



# *The Standard Bearer*

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

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# Eutychus

*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*

*And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.*

*And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.*

*And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.*

*When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.*

*And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.*

Acts 20:7-12

Paul was on his third missionary journey, returning to Jerusalem. Along the way he stopped at Troas. Paul had been in Troas on his second missionary journey. However, he had not labored there because of the Macedonian call he received in a vision. Since that time a church had

been established in Troas. Paul now stayed in Troas for seven days, laboring in this young church.

The incident of the raising of Eutychus is the only detail given of Paul's stay in Troas; and it took place the last evening of his stay.

The resurrection of Eutychus provided great comfort for the little church in Troas. It also is a source of great comfort for the church today.

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"And upon the first day of the

week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

There are several things worthy of note here.

First, the members of the church of Troas are called disciples. They were disciples of Jesus Christ. This is what makes one a true member of the church.

Secondly, these disciples came together to break bread. That

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means that they were partaking of the Lord's Supper. The church of Troas was therefore gathered for worship. Thirdly, the church gathered for worship on the first day of the week. This was done at the direction of the apostles. Here is a principle we must remember. Whatever the early church did under the direction of the apostles is the rule for the church today. Hence, we too are to have a weekly Sabbath day as did the apostolic church; and it is to be the first day of the week.

Finally, Paul preached to the disciples of Troas. And because he was to depart the next morning, Paul preached until midnight. Obviously the preaching was the most important part of worship for the apostle, as it must be also in our worship. This is in keeping with the nature and power of the preaching, as we shall see presently. How many congregations today would bear with a minister who preached until midnight? Most become fidgety after 20 minutes. Not so the members of the church of Troas. They were disciples of Jesus Christ. True disciples are eager to hear the Word and do not soon weary of it.

This brings us to Eutychus.

Eutychus was a young man. How old he was we do not know. Probably late teens, early twenties.

The disciples were worshiping in the upper room of a home on the third floor level. The room was full as the disciples listened to Paul's inspiring words. Eutychus found a seat in one of the windows. This was merely an opening in the wall, normally covered with a cloth but now open for ventilation.

And Eutychus fell asleep. Was it the "many lights" (v. 8), creating a lack of oxygen in the room, that caused Eutychus to slumber? Whatever the reason, Eutychus fell deeper and deeper into sleep....

Suddenly Eutychus fell from the window. Three stories! And he was taken up dead.

What an uproar. Women were

crying. Men were shouting. There was confusion.

Paul fell upon Eutychus and embraced him. "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."

What an astounding miracle. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead! The dead had come back to life!

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The raising of Eutychus points us to a greater resurrection in Christ Jesus that is our salvation.

We are all born spiritually dead, dead in sin. This means that we are so controlled by the power of sin that all we can do is sin. Our whole life is given over to sin so that we are the very image of the devil himself. This spiritual death comes to us as a consequence of our original sin in Adam. And what a dreadful consequence this is. For it robs us of God's friendship; it brings upon us the bitter wrath and judgment of God, both in this life and eternally.

The good news of God is that there is a resurrection from this death in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ there is life, spiritual life. This life consists of a wonderful transformation of heart and soul that leads us to serve God willingly according to His commandments. In the way of obedience to God there is the joy of God's fellowship and companionship, as the ever blessed God draws near to us in friendship. In Jesus Christ there is a wonderful, eternal life with God.

This life comes to us through the power of Jesus' own death and resurrection. We begin to enjoy this new life now. It will be made perfect in heaven.

And when we receive this new life in Christ, we are risen from the dead. This is a resurrection not of the body but of the heart. It is the same reality as the new birth in Christ.

This spiritual resurrection from death to life is our salvation. This resurrection is far more wonderful than the resurrection of Eutychus,

for Eutychus' resurrection only served as a picture of this resurrection unto life eternal.

Of significance is the fact that the miracle of Eutychus' resurrection took place in the context of the preaching of the gospel. It must be born in mind that Paul was a great preacher of the gospel, the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Furthermore, Paul had been preaching the gospel to the disciples of Troas during the course of the evening. This Paul raised Eutychus as he fell on him and embraced him.

We are reminded how Elijah, the great messenger of God in the Old Testament, raised the son of the widow of Zarephath, stretching himself upon the child three times (I Kings 17:21). Similarly, Elisha, another prophet of God, raised the son of the Shunammite woman when he lay upon the child and put his mouth, eyes, and hands upon the mouth, eyes, and hands of the child (II Kings 4:34).

The meaning is essentially the same in all three miracles. The spiritual resurrection depicted in each miracle takes place only by the power of the preaching of the Word.

How the preaching of the gospel is despised. The Greeks in Paul's day considered the gospel to be foolishness (I Cor 1:23). No, they did not minimize the power of the tongue. All but the very stupid understand full well the power of the spoken word. Words eloquently spoken can sway the multitudes and move nations to action. What the Greeks considered foolishness was the message Paul brought. He preached Christ crucified. He proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus. What a pathetic, uninspiring message! Only a fool thinks he can influence others by such nonsense. That was the reaction of the Greeks in Paul's day to the preaching of the gospel. It is also the reaction of many in the church world of our day. To preach the cross is folly. Instead,

preach social action, preach education, preach politics....

Now let's hear from the One who made the tongue. The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the power of God to save (I Cor 1:18). Through the gospel of Christ crucified God raises the dead to life. Who among the scoffers ever considered a power that would make the dead to live? But that's exactly what God accomplishes through the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified. Through the power of the preaching, God irresistibly brings His own to faith in Christ. And being joined to Christ by faith they find the power of Jesus' death and resurrection, the power that brings them from death to life.

This is the great reality depicted in the raising of Eutychus by Paul, the great preacher of the gospel.

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What a great comfort this was for the church of Troas.

Evidently the disciples had not yet celebrated the Lord's Supper. Paul had begun the service with preaching and only now came to the Lord's Supper.

After this, Paul talked with the disciples until dawn. No doubt he spoke to them about the meaning and significance of the miracle of Eutychus' resurrection.

And the disciples were not a little comforted. Certainly they were comforted by the fact that Eutychus was alive and well. But more, they were comforted by the meaning of the miracle. Troas was evidently a small and struggling church. This is suggested by the fact that they were only a house church. What comfort, then, they derived from this miracle! For it showed to them very graphically the power of the preaching. God would certainly use the Word to

preserve them in their new life. Even though Satan and the unbelieving community sought to destroy what they had in Christ, God in the power of the preaching that raises the dead to life would certainly preserve them. And God would use the preaching also to raise others from death unto life, beginning with their own children and extending not only into their community but into the whole world.

This miracle serves also to give comfort to the church today.

The church of Christ today is small in comparison to the world. And much that goes by the name church is false. What a comfort the church finds in the preaching of the gospel. It is the power of God to raise the dead to life. Certainly the church that preaches the gospel of Christ crucified is safe. And her labor in the gospel will never be in vain. □

## Editorial

# How Then Will We Live? (2)

At the beginning of a new year, the church is reminded of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of all things. The reminder is especially forceful when the beginning of a new year is also the beginning of a new millennium. Jesus Christ is coming the second time. He is coming quickly. He is coming for the salvation of all who look for Him. He is coming to raise our bodies from the dead. He is coming to conduct the final judgment in which we will be publicly vindicated and in which His and our enemies will be publicly condemned. He is coming to renew

the creation as our inheritance.

Since we believe these truths concerning the last things and since we eagerly expect the coming Lord and Savior, how then will we live?

How are we *called* to live?

And because this calling in the gospel is the sovereign call of us whom God has loved from eternity, for whom Christ died, and in whom the Spirit of Christ has worked belief of the truth of the last things, how *will* we live? How will we *certainly* live? How will we certainly live, regardless of the hopelessness and depravity of a world that now fills the cup of its wickedness to the brim? How will

we certainly live, regardless of the mockery by churches and theologians who have fallen so far as to scoff at the hope of the true church that the coming of Christ is near?

We will live in hope, as the previous editorial showed.

### The Holiness of the Church

This hope takes form as holiness.

What is the practical significance of the Reformed, biblical, amillennial doctrine of the end? What difference does knowledge of the truth of the last things make in the lives of those who know the truth?

Holiness!

The gospel of hope—hope as the living, ardent, day-in and day-out longing for the bodily coming of Christ, which is near—calls church and believer to keep themselves from the wicked world and its corrupt way of life and to devote themselves to the holy God in a life of obedience to His law.

This is the calling, first, of the church, the instituted congregation of believers and their children.

### Preaching

For the church, holiness is faithful, zealous preaching of the Word both within the congregation and outside in missions. The main reason why the end has not yet come, the explanation why the Lord “tarries,” is that all of us elect have not yet come to repentance. But the Lord is not willing that any of us should perish (II Pet. 3:9). Included among the elect who may not perish and who, therefore, must come to repentance are the covenant children of believers. As the church desires the coming of the Lord, she will preach the gospel by which Christ brings His own to repentance.

In addition to this gracious, saving purpose of God with the church’s preaching of the gospel, by the hearing of the Word the whole world of the ungodly must be rendered inexcusable, so that God may be just when He judges in the final judgment.

In His great address on the last things in Matthew 24, Jesus taught, “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” (v. 14). Thus did He call the church to her chief activity, her most glorious holiness, in light of His coming again.

### Defending

Closely related is the church’s task of defending the faith and, thus, holding on to all the doctrines of Holy Scripture, including the doctrine that Scripture is the God-

breathed Word. An uncompromising, vigorous defense of the faith is a brilliant facet of the church’s holiness. Again and again in Revelation 2 and 3, by positive exhortation and praise as well as by negative rebuke, Christ calls the churches to hold fast “my name,” “my faith,” sound “doctrine,” “my word.” This is the calling of the churches in their circumstances of end-time persecution: “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth” (Rev. 2:13). And this calling rests squarely on the churches’ hope of the coming of Christ: “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come” (Rev. 2:25).

Lending a keen edge to the urgency of the church’s calling to defend the faith is the apostasy of churches and nominal Christians in the last days. II Thessalonians 2:3ff. prophesies a great falling away, which has its source in this, that churches, officebearers, and members do not have “the love of the truth” (v. 10). In this context of departure from the truth and belief of the lie *by much of professing Christianity*, what is the charge to the true church? “Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (v. 15).

This counts for absolutely nothing in the estimation of many professing Christians today. What matters to them is that a church has a “progressive” style of worship, or a lively youth program, or an aggressive missions and evangelism “outreach” (never mind what is *taught* in this “outreach”), or opportunities for “ministry” for every member, or a friendly face. That such a church is swept away with every wind of doctrine that blows through

Christendom and even with every politically correct notion that gains ascendancy in the world, so that it surrenders every tradition, does not concern them.

But the church’s standing fast and resolutely holding the traditions counts with God. It is the very holiness of His church.

### Contending

An essential aspect of this defense of the faith is the church’s refutation of false doctrines and errors “that multiply exceedingly,” to use the phrase of Article 55 of the Church Order of Dordt. These damnable and highly dangerous teachings are found in other churches, in books and other writings, and on the radio and television. The churches carry out this aspect of their defense of the faith mainly through the preaching of their ministers, the admonitions of their elders, and the teachings and writings of their professors of theology.

Strong pressures are put on the church today to tone down this refutation, if not to silence it altogether. Ominously, the state warns against “hate crimes.” A favorite is “gay bashing.” Note the carefully chosen pejorative! The state and the media do not speak of “opposition to homosexuality,” but of “gay bashing.” Within the church herself voices are heard that decry pointed, strong condemnation of false doctrines as unloving criticism of other churches. The impression is left that a church that criticizes other churches and their theologians for their false doctrines manifests a “holier-than-thou” attitude.

Fact is, a church that refuses or neglects to refute false doctrines and to sound the judgment of the gospel upon those who maintain them is unholy. Her unholiness is that she does not love the truth.

*God  
will send  
her members  
a strong delusion  
that they should  
believe the lie  
which that church  
did not hate  
sufficiently  
to condemn.*

Before long, she too will be carried away in the great apostasy. God will send her members a strong delusion that they should believe the lie which that church did not hate sufficiently to condemn.

### Suffering

There is yet another activity of the church that is an outstanding aspect of the holiness that is hers by virtue of her hope in the coming of Christ. It figures prominently in Scripture's description of the life of the church in the last days. Both of the main millennial errors deny it, thus proving their utter falsity. Reformed amillennialism, on the other hand, does justice to it, thus showing itself true. This is the activity of suffering persecution patiently for Christ's sake.

The true church is always hated, always reproached, always persecuted. "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. 8:36). This will intensify as the end approaches, until the beast "make(s) war with the saints and overcome(s) them" (Rev. 13:7). Playing a leading role in this persecution, whether of reproach or physical harm, are the apostate churches and their agents in the bosom of the true church.

Suffering for the sake of the truth—Christ's name!—is a *calling*. The church does not merely put up with this suffering as even a dog may submit to an unavoidable beating. The church is active in her suffering. She bears it patiently. She perseveres in confessing Christ faithfully, refusing to compromise the least of His doctrines or commandments. She rejoices in this suffering as a distinct blessedness. So Christ effectually calls her: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad" (Matt. 5:11, 12).

Suffering for Christ's sake is a

privilege, as is every aspect of the church's holiness. "Unto you it is *given* in the behalf of Christ ... to suffer for his sake," the apostle assures the church in Philippians 1:29.

Premillennial dispensationalism robs the church of this privilege by rapturing the church out of history before the great tribulation under antichrist. Postmillennial Christian Reconstruction is guilty of the same robbery when it thrusts all the New Testament prophecy of end-time persecution, of the great tribulation, and of antichrist into the distant past. Christ graciously gives us the privilege to suffer for His sake. Millennialism ungraciously takes the privilege away.

Foreign to the millennial errors is the attitude toward suffering for Christ's sake that is evident in Herman Hoeksema's profound description of those who stand on the sea of glass and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15:2-4.

Truly, they have been in the thickest of the battle. It was for them to live at the time of Antichrist in all his power and fullness. The honor and privilege to live at that time was in store for them. For thus it is in reality: it will be a time of special privilege for the people of God to live at the time of Antichrist. It is much rather a cause of longing and yearning, than of fear and trembling, for the people of God to live at that time. Is not a soldier in the battle honored by being in the thickest of the battle? And shall not the soldier of the kingdom of Christ by faith deem it an honor to be in the thickest of the fight against the power of Antichrist and to show that he fears nothing even though he be hated of all men and of all nations? And therefore, it is a special honor to be deemed worthy to live at that time. God shall have His strongest children, His best forces, in the world at that last period. And therefore, to belong to those picked forces of Christ in the world at the time of

Antichrist shall be the greatest honor conceivable. For that same reason I have no doubt but that there shall be a special place in store for them in the new heaven and the new earth,—a place which they alone can occupy. I have no doubt but that they are the leaders in the chorus which is here singing at the sea of glass (*Behold, He Cometh! An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, RFFA, p. 522).

It is enough to make one regret that he is unworthy to be alive during the reign of the beast. It is also a healthy corrective to the unspiritual wish that Christians sometimes express when they study Scripture's prophecy of antichrist, that they may die before those days.

But the point is not simply that the church must, and *may*, suffer in the last days. Nor is it the point that the suffering of the church is part of her holiness. The point, rather, is that this suffering, which is the holiness of the church, stems from and is borne by the church's *hope*.

The body of Christ is filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ its head (Col. 1:24). This explains the strange, even startling, response of heaven to the plea of the souls of the martyrs for justice on their murderers. "It was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:11). And each member embraces his or her persecution in hope of Jesus' promise in Matthew 5:12: "for great is your reward in heaven."

This is the active, fruitful, splendid holiness of the *church* as she waits for God's Son from heaven.

How then, we must also ask, will the *individual child of God* live?

□

— DJE

## Letters

### Suggestions

Is it possible to obtain a pamphlet of your series of editorials on preterism?

Also, I would like to see ad-

dresses and telephone numbers of the publishers or distributors of the books reviewed in the *Standard Bearer*.

Perhaps, a series of articles on

the "holy land" would be worthwhile.

Keep up the good work.

Scott E. Kunst

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## All Around Us

## Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ Abortion, Euthanasia, and Now: Assisted Suicide

It was, of course, inevitable. When the value of life has, under certain circumstances, dropped to zero, the value of life declines overall. The anti-life movement (euphemistically known as pro-choice) is growing. "Pro-choice" increasingly is seen in the claim that one has the "right" to choose death when confronting inevitable suffering, whether of old age or of some terminal illness. Now this "pro-choice" movement has developed further. It is claimed that any individual, for whatever reason, has the right to choose to die. There is the "right" of suicide upon demand. This was pointed out recently in the *Chicago Tribune*, September 21, 1999, where an article reported on "The Dutch solution."

In Illinois, you have to be 21 years old before you can get a tattoo without parental consent. In the Netherlands, social attitudes are a bit more permissive. Under a new law proposed by the Dutch government, a child as young as 12, without the permission of her parents, could do more than get a tattoo—she'd be allowed to get a

physician's help in committing suicide.

In the Netherlands, doctor-assisted suicide is technically against the law, but for the last decade, doctors who follow official guidelines have been assured that they won't be prosecuted. Now the government wants to give unconditional approval to the practice. The draft legislation would make assisted suicide fully legal if done within the guidelines, and it would make it available to children as young as 12 years. If the parents object, no matter: A child who wants to end her life will get her wish.

The legislation is supposed to head off abuses by restricting the procedure to sick patients who request it, face unbearable suffering and have no chance of recovery. Note what is missing from that list: Neither the old policy nor this measure limits assisted suicide to people who have terminal illnesses. Even physical illness is not required: At least one woman asked for and got a lethal prescription from her doctor merely because she was distraught over the death of her two sons and the collapse of her marriage.

Even more disturbing is that the government has done little to enforce the guidelines. A 1991 survey of physicians who had assisted suicides found some 1,000 cases where lethal injections were carried out on patients—mostly comatose ones—who had not requested them. In some cases, even the family was not consulted. But such abuses have been greeted with indifference by law enforcement. Few physicians have been

prosecuted for taking the law into their own hands, and even fewer have been punished.

Dr. Ben Crul, editor of the *Royal Dutch Medical Journal*, has assisted in suicides and defends the provision giving adolescents the right to end their lives over their parents' objections. "I have been a doctor 20 years, and I've never seen a case in which the child and parents are not in agreement," he says. In that case, why the need to let children ignore their parents' wishes?

When the Netherlands decided to tolerate this form of killing, critics warned that it would foster a too-casual attitude toward death. So far, the critics seem to have been right.

It is, indeed, shocking. But is it unexpected? When society approves the taking of the lives of those unborn—and without their consent, is it strange that this same society should insist that lives can be taken with the consent of the individual? It's all a matter of "rights." One who denies God, who denies His Word and law, then is left to decide for himself what he will do with his life.

And make no mistake: the next inevitable step is the Hitler "solution." Society will decide who has the right to live and who must die. Those who are a "burden" to society—the seriously ill, the handicapped, the aged—must be removed for the good of this society.

Stranger still: we hear in the USA that crime is now "way

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down." And one of the reasons which has been given is that abortion has done away with most of the "unwanted children." Had such children been born, they would likely have led a life of crime. Now we have "prevented" that.

Indeed, in the last days lawlessness shall abound. We see so many evidences of it.

## ■ The Vatican – and Indulgences

An old Rome reveals its true colors. Though much is made of an agreement between the Roman Catholics and many Lutherans, and though these insist that they have come to a common understanding on justification by faith, Rome has not changed its "spots." Again, quoting from the *Chicago Tribune*, September 18, 1999, we are told the following:

The Vatican on Friday issued an updated manual on indulgences, offering new ways of winning forgiveness for Roman Catholics who courageously manifest their faith.

Vatican officials said that the new attention on indulgences—the forgiveness of sins through good works—shouldn't harm recently improved relations with the Lutheran church, whose founder, Martin Luther, rebelled against abuses to granting indulgences.

The new manual, last updated in 1986, was published in Latin and will be translated into modern languages.

Last year, Pope John Paul II issued a decree upholding a 700-year-old tradition of celebrating church anniversary years by offering indulgences. The new manual incorporates the pope's directives on indulgences, including advice that individuals can do penance by such simple acts as giving up smoking for a day. But it also stresses actions in which Catholics set good examples.

For example, "a factory worker, surrounded by colleagues cursing and using off-color language, cou-

rageously makes the sign of the cross," said the Vatican's Monsignor Luigi De Magistris.

Besides helping people in need or depriving oneself of something spontaneously, indulgences can also be won by giving "public testimony of one's faith in certain circumstances of daily life," said another Vatican official....

Rome has not changed. But much of Protestantism has. Many appear willing and ready to return to the camp of Rome. Few seem even disturbed anymore by the salvation by works promoted in the Roman Catholic Church. Let us hold fast to that glorious testimony of Scripture that one is justified by faith and grace alone.

## ■ A Century of Change

As one millennium ends, so does a century. One cannot help but note that though a thousand years have passed in the millennium, it was the past hundred years that marked the far greater changes. The immense changes which took place the past hundred years ought to tell us something too. These changes are such that nothing in all of history equals it. The *Grand Rapids Press*, December 13, 1999, points to some of these.

The nation had one-fourth the people and none of them had ever flown the last time the calendar rolled over to double zeros. Highway accidents were rare. Married women stayed home. Television and computers were the stuff of fiction.

With the 20<sup>th</sup> century nearing an end, the Census Bureau has chronicled just how much America has changed in 100 years.

To begin, there are a lot more of us: more than 270 million Americans today, compared with 76 million in 1900.

But divorces have skyrocketed more dramatically than the population, up almost hundredfold, from 200,000 to 19.4 million. And the women who stay married aren't staying home. In 1900 there

were 800,000 wives in the work force. Now it's around 34 million.

These and hundreds of other changes are detailed in the Census Bureau's 1999 Statistical Abstract of the United States, being released Monday.

"Some of the numbers are truly amazing," Census Director Kenneth Prewitt said.

Thanks to improvements in medical care, life expectancy of Americans has shot up. In 1900, a typical man could expect to die at age 46; a typical woman, 48. By 1997, life expectancy had reached 74 years for men and 79 for women in 1997.

...Transportation obviously took off, too.

It was Dec. 17, 1903, when the first sustained powered airplane took to the sky at Kitty Hawk, NC, traveling 120 feet in 12 seconds with a single passenger. In 1998, commercial airlines carried 614 million passengers over thousands of miles.

On the downside, there were just 36 highway traffic fatalities in 1900 compared with 41,967 in 1997.

Television did not become widespread until the 1950s and computers only in the past few decades.

Just 9 percent of households had a TV in 1950; today it tops 98 percent.

In 1900, high-speed mass communications meant daily newspapers, of which there were 2,042 in the United States. By 1998 that had fallen to 1,489....

Does it tell us something? Such rapid scientific and medical developments within such a short time is additional reminder that the coming of the Lord is at hand. Man is using these changes and inventions in the service of sin. The child of God is tempted often to do the same. Yet he cannot help but note that God speaks also through these signs and reminds His people to look up from whence comes our deliverance. May God grant that we also do so. □



# The Amazing Signs of Pentecost's Fulfillment

When we consider God's wonder work at Pentecost in connection with all His other wonder works — the incarnation, the resurrection, and so on — then we might say that Pentecost is the crowning event of all the other events. Without God's wonder work at Pentecost, a work which continues for our sakes, all those other works — the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of our Lord — mean nothing.

Have you ever thought about what our religion would be like if Christ had come in the flesh and died and been raised from the dead, but the Spirit had not been poured out? The result would have been that you and I would have no personal contact with Christ.

Jesus promised His disciples, according to John 14, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; ... ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you....The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Without Pentecost, the Bible would have been a fine piece of literature perhaps, but devoid of all accounts and letters written by the apostles. We would have nothing more than the Jews do today.

Without Pentecost, we could have known nothing more than that a man died on the cross. Without Pentecost, you and I would be void of our only comfort in life and death. Without Pentecost, the rich experience of salvation — and the assurance of it — would be gone.

Now, I realize that we have just taken a negative approach to drawing out the significance of Pentecost; but, from that, don't you see the magnificence of this work of God's grace?

We are rich with the experience of our salvation, are we not?

The Spirit of Christ came with three accompanying signs.

It is necessary that the Spirit come in signs. The things of the kingdom of God do not belong to this world. For that reason, not only the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, but all the events of salvation were accompanied by signs. Apart from signs, Jesus is just another baby. "But this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." So there were those tremendous and even terrifying signs at the cross. There were signs at the resurrection of our Lord. And so there are signs here, signs of the Spirit.

## The Sound from Heaven

The first sign of which we read is the sign of the sound from heaven, a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the whole house in which they were sitting.

The Holy Spirit is pictured here

as to His irresistible power and mysterious workings. We see here that when the Holy Spirit descended it was not only for a handful of people, but in order that this might reach the ends of the world.

Surely God could have sent the Spirit in a more gentle manner. But at about nine o'clock in the morning He sent this tremendous sound from heaven. The roar thereof was heard in the sky and throughout the city, but it centered itself in the upper room where the disciples were gathered. It had every semblance of a strong wind rushing through the city, but at the time there was no wind, only the sound as of a tornado wind.

And when you ask, why this sign, the answer can be found in a couple different directions.

In the first place, the Lord would wake us up! Remember now, this sound was not only for those in that upper room, but especially for those who were outside that upper room, those who were still sleeping and caught up in the pride of their Jewish religion. So we also are often so caught up and wrapped up in this world, that we can taste neither the Word of God nor the work of His Spirit, unless we are awakened as it were by His power.

But in the second place, this sign is most appropriate as a sign demonstrating the characteristics of the Spirit's work. God was at work here, as signified by the sound which penetrated Jerusalem and centered in that upper room. He was working mightily, irresistibly

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in the hearts of His children, calling them from darkness into His marvelous light.

And so we read that many, actually thousands, were drawn by God to that house, that they might hear the gospel through the preaching of the Spirit-filled apostle. Though the Pharisees and scribes and the ungodly in Jerusalem hardened their hearts to this sign, God drew His elect irresistibly, that they might be saved. For so it happened, as Jesus had said to Nicodemus in John 3 when He spoke of the absolute necessity of being born again unto salvation: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

### **Cloven Tongues Like as of Fire**

The second sign is that of cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them in that house. Literally we read that tongues like fire were seen distributing themselves among them, and sat upon each one of them.

Perhaps we may best conceive of the appearance this way. There was the appearance of a column of fire coming from heaven, and from this one appearance of a flame broke numerous other tongues like as of fire, settling on the heads of each one of the 120 or so disciples.

Fire is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit's work as a dynamic, energizing, and quickening power. And although symbolically we Christians may aptly be described as coals of fire, the Spirit Himself is a living fire.

He quickens us, in the first place, by cleansing us, as fire signifies. And the tongues appeared on each one. Every one of us needs to be purged, since there is only filth and corruption in us. If you examine yourself in the light of God's Word, you will find that there is pollution and stench everywhere in your being. But the

fire of the Spirit burns away all that is impure, and thereby purifies and sanctifies us as a people consecrated to the Lord. God prepares us unto Himself, to shine forth as His precious jewels.

Secondly, as to the significance of that fire, the Holy Spirit not only cleanses, but enlightens and sets on fire. When it comes to loving God as we ought, we are as cold as ice. We need to be set on fire, to be filled with zeal. So God works through the Spirit, raising us up on high by means of His Word. He first enlightens us, filling us with His certain and infallible truth as the revelation of the God of our salvation and the witness of our adoption.

That is how we are filled with zeal — God working in us through His Holy Spirit, powerfully, dynamically, quickening us, setting us on fire unto Him.

### **Speaking in Different Languages**

Finally, there is the sign by which the work of God through His Spirit is characterized as a universal work — the sign of all speaking in different languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The roaring sound, which had all the semblance of a raging wind, had been heard throughout the city and had drawn thousands of people to the spot where that strange phenomenon plainly centered. Among that multitude were not only Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem, but pilgrims from around the known world who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

We can say that the whole world was represented to witness this momentous event. And they all were amazed when these disciples walked among them and spoke freely with each of them in his or her own tongue.

That does not mean that there was a wonder in them that heard. Sometimes the clear teaching of the text has been misinterpreted that way. But the wonder was in those

who spoke. And the symbolism here is simply but profoundly the wonder that the promise is now universal. The prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, a fulfillment which has continued to this present day: All shall be prophets in the kingdom of God.

Of what did they speak? They spoke of the marvelous works of God in our salvation, and the salvation of all His people. To every nation, tribe, and tongue, the faithfulness of our God in Jesus Christ is revealed. He sent His Comforter, as He had promised. And you need not speak the Hebrew tongue to receive Him. You need only to be filled by God with the Spirit of His dear Son.

### **The Effects of This Wonder**

The effect of this wonder work of God's grace was immediate.

In the first place, we notice that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. That means not only the 120 saints in that upper room, but the whole church of Jesus Christ. He had fulfilled His promise to His church.

That continues in the church today. All in Christ's church are filled with the Spirit. No, not all church-goers are filled with the Spirit. All in Christ's church, all the elect who have been regenerated and called by the Spirit of Christ are filled.

Do not corrupt this Word of God. Do not make an elite few the Spirit-filled members of Christ's church. Do not make only adults the recipients of the Spirit. The Spirit does not fill adults and pass by the little children. The Spirit fills the church, young and old. All are now prophets, priests, and kings unto God. All occupy the office of believer in Christ's church.

It is on that basis that the church lives and teaches and preaches and brings the gospel to the ends of the earth in obedience to God. God gathers His people from every nation of the earth by means of His Word and Spirit. He

fills all His elect, changing them, cleansing them, filling them with zeal to live unto Him. And it will not be long before that church will be gathered, and our Lord will return with the clouds of heaven. He will appear with the sounding of the trumpet. And all shall hear and understand and bow in adoration before Him. In the Spirit of Christ we shall live and reign with Christ forever in the new creation.

That Christ is now present with His church by His Holy Spirit was immediately evident. It was evident in that the people all began to speak. Not only the apostles spoke,

not only the ordained preachers and missionaries spoke, but all began to speak. That was the beautiful immediate effect of Pentecost. That is the immediate effect wherever the Spirit is at work in His church. When a person in darkness is consumed by the light of the Spirit, when he receives the consciousness of the forgiveness of his sins, when he realizes that he is an heir of unspeakable glory, he speaks.

It is a bad sign in the church when members can talk about everything else, but have empty mouths when it comes to talking

about the marvelous things of God. We must not be in the shadows, attempting to please God by our church attendance and by bringing our own sacrifice. No, then we cannot speak. For we have not yet tasted the rich outpouring of the Spirit. But when the wonder of Pentecost lives in our hearts, beloved, we speak — to God, oh yes, in prayer; but also to our children and to our brothers and sisters and to our neighbors — about the marvelous work of God.

Rich, exceedingly rich, is the gospel of our salvation — unable to be contained under a bushel. □

**Marking the Bulwarks of Zion**

**Prof. Herman Hanko**

# Rabanus and the Victory of Semi-Pelagianism (1)

## Introduction

In the last two articles I talked about the battle between Augustine on the one hand, and Cassianus and Faustus on the other, over the doctrine of sovereign grace. This battle continued after the death of these men for 100 years, until official decisions were made by the synod of Orange (529) and approved by Pope Boniface II.

But even these decisions of Orange did not settle the matter. There continued to be defenders of Augustine and defenders of Semi-Pelagianism for another 300 years. The controversy climaxed in the life of Rabanus who, though an extremely gifted man, proved a terrible enemy of the doctrine of sovereign grace. In fact, he was the man who, more than any other, was responsible for the murder of

Gottschalk, a courageous defender of sovereign grace and double predestination.

One wonders sometimes why the battle was so prolonged. There was something inevitable about the adoption of Semi-Pelagianism by the Roman Catholic Church. Given its prior history, especially its approval of monasticism, it could hardly have adopted the theology developed by Augustine. Yet, the Lord prolonged the controversy for 400 years.

It is probably not possible to determine why the Lord worked in this mysterious way. God's ways are always higher than our ways, and the mysteries of His providence are the mysteries of the works of One who does all things perfectly from the beginning to the end of time, who knows the end from the beginning, and who sees the perfect pattern into which every event must be fitted.

But two ideas suggest themselves. The first is that the pro-

longed battle demonstrates vividly that, even as the clouds of apostasy lowered on the Romish Church, God preserved a faithful remnant ready to defend, at the cost of their lives, the truths of sovereign grace. The second is that the Romish Church had abundant opportunity to know the terrible error to which the church was determined to commit itself. Yet it persisted in its evil way. One is reminded of what the Lord says of Judah: "What could be done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Is. 5:5). And yet it brought forth wild grapes. The Romish Church has no excuse for its terrible denial of salvation by grace alone.

The story begins with Rabanus and Gottschalk.

## The Life of Rabanus

Rabanus lived during the time of the great Frankish king Charlemagne, who carved out a

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kingdom from the wilds of France and Germany, and who is the founder of what became known as the Holy Roman Empire. Rabanus was born around 776 in Germany in the town of Mainz. He was educated in the abbey at Fulda, and thus destined for monkhood. He entered the Benedictine Order, became a deacon in 801, and went to Tours in France to study theology and the liberal arts under Alcuin, the great educator in Charlemagne's empire.

Rabanus completed his education and returned to Fulda to teach in the school which was connected with the abbey. His administrative and teaching abilities were so great that the school grew rapidly. Attending it were many sons of noblemen, but also future ministers and teachers who, upon completing their studies, fanned out into all parts of Charlemagne's domain.

In 814 Rabanus became a priest, and in 822 the abbot of the abbey in Fulda. The choice proved to be a good one, for Rabanus ruled the abbey well, supervised the rebuilding of the abbey itself, encouraged and promoted the building of many other churches in the surrounding area, and ruled the monks with wisdom, discretion, and firmness. He helped artistic monks to develop their talents, and instructed them to use their artistic abilities to decorate the new churches built in the area. He increased the property holdings of the monastery and made it one of the leading monasteries in the whole of Europe. He taught and preached regularly and produced an enormous amount of material. He wrote a commentary on all the canonical books of the Bible and on all the apocryphal books.

In 842, Rabanus retired to spend his time in a nearby church where he could concentrate on devotional activities and writing. However, in 847 he was called out of retirement to become archbishop of Mainz. It was during this period of his life that Rabanus

showed how deeply he was committed to Roman Catholicism in its most virulent forms.

### **Gottschalk**

I must at this point remind our readers of Gottschalk, who, in my judgment, was one of the great men of Medieval times. I cannot give you here his entire biography, but the interested reader can find it in my book on church fathers.

Gottschalk was born in 806 and was placed by his parents in the monastery at Fulda when he was a child. Upon arriving at years of discretion he asked to have his monastic vows canceled because he had had no choice in making them when still a child. This request was first granted, but was vetoed by Rabanus, the abbot of the monastery.

Rabanus was an ardent and radical defender of monasticism and all the theology implied in that strange Roman Catholic institution. Rabanus firmly believed that once someone had taken a monastic vow, that vow was absolutely unbreakable. He could not, therefore, grant Gottschalk a release. Instead, Rabanus sent Gottschalk to Orbais to be ordained as a member of the Benedictine Convent there.

Because Gottschalk saw no hope of ever being delivered from a monastic life, he devoted himself to a study of Augustine, and became persuaded of Augustine's teaching concerning the sovereignty of grace, including Augustine's doctrine of double predestination. He was so enthralled with these views and their biblical character that he traveled through the Mediterranean world bringing the gospel of sovereign grace to all who would hear.

Such practices as this soon got him into trouble with the church authorities. A bishop from Verona took exception to Gottschalk's teaching and referred the matter to Rabanus in Mainz, who was, after all, Gottschalk's superior. Rabanus condemned Gottschalk's views out

of hand, but Gottschalk had the courage to stand up to Rabanus and condemn his views as being Semi-Pelagian. The controversy between the two soon reverberated throughout Europe.

### **The Synod of Mayence (848)**

Because of Gottschalk's refusal to kowtow to the judgment of Rabanus, Rabanus called a synod to meet in Mayence. Gottschalk, a bit naive, was convinced that when it was shown to the synod that what he taught was pure Augustinianism and in keeping with Scripture besides, he would be completely exonerated. He set forth his views at the synod "in the joyous conviction that it was in accordance with the one doctrine of the church" — as one historian put it. But the poor monk had no conception of ecclesiastical politics. The synod condemned him, and Rabanus handed him over to Hincmar of Rheims (in France) with this paragraph in the accompanying letter: "We send to you this vagabond monk, in order that you may shut him up in his convent, and prevent him from propagating his false, heretical, and scandalous doctrine."

He was now at the mercy of Hincmar, a man noted for his cruelty. Gottschalk was never to escape from the convent, nor from the prison into which he was eventually put. Beaten, starved, cruelly treated, he finally died. But he never denied his faith.

### **Synod of Chiersy (849)**

While Gottschalk still lived, his courageous stand continued to stir up discussion, and various other synods were forced to meet to consider the matter. One such synod was the synod of Chiersy. It made every effort to persuade Gottschalk to retract his views, but it failed miserably. Gottschalk was convinced that the truth he confessed was the truth of God.

But the synod did make some notable decisions about doctrine.

Concerning predestination the synod said two things. 1) God elected a people out of the fallen human race to eternal life. 2) God did not predestinate the rest that they should perish, but He predestinated them to eternal punishment because He foreknew they would not believe. This is the doctrine of conditional reprobation, taught later by the Arminians, and held to by many today.

The synod also said that grace works in such a way that man's will is made free, so that the depravity of man's nature is mitigated by the power of grace. This is the doctrine of preparatory grace, which is given to all who hear the gospel or to all who are baptized.

Further, God wishes that all

men be saved, and expresses that wish in the preaching. So, also, Christ died for all; but the fact that His death did not set all men free "is the fault of those who are unbelieving, or who do not believe with the faith that works love." So salvation is dependent upon the choice of man's will made free by preparatory grace.

Gottschalk did have some supporters, men who were appalled at the cruel treatment he had received, and who were in basic agreement with his views.

Although the names mean nothing, let me just mention a few of them.

Ratramnus insisted that God is the "Ruler" though not the author of sin. In this way he insisted on the sovereignty of God over sin.

Prudentius repudiated the idea of a universal atonement and insisted that Christ died only for the elect whom it was God's purpose to save.

Lupus agreed with Gottschalk that I Timothy 2:4 referred to different kinds of people and a limited number, not to all men head for head. He also held, against those who charged Gottschalk with creating carnal Christians with his doctrine of sovereignty, that the elect can never be carnally secure because they see their need of Christ and go to Him. Nevertheless, on the doctrine of reprobation, Lupus was weak.

All this led to another synod. To that synod, the synod of Valence, we will turn our attention next time, D.V. □

Go Ye Into All the World



Rev. Jason Kortering

## Christian Evidences in Ancient Chinese Characters

**D**uring our Good Friday service this past April, our seminarian, Brother Paul Goh, reminded his audience that Christianity has deep roots in Chinese history.

Since Good Friday is a public holiday in Singapore, the service takes place in the morning and gives excellent opportunity to invite non-Christian parents and friends to attend. Mr. Goh had in his audience a number of aged non-Christian Chinese.

Among other things, the older generation stumbles over two issues regarding Christianity.

The first is that Christianity is viewed as a Western religion and therefore foreign to easterners, especially Chinese. There is a degree of antipathy between east and west, much of it rooted of course in political systems and expressed in historical conflicts. This affects religion as well. In the view of easterners, Christianity is contaminated. It is western and contributes to the undesirable characteristics of western behavior. In contrast, eastern religion enhances their virtues both in thinking and behavior.

The second is that the Chinese like to emphasize that they have

their own religion, which by tradition has been handed down to them, and that they ought to be committed to preserving this religion for future generations through their children. By contrast, Christianity is viewed as a "recent" and new religion introduced by western culture.

The traditional Chinese religion is made up of three parts: Buddhism (with its emphasis on karma), Taoism (from which it gets its Animistic elements), and the philosophy of Confucianism (especially filial loyalty and meritocracy). This religion is very old and has deep roots in their history and culture. Loyalty to their traditions requires them to reject Christianity in favor of their own.

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Since these obstacles affect especially the older generation, the main point of the message which was brought to them was that Christianity is *not* western and is *not* recent. Besides, if one examines carefully the beginnings of the Chinese people and their language, it can be demonstrated that Christianity had a large influence on their language itself. If tradition does weigh in the balance of decision, then they ought to be aware of the evidences of Christianity in the characters of their own language.

This is both intriguing and useful in ministering to the old generation of Chinese.

### **The Bugaboo of Contextualization**

That big word refers simply to the attempt on the part of missionaries to adapt the gospel to foreign religions and cultures, to make use of heathen religious practices, and to find similarities between Christianity and that religion — all in order to build bridges to communicate the gospel.

Paul's activity at Mars' Hill in Athens, Acts 17, is held forth as the great motif for this practice. There he identified the local altar to "THE UNKNOWN GOD" as a reference to Jehovah, the true God of whom he preached. He used that as a take-off point to preach to them the Creator and also the Father of Jesus, whom He raised from the dead. We do not reject that effort, or deny its place in the inspired Scripture and legitimacy as a mission method. In summary there is quite a difference between identifying Jehovah with an "unknown," and identifying Him with a heathen deity, which is so often done in contextualization.

I use the term "bugaboo" because the concept of contextualization as usually practiced is fraught with so many dangers. Just to put this article into perspective, I mention two. First, it is rooted in bad theology. It is the old heresy of Rome and Protestant Liberalism

that natural man is reaching up toward God and trying to find God even through heathen religions. This is dashed to pieces by God Himself in Romans 1:22,23, where we are told that heathen idolatry is not man trying to find God but man rejecting the God who has revealed Himself to them. There is a horrible chasm between heathen religion and the gospel truth. Secondly, it is also bad methodology. It allows the hearers of the gospel to maintain their wrong perception of "god." We only give him a new name and set him forth as part of a new religious system. Christianity is a radical religion and salvation means rooting out all the old, including all heathen idols and practices, in order to receive by free grace the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Now, having said this, we can clear the air and try to focus on the issue at hand.

### **Mysteries Confucius Couldn't Solve**

This caption is the title of a book written in 1986 by Ethel Nelson and Richard Broadberry. Its subtitle is *Analyses of Ancient Characters (Chinese) Reveal Intriguing Facts Shared with Hebrew Scriptures*.

What the book does is to demonstrate that there are evidences of Christianity in both Chinese practices of religion and in the language itself. This goes back a long time. Briefly, the story goes this way. From the Shun Dynasty (around 2205 BC) until as recently as AD 1911, the Chinese people, including the emperor, had the practice of a yearly sacrifice to the King of Heaven. Prior to 1420 it was held at the "eastern border," but after that date the emperor began to build the Temple to the God of Heaven in Peking and finished it in 1539. The annual sacrifice was then offered there. The name of the god of heaven was ShangTi.

Confucius (who lived 551-479 BC) was asked why the Chinese

practice this annual sacrifice. He had no answer, but he did insist as quoted in the book, "He who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth... would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his palm!"

What is suggested in the book is that this practice began soon after the confusion of the tongues at Babel (around 2200 BC). Chinese history goes all the way back to this period of time. It could well be that some of the people who migrated to China took with them a true concept of God and continued to worship in this manner. The point is that it did not take long before the understanding of this sacrifice was lost, and very soon the people were doing things for which they had no idea why they did it.

With care, the point can be made that there are evidences of Christianity in the very early days of the Chinese history. We cannot say that this ShangTi is the same God as Jehovah or the God of the Bible. I was reading awhile back of a similar account in the Ancient Vedas (Hindu Scriptures), that one of the gods took on humanity and became man (something done quite often in heathen traditions). The author suggested that this Purusa is a reference to Jesus Christ, and that he could conclude that Christ is in those Ancient Vedas because it includes a man-sacrifice. Admittedly, my knowledge of that ancient language is nothing, yet the twisting and assuming that goes on is very scary if we are to conclude that there are such evidences of Jesus in heathen Hinduism. Such contextualization is dangerous.

### **Additional Evidences in Chinese Characters**

There is something else in the book *Mysteries...* which is far more significant for our purposes here. A simple reference to the yearly sacrifice of a bullock on the eastern border by itself may be too

speculative, but if we add to it the evidences of Christianity which are in the language itself, it becomes a bit more convincing.

The date of Babel and the origin of the Chinese language almost coincide, again according to sources given. Evidently some of the children of Shem went into China because God confused the tongues at Babel and some of them spoke Chinese. Their close proximity to Noah and the flood allowed them to know the promise of God and take with them some semblance of Christianity. The point is that they must have had that personally for a time, but eventually it died out and the meaning of those religious roots became a mystery.

It is also significant that the kind of Chinese writing was somewhat similar to other writings of this period of time. It was picture-writing, sort of like using stick figures (pictograms). In other contexts it is called hieroglyphics. Chinese writing to this day is made up of pictures, or little segments of pictures, layered on top of each other, which are then read. Obviously the written form of any language changes over the years. It is quite amazing that the sources for the characters mentioned here were taken from bronzeware (dating back to the Shang dynasty around 1711-1122 BC) and oracle bones (which were written from early 2000 BC). The oldest complete dictionary of the Chinese language goes back to 86 BC. It was composed by Hsu Shen and was published as *Shuo Wen* in AD 120. He analyzed the characters and inserted the false ideas which were already rampant in his day.

I hesitated writing this article because I cannot say that I know this written language. Brother Paul, on the other hand, could demonstrate the point during the service by using a white board and writing out the characters. We could see the old people nodding their heads as they understood

what he was doing. I asked him if he would write this article, but since the publication of the *Standard Bearer* does not support Chinese fonts, it was difficult for him. So you will have to rely on my descriptions rather than on the actual writing of the characters themselves. What we will do is insert in place of a Chinese character an "X" and next to it give the meaning of that figure in English in parentheses and use "+" to indicate that the next character is added to the preceding one, and use "=" to introduce the finished figure and its meaning. Since we are working under this handicap, we don't want to make it tedious but use only representative words to illustrate a point and then move on. If this interests you, read the Book. The author gives so many illustrations from the characters that we have to be selective.

First illustration is the word to *create*. In Chinese it is made up of these layers or combinations: X (dust) + X (breath of mouth) + X (alive) = X (to talk or speak) + X (walking) = to create. From the Chinese character itself, which is translated to create, we have this concept: dust is the material, and breath and speech are the energy, to make alive. We think of the passage, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6). Or if we relate it to the creation of man, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The point is, where did this idea come from which is expressed in these Chinese characters that go back to the time of Babel? There must have been some Christian influence.

Closely connected with this is the Chinese character for *flesh*. It is made up this way, X (man) + X (hand) + X (wife) = X (flesh). In this character is a picture of a man with a wife attached to him

brought forth by the hand of God reaching inside of him. Quite a description of the creation of Eve, who was called "one flesh" with Adam, or bone of his bone. Again, how could they describe flesh this way unless they had knowledge of the creation of Eve?

Is there any evidence for the fall of man into sin? The Chinese word for devil or Satan has these elements in it. X (garden) = X (man) + X (mouth or secret) = X (devil). Satan here is pictured as the one who spoke or whispered in the garden. The Chinese word for desire is pictured this way, X (trees) + X (woman) = X (desire). Interesting, that the word desire is pictured as a woman looking at a tree. Just to add another interesting one, the word naked. It includes these parts X (garden) + x (tree) = X (fruit) + X (clothes) = x (naked). We can summarize it this way, by eating from the fruit of a tree in the garden man would see the need for clothes. That is what naked means. To this day, the Chinese character for naked has this root meaning, which can be discerned only if one is acquainted with biblical history.

What about salvation? Is there any indication in the Chinese characters about this? The word sacrifice has these pictograms: X (vessel, which also means flesh) + X (hand) + X (God) = X (sacrifice). The meaning is that humans by their hand offer to God. More specific is the word righteousness, which we as Reformed believers have come to appreciate through the Reformation. The Chinese word for righteousness is pictured this way: X (hand) + X (lance or sword) = X (me) + X (sheep) = X (righteousness). The meaning of this is that I must be below the lamb, kneeling and worshiping Him, and that by my hand I have killed Him with my sins (in the picture my hand holds the lance) and only in Him am I covered (joined to Him). That one word tells almost the entire message of salva-



tion — that righteousness with God is essential and that I cannot obtain it, but only Christ has done that.

A devotional word like prayer includes much the same imagery. X (couple) + X (garden) + X (God) + X (mountain) + X (river) = X (to seek or pray). The root idea is that, outside the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve (the couple) are seeking God, who is on the holy mountain where the river of life flows. This imagery could very well have lived in that early point of history.

### Conclusion

Such evidences must be viewed with great caution, and the use of them is very limited. We must not get carried away as if it proves something of the Bible. We don't need that kind of proof. Nor does it even serve that purpose for us. Rather, such evidence can be used to demonstrate to Chinese people, who have strong convictions about their traditions, that those traditions are not, as they think, exclusive of Christianity. It shows, too, that Christianity is not "western" but universal, both for all nations

and all ages. Such evidence will not save anyone, it can only make them curious, if the Spirit is pleased to work in them to guide them to the Word of God and the gospel preached, for that alone is able to save.

Do pray for our Chinese neighbors throughout the world, that God may open their eyes to such wonderful salvation which must have influenced their forefathers long ago.

God's Word is both wonderful and true. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Martin VanderWal

## Slaughter of the Innocents, or Life for the Guilty?

Matthew 2:12-23

Much debate we might have over the name by which this passage is remembered. Most commonly, the event recorded in that latter part of Matthew 2 is named "The Slaughter of the Innocents." This event is placed for remembrance on the liturgical calendar of several denominations—Anglican, Episcopalian, and Roman Catholic—on December 28. The purpose of this remembrance is to stimulate prayers for "innocents" slaughtered everywhere and prayers against all tyranny.

The question we must answer is whether this name is appropriate. Were these infants who were

slaughtered by the cruel sword of Herod truly innocent?

From one point of view, we must answer in the affirmative. According to the law of God, there was to be a certain regard for life. There were certain persons who had to be put to death. From the time of Noah, it was understood that "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man must his blood be shed." Blood was shed for the sake of blood. From the time of Sinai, those impenitent in their transgression against the law of God were either to be put to death or placed outside the camp, literally excommunicated from the fellowship of God's holy people. Those infants slaughtered by Herod had committed no such transgression. They were not worthy of death. Because of this, wicked king Herod bears terrible guilt for this heinous sin.

But from another viewpoint we cannot hold that these children

were innocent in themselves. According to the teaching of Pelagianism, these infants were free of guilt in every respect, even before God. As individuals (the only viewpoint of Pelagianism) they had done nothing wrong. And, since all sin is ever in the deed, they were not worthy of death, temporal or eternal. For this reason — not because of Christ — it is assumed that every one of these infants of Bethlehem was brought to heaven.

Holding to the biblical, Reformed doctrine of original sin, we vehemently disagree with this conclusion and its ground. These children were the children of fallen Adam. In him they were guilty and worthy of death. They were reckoned as sinners before they had done good or evil deeds. From that viewpoint this was not a "Slaughter of the Innocents," but a slaughter of the guilty.

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All, or some?

We must consider the possibility, nay, even the likelihood, that some of these infants were elect. In those particular cases, the cruel sword of Herod was the very means used by God to bring His children home, into everlasting life.

And that must be where we find the necessity of this unjust action of Herod. Necessary because of the One who had only recently been born in Bethlehem. Herod, even as he attempts to destroy Christ, must at the very same time serve Christ. Herod's service to Christ takes place in several different ways. His first service to this child is to fulfill prophecies concerning Him in the Scriptures. His second service to this child is to serve his church. By his nefarious deed, Herod provided the church a picture of the idea of substitution: one life for another.

One life for another. This idea of substitution we have in three different ways. Herod viewed the Messiah as a threat to his throne. He received the wise men, not as ambassadors to himself, but as ambassadors to a king who was rival to Herod. Herod saw the need to maintain his throne, not so much for himself, but for his posterity. His life, and the continuation of his throne, he deemed of greater value than the infants of Bethlehem. These were not his people, for he was a descendent of Edom, Idumea. Herod was of the line of reprobate Esau, hated of God. His life and throne he thought to preserve by the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem.

The second substitution was in the life of these infants for the preservation of Christ. This preservation took place in two important ways. The wrath of Herod was vented on these infants. By their slaughter Herod hoped to ensure that the Messiah would be destroyed. Then it was back to business as usual. But the Messiah was preserved. The preservation of the child Jesus served, in fact, to iden-

tify Him as the Christ. He was the Son that God called out of Egypt.

The third substitution we deem the most important. This was the substitution of the life of Christ for others — all the elect.

This substitution, the substitution that we have as the center of the gospel, could not take place immediately. It would not do at all to have the Messiah killed as a child, among these other children of Bethlehem. He had to grow and develop. He had to be taught, and later to teach others the truth concerning Himself. He had to be separated from all others, even from these children of Bethlehem. He had to be lifted up from the earth on the cross, in order to be the substitute for the elect of all the earth. Not Herod's sword would be the instrument of His death, but the wood of the cross, that He might bear the full weight of God's wrath against His people. He had to be the willing, conscious substitute for that people. He had to die, not in the space of a few seconds, but over a period of six hours, that He might bear, through to the end, all of God's wrath.

And so, for the sake of Christ, these children had to die. But it must also be true, if some of these children were elect, that Christ had to die for them. Since these elect infants were guilty in their first father, Adam, that guilt had to be removed by Christ, and in no other way than by the death of the cross.

The Scriptures had to be fulfilled, even those that appear obscure to us. "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." This prophecy is recorded in Jeremiah 31:15, and had to do with the chastisement (Jer. 31:18) that Jehovah would send upon Judah for her wickedness.

The voice of weeping was due to death. This weeping was first occasioned by the death of Rachel,

brought about by her hard labor in Benjamin's birth as recorded in Genesis 35:16-20. Her sorrow, manifested in weeping, was the reason for the name which she gave to this son, Ben-oni, son of my sorrow. Rachel's body was buried on the way to Bethlehem, and near the village of Rama.

This weeping had a second occasion, for along the way of Rama were the Jewish captives led to Babylon. In this place also was Jeremiah released from this captivity, and allowed to go where he pleased. In this band of captives there was great mourning and lamentation. This weeping was occasioned by the violence of the Babylonians against the infant children of Judah and Jerusalem. Babies were pried from their mothers' arms by the Babylonian soldiers and dashed headlong to the ground. Their necks broken, they formed an ugly path along the way through Rama. Violently killed before their mothers by the enemy, these infants were cause for great sorrow.

That lamentation turned into a wish and a prophecy. The wish we find recorded in Psalm 137:8,9: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." The prophecy we find recorded in Isaiah 13:16,18. There the prophet writes of the end of Babylon at the hands of the Medes. "Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes.... Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of their womb; their eye shall not spare children."

However, there had to be a third occasion for the weeping which took place in connection with the birth of the Messiah. The occasion is the wrath of the tyrant Herod. This king was no stranger to bloodshed. He had killed for the sake of his throne before. He

put to death members of his own family because he suspected they were plotting against him. He put to death the leaders of the Sanhedrin, suspicious that one of them might otherwise be father to the Messiah. Now it appears that the wise men have mocked him. He had planned to shed the blood of one child, having obtained knowledge of His specific location. This plan, brought to nought through divine intervention, makes a new plan necessary. So Herod sent out the order: All the children of Bethlehem, two years old and under, must be put to death. Herod's thirst for blood, inflamed by his rage, knows no bounds. He "sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." The mothers and fathers of Bethlehem and the coasts thereof saw their children torn from them and viciously murdered. For what reason they had no knowledge. How great their sorrow!

Meanwhile, Herod's sword cannot touch the Messiah. For, before Herod even began to grow suspicious over the "delay" of the wise men, Joseph received an angelic message in another dream. "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word." Joseph's obedience must have been spurred on by the knowledge of what sort Herod was. Joseph left by night, perhaps immediately following the dream. No one must know where he is going, not even the casual observer.

Through Joseph's obedience, the Messiah is preserved, while the children of Bethlehem must soon be slaughtered. This obedience stands in the service of God toward another end. Another prophecy must be fulfilled, that of Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." This prophecy may seem to us as incidental, just as the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15. For

this prophecy is God's complaint against His people, that they had refused sonship, though God had so mightily delivered them. By means of this prophecy, however, the inspired Gospel-writer Matthew shows that God had another purpose with these words. They were spoken about the Messiah, and fulfilled through the flight to Egypt and back. The Messiah, too, as the Son of God, must be called by His God out of Egypt.

That prophecy of Hosea must apply first of all to Jesus Christ. There are no other sons of God, unless He is truly the Son of God. Israel could not be called the son of God unless that nation carried Christ in its womb.

This brings us to the point of substitution. We have our eye upon God's election in Christ. Jesus is the only-begotten Son. But in Him God chose others to be His sons and daughters by adoption. The gracious election of the true Israel. It was for them as substitute that Jesus Christ came into the world. It was for them that all

these prophecies had to be fulfilled. It was for them that the children of Bethlehem were put to death. It was for them that Joseph fled into Egypt and returned to Nazareth—because their sin and guilt could be taken away by no other means than the death of the only begotten Son of God. Even those children of Bethlehem who were elect had to be put to death for the Christ. But through the death of Christ they, too, were brought out of their sin and guilt, into salvation.

Great is the weeping. But greater still will be the joy of the redeemed. We keep before us the words spoken in such close connection with the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15. "Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border" (31:16, 17).

## Questions for Meditation and Further Study:

1. How do the prophecies and the history related in this passage bring together different facets of the doctrine of antichrist? How do they together demonstrate the victory of Christ over antichrist? Can we see this part of the gospel reflected in Revelation 12? To what degree, and how?

2. What is the significance of these prophecies when we consider that Christ is wholly passive regarding them? How do they conclusively demonstrate that this Child is indeed the Christ?

3. How must it humble us when we consider that these children died as they did not only for the

sake of Christ, but also for our sake? How is the death of these children a matter of God's wrath? How is it a matter of God's grace and mercy?

4. Why must Joseph flee into Egypt? How does this "make" Christ the Son of God? Is there another deliverance from Egypt that takes place through another call, as the fruit of Christ's death?

5. How does Jesus' residence in Nazareth come about? Why must He be called a Nazarene? Which prophecy (prophecies) is here fulfilled? (Calvin's Commentary on this passage is an excellent resource, but be free to disagree!) □

# Instruction in the Covenant Home

**T**he subject of this article has been addressed before in this department. It is a subject, however, that needs to be addressed again and again because of its importance. It is customary in many of our churches that at the time of the opening of school our ministers preach a "school sermon." The substance of this article was preached as such a sermon. I pray that it will be a reminder and encouragement to us all of the importance of covenant instruction in our homes. Even though the publishing of this article will be long into the school year I believe we can consider these matters at any time of the year.

Instruction in the covenant home is fundamental. Our covenant children are instructed in church. We believe that they belong in the public worship services and are not to be separated from them as they are in churches where the truth of the covenant family has been forgotten. We also have instruction for our children in the catechism class, which is specially adapted to their level of understanding. We ought to be full of thanksgiving to God when we have our own Christian schools where our children are instructed in har-

mony with the principles of the fear of the Lord as we confess in our homes and in our churches. Yet we must never forget that instruction in the home is fundamental to all of these. In fact, without home training the instruction given in other spheres is very difficult and even almost impossible.

As a pastor I know, for example, how difficult it is to teach children in the catechism class when there is no support, or even only weak support, for such instruction in the homes. One can soon tell how things are in the home by how well children have prepared their lessons and by how interested they are in God's Word. We must not imagine that our Christian schools, as good as they may be, can replace the personal instruction we ought to be giving in the home. Christian school instruction can only supplement, add to, and enforce the instruction that we first of all as parents must personally give to our children in our homes. We are wasting our tuition money if we are not first of all giving good godly instruction in our homes.

There is evidence in our own circles that personal instruction by some parents is grievously lacking. There are obvious reasons for this. One of them is the busyness of modern-day life. Both fathers and mothers in some fami-

lies are so busy with daily occupations, sometimes even holding down two jobs, that there simply is not sufficient time or energy to devote to the important calling in the home. Often all of this is driven by a powerful desire to have more and more material things and to keep up with the rest of the world in nice homes, recreational equipment, and dream vacations. In some homes this busyness crowds out time for matters as basic as regular family devotions. In more and more homes in our churches, mothers are following the example of the world and abandoning their primary calling in the home for outside careers. There is tremendous pressure on our mothers to go along with the commonly held and false idea that the worth of a woman is defined by the kind of career she has outside

of the home. Taking care of children is, according to the prevailing philosophy of our times, such a lowly and demeaning task. Any dummy can do this. Child care organizations can do it for us. Outside of the home there are so many careers that are far more glamorous and significant. I

am sometimes dismayed at evidences of how deeply this philosophy has taken hold even among us in our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

Teenagers in our modern-day

*One can soon tell how things are in the home by how well children have prepared their lessons and by how interested they are in God's Word.*

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world are also extremely busy. They are involved in sports activities and music lessons and almost countless other activities outside the home. They are almost never home, not even for meals. They feel the need of being with their dates, often even more than one evening in the week. Some are convinced that already in their late teens they should live on their own. Later they all have their college and university schedules. If you have a couple of teens in the home, as we do in our home, it is a dizzying task just to keep abreast of all the different schedules every day and trying to adjust family life to them all. Of course we are not saying that all of these things are bad in themselves. We are, however, urging the need of waking up to the fact that some of these things can exclude from our families any time for real covenant life in our homes.

The sermon I preached on this subject was based on Deuteronomy 6, verses 6 to 9. Let me quote this passage so that we will have it before us. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

These words are part of the farewell address of Moses the man of God to the covenant nation of Israel. The book of Deuteronomy is largely made up of this farewell address in which Moses reminds Israel of all that the Lord had done for them and of the great urgency that as God's covenant people they continue to live in the land of promise in the fear of the Lord and according to all His commandments, statutes, and ordinances.

Aged Moses, who is soon to be taken to his eternal reward in glory, is earnestly concerned about the future welfare of God's covenant nation. He knows profoundly that one of the most important things for the future of Israel is the calling of covenant parents to instruct the children the Lord has given. These children represent future Israel. The continuation of God's covenant with Israel is dependent on (though certainly by the grace of God alone) the diligence with which parents in Israel will instruct their children.

In order rightly to understand the passage from Deuteronomy quoted above, we must keep in mind the perspective from which it was given. This perspective is emphasized over and over again in the book of Deuteronomy. We recently read this book for our family devotions in our home. What a tremendous book it is! In the book of Deuteronomy Moses rehearses for Israel over and over again all the wonderful works of the Lord whereby He redeemed His chosen people Israel. He reminds them of the great and mighty plagues which the Lord sent upon the Egyptians. He reminds them of the wonders of the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea.

Moses gives many reminders of the mighty miracles that God performed for Israel during the wilderness wanderings and the wonderful way the Lord led His people and provided for their every need. There was no other nation in all the world that was as blessed as Israel, who had Jehovah God, the sovereign glorious God of all the earth, dwelling in her midst, revealing His great wonders to His people. Moses prophesies to Israel concerning the blessedness of the land of promise into which they will enter.

In Deuteronomy Moses emphasizes beautifully the sovereignly gracious way in which Israel would receive the promised land. "And

it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou fillest not, and wells digged, which thou diggest not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

All of grace! All according to the faithfulness of God to His everlasting covenant! All by the mighty power of the Lord alone!

Moses in the book of Deuteronomy reminds Israel who and what they are. One of the most beautiful and powerful statements of this is found in Deuteronomy 7: 6-8. "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you of the house of bondmen." What a beautiful statement of God's absolute sovereignty in His amazing love and in His faithfulness in saving His people. These great truths form the basis of all the admonitions of the book of Deuteronomy.

Moses, in the name of the Lord, commanded Israel to keep His commandments and statutes and ordinances of the Lord because of the above mentioned truths. Israel was not given the law of God in order that she could save herself through the keeping of the law. She was given the law as the redeemed people of God. The people

of Israel must keep the law because the Lord made the nation of Israel to be a holy people unto Him. She must keep the law of God because of the sovereign, gracious salvation which the Lord has given to her. She must keep the law of God to show her gratitude to God in the whole of her life as the special nation of God's people. Israel must live to the glory of the Lord who has redeemed her. She will do that only if she knows and keeps and loves the law of her God.

These truths form the basis of Moses' urging again and again upon the parents in Israel that they must instruct their children in the law of God. In sovereign grace God will continue His covenant in the line of the generations of Israel. Parents are therefore under solemn obligation to instruct their children in the law of God.

All the above is far more true for us today. We have a more glorious revelation than Israel of the Old Testament. What God revealed only in types and shadows to Israel we have in blessed and glorious reality in Christ. We have been redeemed by His mighty power, through His cross and resurrection and exaltation. We have the gospel preached in our midst. We have the Spirit of Christ teaching us the truth of God and comforting us with the hope of salvation. We belong by grace unto the Lord and are heirs of His great salvation, a salvation far more glorious than the land of Canaan was for Israel. All of this is graciously given to us. This ought to be an even greater incentive for us to teach our children to love the Lord and to keep His commandments.

Ours is an increasingly immoral and wicked world, one that lives in absolute disregard of the law of God in ungodliness and even brazen wickedness. This reality alone makes it more and more urgent for us to be diligent in the instruction of our children. Our children face greater temptations in the world than ever before. There

are such tremendous reasons for warning our children about the sin and wickedness of the world and the fearful judgments of the Lord that shall come upon this world. We must teach our children clear and sharp discernment of the spiritual principles of the law of God, in order that by God's grace they be not tempted to go along with the wicked world and apostatize from the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy gives some of the most fearful warnings of apostasy found anywhere in Scripture. The history of Israel is a testimony of the fulfillment of God's judgments on apostate Israel who departed from His law.

Deuteronomy 6 gives us a picture of what the covenant home should be like. It shows us the manner in which we are to instruct our children in the covenant home. The very manner in which we are to instruct our children must reflect the beautiful idea of the covenant. We believe that that essential idea of God's covenant with us is His living personal, gracious, blessed friendship with us as His people. The covenant relationship between God and His people must be reflected not only in our marriages but also in our covenant families.

We see the blessed truth of the covenant reflected especially in this statement of our text: "When thou sittest in thine house." The covenant home must be the place where the covenant family sits down together, perhaps around the breakfast or dinner table or at other opportunities for regular, daily family devotions and instruction from the Word of God. The covenant home must be a place where parents take the time to instruct their children, in great personal love and concern for their future spiritual welfare in the world. There must be time in the covenant home every day when the cares and concerns of daily occupations and all the other mundane things of life are set aside. There must be leisure for covenant life in the

home. There must be a time when we, especially as fathers but also as mothers, take an interest in and show concern for our covenant children and take time and effort in great love and compassion to instruct them in the law of the Lord our God. I ask you fathers and mothers, Does this go on regularly in your covenant homes? Is the truth of God's covenant a reality in your homes?

In the next article I want to expound some of the practical implications of the passage in Deuteronomy 6. I want to show how beautifully the idea of the covenant is revealed in this passage and how this should be reflected in the day to day life of our homes. Let us not say that, because the times in Israel were so different than our times, none of this is practical and relevant for us. Israel, we might think, was a primitive agricultural nation. What was there, then, to do but feed a few sheep and cows and tend to some camels? The rest of the day was for leisure. There was lots of time to sit around with one's children. The modern world is different. Dad and mom work from early morning till late in the evening. At the end of the typical day everyone is so exhausted there is little energy and time for anything except ordering pizza for the family meal and watching the late evening news on television. Young people are almost always off to some late-night activity, and after an exhausting day we are all ready to go to bed.

If that describes your home, what has happened to the covenant life of your family? Do we expect that by some magic or through the effort of some other organization God's covenant will be maintained in our homes? We need to pay attention to the beautiful and important instruction of Deuteronomy 6. □

## Book Reviews

*Commentary on the Psalms*, by George Horne. Audubon, New Jersey: Old Paths Publications, 1997. Pp.xxvii-659. \$32.95. (Hard cover) [Reviewed by Herman Hanko.]

First of all, the reader might be interested in a few facts concerning the book. George Horne was lord bishop of Norwich, an ordained clergyman in the Anglican Church of England. He lived from 1730 - 1792, a period of time when the Anglican Church was still blessed with many staunch Calvinistic preachers. The book reflects the Calvinism of the Church of England.

Secondly, Ernie Springer, the owner of Old Paths Publication, has given the reading public a large number of extremely worthwhile and important reprints. This is another of them. The reader would do well to watch for any list that comes his way of new publications put out by this publisher.

Thirdly, the book is attractive, easy to read, and has a helpful "Foreword" written by Rev. John Greer, minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Malvern, PA. Rev. Greer emphasizes correctly that Rev. Horne looked at the Psalms for a Christological viewpoint; i.e., that the Psalms speak of Christ throughout.

We turn to the commentary itself. If one takes the time to read the Preface which was written by the author of the book, one discov-

ers that indeed it is the author's intent to point us to Christ in all His work as Christ is found in these wonderful songs of Israel. Rev. Horne speaks of the need for a spiritual interpretation of the Psalms, by which he means that we must find Christ in the Psalms; but we will find Christ in the Psalms in the lives of the saints in the OT who were inspired to write the Psalms. Thus we will find Christ in the lives of the saints of all ages. The point is that the Psalms, written by inspired saints in the Old Testament, are almost spiritual autobiographies. But because they are inspired by Christ, they are the stories of Christ within these saints — in the same way Christ is within all His people. This characteristic of the Psalms is true even though they are written in the language of Old Testament realities.

Horne includes in his preface a quote from Bishop Hooker, one of the English reformers, to demonstrate his point.

What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied pa-

tience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come; all good necessarily to be either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not, in this treasure house, a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.

Horne also has this in his favor: he consciously puts himself in the tradition of the church of the past and its expositors. We need not fear that we are led by clever minds into novelties of no value; the material is solid and edifying, the confession of the church in many ages.

Although the author does not include an explanation of the headings of the Psalms (it is his contention that no one can be sure of the meaning of many of them), the historical references in the Psalms to the life of Israel, David, and Israel's poets are not ignored.

The Psalms are intended to be studied and the commentary read as a part of one's devotions. They are, therefore, divided into material to be used over a period of thirty days in morning prayer and evening prayer. The commentary, being of a meditative type, is ideally suited to this use. □

## News From Our Churches

### Evangelism Activities

In evangelism news this month we find that the Evangelism

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*Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

Committee of the First PRC in Holland, MI has just finished work on the translation and publication of another of our PR pamphlets into Spanish. It is Rev. S. Houck's "Knowing the True God" (*Conociendo Al Verdadero Dios*). First is excited about this new edition because they believe it will

serve as a good basic pamphlet to introduce the gospel to Spanish-speaking people.

### Congregation Activities

On December 14 approximately thirty families, primarily from the Hudsonville, MI PRC, met in their church's Fellowship Hall to

**Mr. Benjamin Wigger**

discuss in an informal manner a possible interest in being part of a new daughter congregation. In November those families had responded positively to a survey sent out by Hudsonville's consistory, and they were meeting together for the first time in an effort to gauge overall interest in starting such a project. Of those thirty families, about half expressed enough interest in the idea of a daughter congregation to allow Hudsonville to consider them when it comes to appointing men to serve on a steering committee sometime in the future, and have them take this idea to the next level. Much discussion centered in just where this new church should be located if it did become a reality. Two areas seemed to receive the most support. Perhaps in the city of Hudsonville itself, or maybe about five to ten miles south of the city in the Jamestown-Forest Grove area. Hudsonville's consistory now has to evaluate the overall interest shown at this meeting and decide in what direction to go.

Each December all the adult Bible societies of the Hudsonville, MI PRC hold a joint meeting to study a portion of Scripture centered in the birth of Christ. This year's joint meeting was sponsored by Hudsonville's Men Society. For an after-recess program they arranged to have a Rev. Burt Subramanian and his wife, Janet, come and speak to them. He is pastor of a Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore and is in this country to learn how to set up and manage a Bible School, which he hopes to do back in Singapore later this year. They gave a very interesting account of their journey out of the Hindu religion into the truth of the Reformed faith. What a wonderful testimony of the grace and saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He used this couple and their witness over the years to bring many to a saving faith, and how He is now building His church there in Singapore.

The Choral Society of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI presented their annual Christmas concert December 5. A special number was given by a brass quartet, and a collection was taken for the Building Fund of Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland.

The following week, December 12, members of the Loveland, CO PRC, as well as those of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, were invited to come and celebrate, with their respective Choral Societies, the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

#### **Mission Activities**

Rev. J. Mahtani, our home missionary in the Eastern United States, preached December 5 for the Fayetteville Reformed Fellowship in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In addition to preaching twice on Sunday, he also had opportunity to visit with the FRF families, establish new contacts, and hold Bible Studies which dealt with the Canons of Dordt. For your information, the FRF is a group of several families who worship together and are in agreement with our churches in doctrine and practice.

#### **Sister-Church Activities**

This month, the Lord willing, our sister churches in Singapore will teach the first course in their

Evangelical Reformed Bible School in Singapore. This course will be taught by Prof. H. Hanko and will deal with the subject of "Reformation History." This course was scheduled to meet for about 15 weeks and could be taken on two levels. One could take the course for credit, which would involve attending faithfully, taking notes, writing review tests and exams, doing outside reading, and submitting a paper, or he could audit the course, if he chose to sit in on the lectures but not be accountable by means of test and writing papers.

#### **Minister Activities**

The Hull, IA PRC has extended a call to Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC, to serve as their next pastor. Along with Pastor Kuiper, the trio included also the Revs. Kenneth Koole and Thomas Miersma.

#### *Food For Thought*

"So it always is: a low view of the law always brings legalism in religion; a high view of law makes man a seeker after grace. Pray God that the high view may again prevail."

— J. Gresham Machen □

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Stuart Bylsma and family in the recent death of his brother,

**KEN BYLSMA.**

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26).

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.  
Jim VanderKolk, Assist. Clerk

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The council and congregation of the Grandville PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Andy Baas and family, in the death of his infant sister,

**LEAH RENAE BAAS.**

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

Rev. A. Spriensma, Pres.  
Jim VanderKolk, Assist. Clerk



# *The Standard Bearer*

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## CONGRATULATIONS

The congregation of First Protestant Reformed Church (GR) extends congratulations to our pastor,

**REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA,**  
for 25 years of faithful service in the ministry of the Word in the PRC. During those years he has served pastorates in congregations in both classes and played an active role in various denominational committees. We are thankful for his contribution to the work of our churches as a whole, and particularly for his ministry in First Church during the past five years.

Among us he has preached the word; been instant in season, out of season; reproved, rebuked, exhorted with all longsuffering and doctrine. We thank the Lord for a workman who, by His grace, needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 4:2; 2:15).

## NOTICE!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Bethel PRC on Wednesday, March 1, 2000, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Bethel's consistory, using the forms provided for that purpose.

Rev. Steven Key, Stated Clerk

## TEACHER NEEDED

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a Protestant Reformed music/band instructor for the 2000/2001 school year. Interested individuals, including those who are pursuing an education in this area, should contact Mike Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew, Walker, MI 49544 (616) 453-4106, or the administrator, Ron Koole (616) 453-9717.

## NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Dan Huizinga (Phone: 453-3191). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 14, 2000, D.V.

Student Aid Committee  
Dan Huizinga, Secretary

## *Standard Bearer* on CD

All 75 volumes of the SB have been computer-scanned and are now available on three CDs (instead of 3 shelves), including Adobe Reader software for searching and viewing.

Computer requirements: 16MB RAM and Windows 95. The CDs are Mac-compatible (please mention if you are a MAC user).

**Special introductory price, till February 1, 2000: \$75.00.**

Regular price, after January 31, 2000: \$125.00.

Order from the SB Business Office (cf. p. 170 for addresses).

Please watch for the upcoming registration forms for the 75th Anniversary Celebration of our Churches. The registration forms should be out within the next month. The plans for the Celebration are being finalized and there are many worthwhile spiritual activities as well as recreational activities for the whole family. Plan to attend this event on June 19-23, 2000.

