of Deacons*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979), page 19.

7. Cf. Prof. William Heyns, *Handbook for Elders and Deacons*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), pages 287-288.

8. Herbert Krimm, "The Diaconate in the Lutheran Church," as compiled in *The Ministry of Deacons*, page 54.

9. *Ibid.*, page 55.

10. Deweese, *op. cit.*, page 35.

11. *Ibid.*, pages 54-55.

12. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, transl. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 2, pages 1088, 1097-1098, 1479.

REMINDER: to College Students

Please let the SB business office know your college address so we can send the *Standard Bearer* to you during your time away from home.

What We Must “Get” in the School Year 1999-2000

In a matter of weeks, another new school year opens. Another year of covenantal instruction. Teachers have been planning for some time how best to teach their courses, what improvements to make, and what material to include. The new year will mean countless hours of preparation and study by teachers and students. It will be another year packed with lesson plans, assignments, papers, and tests. Subjects will include everything from art and music to history and algebra.

Why all this activity? What, exactly, teachers, do you hope to accomplish this year? What, specifically, students, do you hope to obtain in another year of school? New skills? More knowledge? More ability in areas where you are weak? Perhaps better grades?

Proverbs 4:7 tells us the one thing that teachers must strive above all else to give their students, and what all covenant youth must be seeking. It is wisdom. *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.* This is the command of God to all — from the little girl entering kindergarten, to the boy in his last year in grade school. It comes with equal force to those in

high school and to those who will sit in the lecture halls of a university.

What is wisdom, and how do we get it?

Wisdom is an attribute of God. God has perfect wisdom. By His wisdom He determined the whole course of history. As God, He not only knows all the factors, He is sovereignly able to control them. And He has no sin to mar His judgment. Truly He is the All-wise God.

In His wisdom God has determined everything both in time and eternity, in heaven and on earth. This plan of God includes all creatures, all events, all actions and words. God has so wisely planned that *all* these work together for the highest good possible, namely, for the utmost glory of His holy Name! Psalm 104:24 sings, “O LORD, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom thou has made them all.”

Wisdom in man is a dim reflection of that infinite wisdom of God. This is due to our being creatures, and thus very limited. We are limited in our knowledge of how to use the material things in our lives to the best advantage. In addition, we do not have control over the elements around us. Not knowing the future, we cannot know what choice is best. Besides, we are sinners, and sin distorts our judgment. Scripture teaches that sin is foolishness, the very opposite of wisdom.

In general, for a man to be wise, he must have a certain amount of knowledge. He must know what is the best goal, that

for which he must aim. In addition, he must know the factors in his life and how important each one is. He must know also how to use the things of this life to attain the goal.

The wise man will set his eyes on what *God's* wisdom seeks, namely God's glory. He will see the factors in his life in the same light that God sees them. Then by God's grace he will plan and walk in harmony with God's wisdom toward the goal of God's glory.

The Bible teaches that Christ is the wisdom of God. He is that because He is the fullness of the revelation of God's glory. God has made Christ the center of the whole counsel of God. God's plan to glorify Himself as the covenant God revolves around Christ, the Mediator of the covenant. As the Mediator, He went to the cross, established the covenant in His blood, redeemed His own, and reconciled them to the Father. As Mediator He brings His people into fellowship with God. In the wisdom of God, these covenant people will live in covenant fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, praising God for an eternity.

Since Christ is the wisdom of God, for us to be wise, we must have Christ. We must have the “mind of Christ” and live in all humility. Christ must live in us, and we must live out of His life. We must be renewed in His image. We must keep his commandments, and follow His example. We must flee all folly, that is, sin.

However, wisdom is not all that we should desire. We must

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also have *understanding*, according to Proverbs 4:7. What is understanding? Think about the literal meaning of that word — to stand under. A man with understanding recognizes what is under, or behind, the things he sees. Understanding is the ability to evaluate and then explain what we see and hear and experience daily. It is the ability to grasp the character of the person or event, and then to recognize his or its significance.

Wisdom is chief. We must get wisdom. However, in all our getting of wisdom, we must also get understanding.

Wisdom and understanding are related in this way. Understanding, along with knowledge, is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge is first. To be wise, a man must have at least some knowledge of God, of himself, and of his world. Added to that must be understanding — the ability to explain what he studies in the light of God's Word. Built on both knowledge and understanding is wisdom. Equipped with a knowledge of the facts and an understanding of their significance, a wise man can plan his way for the goal of giving God the highest praise.

How does a teacher impart that precious gift, that chief quality of wisdom, to his students? How does a student seek wisdom?

First, it is plain that the foundation must be there. The goal of Christian education is not to raise a child's self esteem. It is not to develop social skills, or to entertain. It is, first of all, to impart knowledge. With all diligence, therefore, the teacher seeks to teach — reading, math, history, Bible, spelling, grammar, and the rest. With all diligence, the student applies himself to know these things, and that, not as ends in themselves, but as the foundation for understanding and wisdom.

Notice, then, that the mere imparting of knowledge is not sufficient. No parent or teacher may be satisfied merely with high aca-

demic standards and high ACT test scores. No student may be content simply with grades that reflect his ability. Our goals must be higher. We are striving for the chief thing — wisdom, and for understanding with it.

In our seeking of wisdom, we turn to the Bible and learn that *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*. This means, first of all, that the fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom. Without that fear, there will be no wisdom, no matter how outstanding the educator or brilliant the student.

Secondly, the fear of Jehovah is the *principle* of wisdom. This stands to reason since the fear of the Lord makes one to stand in awe of God, to reverence Him, and to humble himself before God. That godly fear is also a love for God, a love so deep and controlling that one never wants to do anything that would make God angry with or disappointed in him.

Therefore one who fears Jehovah wants to do His will. He loves the commands of God and strives to keep them. He is daily putting on the new man in Christ, and putting off the old man of sin. He orders well his way, in wisdom, earnestly desiring that his life give all the glory to God.

What must the teacher do to instill this? It should be obvious, first, that a teacher *cannot* give wisdom. Wisdom is a gift from God alone. Unless God regenerates the student and recreates him in the image of Christ, he will never have (true) wisdom. What humility this works in the believing teacher! All his efforts are vanity, unless God works in the students.

Even though he realizes the necessity of God's work in the student, the teacher does not ignore this aspect of his teaching. His chief calling is to impart to his students wisdom. He therefore understands that the essence of his work is rearing covenant children in the fear of the LORD! In all his instruction, he is teaching them to know

God in and through Christ! He seeks to set before them the wisdom of God, which is Christ. That is what Christian education is — Christ-centered education!

In practical terms, it means that the instruction is given in light of the Scriptures. This is necessary for the basic facts as well as for the more complicated processes. In arithmetic we learn that 2+2 always equals 4, not because it just happens, but because the unchanging God has determined it, and in Christ upholds the creation in such a way that this fact consistently holds. The same can be said of the chemical reaction in the laboratory. Such instruction imparts true and correct knowledge, the knowledge of God in Christ. That is because it presents the facts of these subjects as the works of God, and these works reveal God.

True understanding will go beyond the mechanical, as, for instance, merely how and why a given chemical reaction occurs as it does. True understanding comes from a spiritual discernment gained from the Bible. It requires that students grasp God's purpose of the whole creation, and then how each creature (from the elephant to the carbon molecule) fits into that creation. True understanding comes through the knowledge of the proper (God-glorifying) use God has determined for each creature. Such understanding even includes how this element contributes to the earthly creation as a picture of the heavenly and spiritual.

With that understanding comes wisdom, as God grants it. Christ must be displayed. Christ, the fullness of the counsel of God. Christ, who rules over the chemical reaction as much as He does the development of the kingdom of the antichrist — all for the same goal and purpose — the final glorious kingdom, where the covenant of God and His people will be enjoyed in perfection, and God glorified to the utmost.

Such wisdom enables the be-

liever to walk in the ways of God. It enables him to use the world about him in the service of God. It equips him to be watching for the return of the Lord, discerning the signs, knowing their significance, reacting to them in obedience to God.

A new school year dawns. What are we seeking?

Woe to the student who does not use the opportunity to gain the knowledge, and who spurns wisdom, and the understanding with it. Woe to the student who earns all "A's" but gains no wisdom. It were better for that student that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea — before the school year starts.

The same is doubly true for the teacher who makes orderly lesson plans, is lively in his teaching, and gives profitable assignments, but does not impart wisdom.

In the new school year, then, let parents, teachers, and students alike resolve that we must get wisdom — that is the principal thing. And with all our getting, let us get understanding. □

Come, Lord Jesus

Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Signs of the Times

8. The Worldwide Spread of the Gospel

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Matthew 24:14.

We have had occasion before to point out the importance of the preaching of the gospel in the new dispensation as one of the signs of Christ's coming. Jesus spoke of false Christs and of false prophets, warning us of their cunning deception and that their strong influence is leading many astray. The implication always was that we should maintain the truth, and defend it as long as we live. Jesus encourages us: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

The emphasis is on the fact that the gospel of the kingdom must be

preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. This is extremely important because, before this is accomplished, the end of the ages cannot come.

In the old dispensation the gospel was limited almost exclusively to Israel as a nation. The covenants and the promises were given to the Jews, and the message of the prophets was directed mainly to the Jews as nation. But in the new dispensation the church has become universal, gathered from all the nations of the earth, so that the spread of the gospel must also be among all nations. Therefore one of the signs of the times is the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

This is a very important sign. You will notice that, while the other signs speak of the development of sin and God's judgment upon the wicked, this sign speaks in a more positive sense of the preaching of the gospel. This sign is significant also because of the importance of the spread of the gospel throughout the world. Revelation 6 says concerning the white

horse that "he that sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer." This refers to the work of the exalted Lord sending forth His servants to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. By this powerful Word the church is gathered and the world is made ripe for the final judgment.

The gospel is the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus and is referred to here as the gospel of the kingdom.

— This kingdom is God's kingdom. This may well be emphasized. God is not in heaven for our sakes, to serve us, as many seem to think, but we are on the earth for God's sake, to worship and praise Him. We are taught to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." And this prayer is concluded with the doxology: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

This kingdom is also Christ's kingdom under God. He is ap-

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pointed eternally as the Servant *par excellence*, the Head and Mediator of His people. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the earth and redeemed us by His blood and merited for us a place in His kingdom. He has redeemed and merited for Himself and His people a place in God's kingdom. God raised our Lord from the dead and exalted Him at His own right hand, entrusting Him with all power in heaven and on earth. He now carries out God's counsel, working all things for the salvation of His church and the coming of God's kingdom.

That kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. Its citizens are referred to as the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is an entirely mistaken notion that this kingdom will still arise here on earth with a Christian government, a Christian legal system, Christian business associations, and in a Christian society. Scripture always emphasizes that God's kingdom is fully realized only in the new creation, even as Christ says: "My kingdom is not of this earth."

The kingdom of Christ is, first of all, spiritual. Its citizens are born again as new creatures in Christ Jesus, possessing in their hearts the life that is from above. They are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, spiritually minded, as they seek the things above where Christ is at the right hand of the Father.

They are also heavenly citizens. They have the principle of eternal life in their hearts. They experience the beginning of heavenly joy. They know the peace that passes all understanding. Therefore, in the midst of an evil world and still wrestling with sin that wars in their members, they enjoy the blessing of contentment, confident that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them. They cherish a hope that never dies.

The realization of God's king-

dom is in the new creation. The apostle John writes: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there was no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him" (Rev. 22:1-3).

Jesus speaks of this gospel, thereby referring, first of all, to the warning He has given concerning false Christs and false prophets rising in the church, lawlessness developing in the world, and God's judgments in nature. But in a broader sense Christ is referring to the gospel that He proclaimed while He was on earth, and the truth as it is presented to us in the Holy Scriptures.

—This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is proclaimed by Him through His ambassadors and applied to the hearts of His people by His Spirit. It is also the gospel concerning Him, for He is the Word that became flesh, the revelation of the Father, revealing unto us all the fullness of God. There is therefore no other gospel than the gospel that proclaims salvation in Jesus Christ. For there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved than the name of Jesus, just as there is no salvation apart from the cross of our Savior. Therefore the answer to the question of the Philippian jailer: "What must I do to be saved?" still applies today: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

This gospel must be and is being preached unto the ends of the earth. The spread of the gospel in the new dispensation began in Jerusalem, spread to Antioch of Syria, and from Antioch to Asia

Minor, into Europe, across to the British Isles and the Americas. From there the gospel is being spread, especially in our day into the Orient. The power of the gospel is evident among every nation, race, tribe, and people, unto the far ends of the earth and the islands of the sea. There is virtually no area anymore where the gospel has not been proclaimed.

This gospel must be proclaimed among all nations for a witness that all nations must hear. This proclamation is not a general, well-meant plea for all men to accept the salvation offered to them. It is a two-edged sword that makes separation between the believer and the unbeliever, between the righteous and the unrighteous. Jesus says in Matthew 10:34, 35: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." That is the evident result of the preaching of the Word. False Christs and false prophets arise and deceive many. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, so that those who hold the truth under in unrighteousness turn to the worship of idols and to every form of uncleanness and lawlessness, and not only do those things, but take pleasure in those who do them. The result is that their cup of iniquity is filled and God is justified in His judgment.

At the same time the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, for it is a savor of life unto life as well as a savor of death unto death. The gospel is the revelation of the God of our salvation, revealing to us the riches of His grace and all His blessed promises. It is the power that draws His elect out of darkness into light, out of death into life, and changes children of Satan into sons and daughters of the living God. It creates communion with God, drawing us into His

intimate covenant life and blessedness. It gives us a living faith whereby we know and experience the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, even the secrets of the Lord, for we see that which eye cannot see, and hear that which ear cannot hear, the things that are revealed to those who fear God. We experience peace with God, the joy

of eternal life and a hope of the glory that awaits us upon the return of our Lord.

When the gospel has reached all nations, even to the ends of the earth, and has performed its work, the end will come. Not before. The Lord is longsuffering, not willing that any of His elect should perish, but that all are saved. Only then, when the last elect is pre-

pared for glory, will the end come.

The stone of Daniel's vision that is cut out of the mountain will crush all the nations of the earth, and the kingdoms of the earth will become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ forever and ever. That arouses in us the prayer, Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada sponsored a spring lecture on May 7 in their church auditorium. Their pastor, Rev. M. De Vries, spoke on the interesting and relevant topic, "Y2K: Turmoil or Tranquillity? — A Biblical Perspective."

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC hosted a conference entitled "Reacting to the End Times," on June 25 and 26 at their church. Prof. D. Engelsma spoke Friday night on "Reformed Sanity Regarding the Millennium." This was followed the next morning by Prof. H. Hanko speaking on "Crucial Signs of the Times."

Now if these two events have you saying to yourself, "I wish I could have been there," and if you happen to live in west Michigan, let me add this third bit of news. The Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI is again sponsoring a Summer Seminar. This year's seminar is looking at the topic, "The Biblical Way Through the Millennial Maze." Rev. R. Cammenga, Southwest's pastor, and Prof. R. Dykstra are scheduled to lead these sessions dealing with the four main millennial views. The sessions will be held on four consecutive

Wednesday evenings, beginning July 21. So perhaps you might be able to attend a couple of these classes and have some of your questions about eschatological issues answered.

Congregational Activities

This year's synod gave their approval of a request coming from our Theological School Committee to arrange with the consistory and pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC to give Mr. Mark Shand exposure to the work of the ministry by permitting him to accompany Rev. Kuiper on visits to the sick and shut-ins, lead one Bible Society, and attend a number of consistory, council, and diaconate meetings. Mr. Shand is a student in our seminary from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. He and his family attend Byron Center PRC.

Young People's Activities

In the month of August all roads point towards the annual Young People's Convention. This year is not different, with various societies sponsoring one last fund-raiser to cover expected expenses.

Consequently, we are always on the lookout for unique fund-raisers sponsored by our young people. One caught our eye recently when the young people of the First PRC in Holland, MI sponsored a Bike-a-thon on a Saturday in late June. They planned to travel to and from Grand Haven State

Park along the shore of Lake Michigan, a distance of about 35 miles. Each young person was responsible to get at least \$25 in pledges from family, friends, and church members. Members of the congregation were also welcome to join in the outing.

However, not all fund-raisers point to the convention. Recently the young people of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL sponsored a program of instrumental numbers, vocal numbers, and congregational singing. A collection was taken for the church picnic which the young people are planning this year.

Bethel's young people also met Monday, June 28, with the young people of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC. Rev. C. Haak, Bethel's pastor, led a discussion on Biblical Perspectives on the Littleton, CO Tragedy. The following day they joined together for an outing to Six Flags.

School Activities

In mid-June a few members of the Bethel PRC met to form an association for PR education. They chose the name Heidelberg Christian School Association. Presently their main function will be to raise funds for future needs.

Missionary Activities

Rev. and Mrs. R. Moore, our churches' missionary to Ghana, arrived safely in Accra in mid-June. Currently they are looking for suitable housing so they can apply for permanent residency. So far he has

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

gained official status from the Registrar's Office so that he is able to preach and teach in Ghana.

June 30 the council of the Hudsonville, MI PRC sponsored a Missionary Emphasis Night to welcome their missionary, Rev. R. Hanko, his wife Nancy, and their family back from Northern Ireland for an extended vacation. About 300 people from Hudsonville and surrounding PR congregations enjoyed a picnic supper, followed by a brief program in which Rev. Hanko updated us on his work and answered many thought provoking

questions. An added bonus was that Rev. and Mrs. Jason Kortering, minister-on-loan in Singapore, were in attendance.

Minister Activities

Rev. A. denHartog declined the recall he had been considering from the Hull, IA PRC.

After Rev. G. VanBaren's request for emeritation was granted by our synod, our church in Loveland, CO formed a trio of the Revs. W. Bruinsma, B. Gritters, and S. Key. On June 28 they extended a call to Rev. Bruinsma.

Candidate Nathan Brummel

has accepted the call he received from our newly organized Cornerstone PRC in Schererville, IN.

We also rejoice with Mr. Garry Eriks, who graduated from our seminary this past June, and give thanks to God for providing our churches with another minister. Candidate Eriks became eligible for a call after July 10.

Food For Thought

"Repentance does not mean remorse, repentance means giving up sin."

— W.E. Biederwolf □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 10, 1999, our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

KENN and GLORIA DOEZEMA, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

We are grateful to God and to them for the loving, Christian home and example they have given us. We thank God for His faithfulness throughout their married life and ask His continued blessing on their marriage in the years to come.

But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee (Psalm 102:27, 28).

✿ Kaye Wigger (Bern in glory)

Petar and Jennifer Matic

Theodore, Ian

Stephen and Rebecca Wigger

Rocky, Philip

✿ Wes and Glenda Koops

Peter and Chera Rizk

Annise, Luke, Ginelle

✿ Kenmart and Kathy Doezema

Mark and Patty Pols

Megan, Caleb

Kevin

✿ Karl and Judy Doezema

✿ Jeff and Kris Mott

Nicole, Kyler

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois on Wednesday, September 1, 1999 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the classical agenda is to be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by August 2, thirty days before classis convenes. An Office-bearers Conference is also planned for Tuesday, August 31, the theme of which is *Fully Equipped For The Work: A Conference for Elders and Deacons*. All delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of South Holland's consistory,

Mr. Bert Worries

3622 193rd Place

Lansing, IL 60438

Phone: (708) 474-4926.

Rev. Steven Key,

Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC wish to express their sympathy to Clarice Newhof in the passing of her cousin,

MARCIA DE MEESTER.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:5).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC wish to express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Irene VanderWal in the passing away of her twin brother,

MR. ABE VOGEL.

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

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President

Ed Hekstra, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to God we offer our congratulations to our parents and grandparents,

DONALD and HILDA DEVRIES,

on their 40th wedding anniversary, August 14, 1999. What a blessing godly parents are to us! We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it (Psalm 90).

✿ Neil and Connie Meyer

Annette, Christina, Bennett,

Jennelle, Tabitha

✿ Kathryn DeVries

Randolph, Wisconsin

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon PRC express their sincere sympathy to fellow members Floyd and Mary VanDenTop and their family in the sudden death of Mary's mother,

MRS. GERT BURGERS.

May the Lord continue to be their strength and comfort. Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Psalm 31:19).

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.
Karen VanDenTop, Sec.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of Doon PRC express their sincere sympathy to the family of

GERTRUDE BURGERS,

a fellow member of the Society whom the Lord called into His presence.

Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her (Proverbs 31:28).

Rev. R. Smit, Pres.
Vivian Hunter, Vice-Pres.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 15, 1999, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. GUSTAVE STREYLE, of Hull, IA celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for blessing them with many years of marriage. We thank God for the covenant home provided by them. May God continue to be their guide and stay in the years ahead.

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

- ✿ John and LeAnn Streyle
Katharina, Adam, Grant, Patrick, Matthew
- ✿ Elaine and Mike Rau
Nathan, Benjamin, Erin, Joel

Hull, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to our covenant God, we are privileged to celebrate on August 2, 1999, the Lord willing, the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. TUNIS (TONY) JANSMA.

We thank our heavenly Father for them and for His love and instruction given us through them. It is our prayer that He will grant them many more years together, continuing to uphold and keep them in His care.

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations (Psalm 89:1).

- ✿ David and Diane Bonestroo
- ✿ Marlys Koele
- ✿ David and Rachel Griess
- ✿ Terry and Dee Jansma
13 grandchildren
2 great-grandchildren

Hull, Iowa

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Protestant Reformed Theological School Committee expresses its deepest Christian sympathy to our fellow committee member, Mr. Jon Huiskens, in the death of his father,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN.

May the brother and his family receive comfort from the promise of the Word of God that ... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Rev. Barry Gritters, Vice-Sec y.

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 1999 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 8, 1999.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 13, 1999, D.V., **HARRY and EVELYN LANGERAK** will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

With them we rejoice and thank our heavenly Father for His everlasting love and mercy in the faithfulness, covenantal love, and instruction of our parents.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts (Psalm 145:3, 4).

- ✿ Bill and Karen Langerak
Jared, Justin, Katrina, Jason
- ✿ Tim and Brenda Bomers
Luke, Alex, Cody, Jesse, Samuel
- ✿ Jonathan and Lisa Langerak
Jonathan, Trevor, Emmet
- ✿ David and Carla Langerak
Emily, Anna
- ✿ Joel and Jori Langerak
Joel, Jake
- ✿ Jim and Sara Geerlings
Jimmy
- ✿ Nathan
- ✿ Jeremy
- ✿ Everett

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Southwest PRC of Grandville, MI express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to elder Darrel Huiskens and family in the death of his father,

MR. HENRY HUISKEN.

May the grieving family be comforted in the assurance of God's Word: 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. Ron Cammenga, Pres.
Clare Kuiper, Asst. Clerk