



The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

In This Issue:

Meditation — <i>Rev. James Slopsema</i> When You Pass Through the Waters	218
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i> A Time to Laugh, A Time to Dance	220
Marking the Bulwarks of Zion — <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i> Gregory I: The First Medieval Pope (1)	222
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i>	224
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — <i>Rev. James A. Laning</i> Distinctively Reformed Soteriology	226
When Thou Sittest In Thine House — <i>Mrs. Connie Meyer</i> How We Live in Our Homes: Encouraging Rays (2)	228
Contending for the Faith — <i>Rev. Bernie Woudenberg</i> Conditions and the Covenant	230
Search the Scriptures — <i>Rev. Martin VanderWal</i> The King's Way Prepared and Traveled	233
Book Reviews	235
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	237

**Vol. 76, No. 10
February 15, 2000**

When You Pass Through the Waters

But now saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Isaiah 43:1&2

Isaiah was the prophet of God to Judah in her apostasy.

We read of this apostasy in chapter 42. Judah had trusted in graven images and said to molten images, Ye are our gods (v. 17). Not surprisingly, we find harsh words of judgment for Judah. Because of her unfaithfulness the Lord would give Judah over as spoils to robbers (vv. 22-24). This was a prophecy of the Babylonian captivity that would soon uproot Judah from the land.

Now follow words of comfort and hope. "But now saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he

that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not..."

How important these words were to Judah as she faced the harsh realities of captivity under God's judgment.

And how important these words are today for the church and her members as she faces the harsh realities of life.

Passing through water and fire!

Water and fire speak of God's judgment upon the wicked. Thus, for example, the world in Noah's day was destroyed by the waters of a universal flood. This was God's judgment upon a wicked world that had filled the cup of iniquity. In turn, the destruction of the world by the waters of the flood serve as a type or picture of the final judgment of God upon the wicked by fire (II Pet. 3:5-7).

To pass through the waters and to walk through fire, therefore, is to live through the time of God's judgment.

But water and fire are also connected to persecution of the church. Thus, for example, in the time of Israel's persecution in the bondage of Egypt, Israel was required to walk through the waters of the Red Sea as Pharaoh pursued them out of the land. For their refusal to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, the three friends of Daniel were thrown into the burning, fiery furnace.

To pass through the waters and to walk through fire, therefore, is also to live under the persecution of the world.

When thou passest through the waters. When thou walkest through the fire. It's not a matter of "if," but of "when." Certainly

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The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Website for RFFA: www.iserv.net/~rffa

we will pass through the waters and fire of God's judgment. For the judgment of God is upon the world in which we live. This dreadful judgment comes in the form of natural catastrophes (earthquakes, tornadoes, famine, etc.), plagues (AIDS), wars and rumors of wars, lawlessness and the breakdown of society.... The very fact that we live in the midst of an evil world under these judgments of God means that we too pass through the waters of God's judgment upon sinful society.

But sometimes the judgment of God falls directly upon the church. For repeatedly the church and her members stray into sin. The judgment of God is also upon the unfaithfulness of His own people. This was the case with Judah in the time of Isaiah. For her departure from His word the Lord took Judah into captivity. No less is this true for the church and her members today. In judgment God has taken His Word from many churches that have refused to honor it. The judgment of God also falls upon individuals and families in the church for their personal sins, judgment such as marital and family problems, poverty, sickness, etc. Through these waters of God's judgment every one of us passes sooner or later.

But the saints must also pass through the waters and fires of persecution.

The wicked world always hates and opposes the church. For the church is Christ's church; and the world hates this church for Christ's sake.

Consequently, the church will always walk through the fires of persecution. The Old Testament church of Israel did. She was repeatedly attacked by the surrounding nations. And although this was often the judgment of God upon Israel for her unfaithfulness, it was also the attempt of the wicked world to destroy the church of God. Even today there are places where the church is severely per-

secuted for Christ's sake. Also in this country the world attacks the church of God and her members through slander, mockery, limiting our business and career opportunities....

When thou passest through the waters....

Fear not!

When Old Testament Israel passed through the waters, they were often afraid. Certainly the true Israel that believed the prophecy of Isaiah concerning captivity in Babylon was afraid. What would become of the nation? What would become of God's covenant and His promises?

We also tend to be afraid when we pass through the waters. We often fear when war looms; when we are opposed for Christ's sake; when we see the moral decline of the nation and the consequences for the church of the future; when there is lingering, debilitating sickness; when there is death.

Fear not!

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.

What a dreadful thing, to pass through the waters alone. Imagine having to deal with war, poverty, sickness, death, and all the harsh realities of life alone! This is what the world does. They pass through the waters of God's judgment upon their sin alone. Consequently, the waters overflow them. The fires of God's wrath set them ablaze and burn them. In other words, they perish under the judgment and wrath of God.

But the Lord promises to go with us, His people.

When we pass through the water of God's judgment, whether that is God's judgment upon the world's sin or our own, the Lord will go with us. And when we walk through the fire of affliction and persecution, we walk with the Lord at our side.

For that reason the waters will not overflow us, nor will the fire set us ablaze so that we are burned.

This does not mean that we will never suffer earthly or physical loss. We may lose many things, even our physical life, as we pass through the waters. But because of the Lord's presence we will never be overcome spiritually. As we will walk through the fires of persecution, we will never lose our faith or our salvation. As we pass through the waters of God's judgment upon sin, we will not suffer the eternal ruin of the world.

We are safe and secure.

For the Lord our God is with us.

Wonderful assurances.

The Lord is He that created Jacob and formed Israel.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, calling them into being out of nothing. Part of this creative work was to form man carefully out of dust of the ground. What an astounding work! It is a work that magnifies the greatness, power, and glory of God.

In a similar manner the Lord also created and formed Israel.

He created Israel as a nation by leading them out of the bondage of Egypt and organizing them into a nation by the laws of Sinai. More importantly, by these same laws the Lord formed Israel into a spiritual nation, a covenant people. This is to be compared to the original work of creation, making something glorious out of nothing.

This great work of creating Israel as His covenant people became a reality as the Lord redeemed Israel and called her by her name.

I have redeemed thee. To redeem is to deliver from the power of another through the payment of a price. Years before, the Lord had through Moses redeemed Israel from 400 years of bondage in Israel. That redemption from Egypt's bondage was of greatest importance in that it pointed Israel ahead to her deeper, spiritual redemption through One who would be greater than Moses, namely,

Jesus Christ. Even as the Lord redeemed Israel from earthly, physical bondage through Moses, so the Lord would one day redeem the same Israel from her spiritual bondage to sin through the Christ that was to come. I have redeemed thee. Although this great redemption lay in the future, it is described as already having taken place, in order to indicate its certainty.

I have called thee by thy name.

The nation of Judah was known by the name of its first father. The father of the nation was called Jacob, meaning "heel holder," to indicate that he was the one who sought by faith to lay hold of the birthright blessing. Later Jacob's name was changed by God to "Is-

rael" to indicate that Jacob had prevailed in his quest for the blessing of God.

I have called thee by thy name. Through the call of the gospel that came through the prophets the Lord made the nation that which he had called her, namely, a nation who seeks the Lord's blessings in faith and prevails.

Indeed, the Lord had created the nation.

And so she belonged to the Lord.

Could the people ever pass through the waters alone, or walk through the fires alone? The Lord their Creator, their Redeemer, would certainly go with them.

The church today is not an entity different from Old Testament

Israel but a continuation of Israel in the New Testament era.

She too has been created by the Lord and formed by His hand to be His own. This has been accomplished through the work of redemption in the blood of Jesus Christ and the great call of the gospel which forms the church into those who seek the Lord's blessings and prevail.

The church and her members belong to the Lord. Certainly He will also go with us as we pass through the waters and walk through the fire. Nor will the waters overflow us; the fires shall not consume us.

We are safe and secure in the Creator and Redeemer who accompanies us. □

Editorial

A Time to Laugh, A Time to Dance

There is a time to laugh and dance in the life of the individual child of God. God's own Wisdom teaches this in Ecclesiastes 3:4. When a child marries in the fear of the Lord, the godly parent laughs with a joy that draws from the glad heart of God. As the joy of the laughing Israelite manifested itself in a merry skipping and leaping before the Lord, so does the joy of the thankful parent necessarily show itself in the various activities of the wedding reception, among family and friends: the greetings, the fellowshiping, the singing, the eating and drinking.

At such times, joy and its exuberant expressions are proper for the Christian. They are right. They are called for. On such an occa-

sion, to weep and mourn, or even to sit by with a morose face, would be wrong. God would be offended. For it is God who arranges these times in our life. He has decreed them. He brings about the circumstances by His marvelous providence. And He works by His Spirit in our souls, that spontaneously we recognize the time for what it is and live in it appropriately: laughing and dancing.

For the church, too, there is the time to laugh and dance. There is the time appointed by the law. This is the weekly sabbath. In the house of God, in communion with Christ by the gospel and sacraments, we rejoice in the God of our salvation. This is our holy laughter. And we worship—believing, praying, singing, giving. This is our holy dancing.

God also creates a time to laugh and dance by arranging the church's circumstances in His sovereign providence.

Such a time is the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Our celebration on June 19-23 of this year will be the laughter and dancing of Ecclesiastes 3:4.

Our uncontainable joy and our exuberant celebration will be legitimate. We will laugh and dance before the face of God. Joy and celebration are necessary. God wills them. The 75th anniversary of our history is *God's* time for laughing and dancing.

There have been times of weeping and mourning. There have been these sad days for every one of the congregations. There have been times of sorrow for the denomination. Such a time was that

of the grievous schism only a few years after our 25th anniversary celebration in 1950. So closely does God mingle our joys and sorrows in this life. This is true also of our personal lives. Also the times of weeping came from our God. He tried us; He chastised us; He disciplined us; He purified us. Then we did not laugh and dance. That was not appropriate. To have done so would have angered Him. He would have increased the strokes. He wanted us to cry. And we did. We never thought of laughing.

But the 75th anniversary is a time of joy and celebration. Seventy-five years ago, God said "Live!" to a small, despised group, "cast out in the open field," and that group became true, Reformed churches of Jesus Christ, the Protestant Reformed Churches (Ezek. 16:5). For 75 years, God has preserved us as a denomination of Reformed churches that are faithful to the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. For 75 years, God has kept among us, in all the congregations, on our mission fields, and in our seminary, the preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel of sovereign, particular grace. For 75 years, in these churches believers and their children have enjoyed fellowship with the triune God and with like-minded brothers and sisters in His covenant of grace. For 75 years, parents and grandparents have witnessed the salvation in these churches of their (and the churches') children, confessing their faith and walking in God's ways.

For 75 years, the Protestant Reformed Churches have been graced with God's truth in the midst of appalling and widespread apostasy.

Still today, after 75 years, His truth abides with us. Every congregation faithfully confesses the Reformed faith as defined by and contained in the creeds; there is no "liberal" congregation, not one. All proclaim grace; none teaches free

will, works-righteousness, or conditional salvation. All teach the unconditional covenant of grace with the elect alone; none argues for a universal covenant whose efficacy hangs upon the fulfillment of a condition by the sinner himself. All honestly believe the inspiration and historicity of Genesis 1 (and 2 and 3 and 7-9 and 11); none is open to replacing God's "days" with Charles Darwin's billions of years. All have a zeal for the holy walk of thankfulness that glorifies God in the covenant; none yields to the pressure of the world by approving sexual promiscuity, unbiblical divorce, remarriage after divorce, or homosexuality.

In a time of schism and fighting in many churches—over sheer modernism, over the acceptance of free-willism as a valid form of the gospel, over denial of the authority of Scripture, over the corruption of the worship of God; over deep inroads into the churches of worldliness of life and refusal to discipline, over the toleration of the mysticism of the charismatic movement, and more—the year of our Lord 2000 is for us a time of unity. We are one in doctrine. We are one in life. We experience that we are one. We are working at expressing this unity by loving each other and receiving each other.

Surely, this is a time of laughter and dancing.

As if this were not enough, our God, who is liberal in His grace and goodness (as He can be severe in His anger and chastisement), gives us numerical growth, vastly extended witness by publications and radio, new mission fields at home and abroad, and the earthly peace and prosperity to carry out our privileged, exciting calling. In addition, our precious Christian day schools also flourish.

Let us then laugh and dance!

Let us gather for the celebration of our 75th anniversary!

The committees appointed by synod on behalf of all the churches have done and are doing splendid

work in planning a lively, edifying, enjoyable, and God-glorifying celebration. The site, the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which we will have to ourselves, is a lovely, spacious, and altogether suitable place.

Let as many outside of Western Michigan who can, make the trip. Let as many in Western Michigan who can, lay aside their private work and recreations for five days to join in the celebration. Now is the time. The 75th anniversary of one's denomination of churches in circumstances of joy and gladness happens only once. The opportune time of God for laughing and dancing must be entered into at God's time. We know not what will follow in the history of our churches, in the history of our country, or in the history of the world.

Let us laugh and dance *together*.

We celebrate a goodness of God that we share. At the heart of the celebration will be the fellowship. Now is the opportunity for the man from New Jersey to meet in the flesh the man from Alberta whom he has never seen before. Now the family from Lynden or Redlands can meet the family from South Holland or Roselle whom they may never visit again.

In this way, too, we strengthen each other's hands for our common work and, perhaps, for the times of weeping that lie before us.

Come to the celebration. It is the time for it. Send in the registration forms. And then come.

I extend a special invitation to the friends of the Protestant Reformed Churches in other denominations. I do not refer now to members of sister churches and of other churches with whom we have official contact. Synod has already warmly invited them. Some are coming, and we are delighted.

But we have friends in other churches in various parts of North America and throughout the world. They are one with us in the truths

of the sovereignty of God. In spirit they join themselves with the Protestant Reformed Churches in the great battle that the Protestant Reformed Churches fight on behalf of Christ's kingdom in these last days. Some we have helped, spiritually.

Now is the time for you to come, to laugh and dance with us. Do not suppose that this is a family-affair and that your presence will be an intrusion. You will be welcome. Your presence will be good for us. And our joyful celebration in the Word will be good

for you.

What a heart-warming, thrilling experience that will be when, on the first night, two or three thousand or more of us will join in singing the Psalms that magnify God, that express the deepest desires of our soul, and that we love. As we sing, we will be reflecting on the goodness and faithfulness of God to us hitherto. That swelling sound of singing will be a prelude to the voice of many waters and great thunder on mount Sion in the Day of the Lamb.

All our celebration will be the praises of God. Not of ourselves. Not of the men who figured large in our history, although we will remember them with honor and thanks, as well as the others who believed and worked and suffered and sacrificed to give us what we have.

The *Lord* maintains our lot. We know this.

Just for this reason, we may laugh the louder and dance more vigorously. □

— DJE

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Gregory I: The First Medieval Pope (1)

Introduction

The most important institution in the Middle Ages, roughly the time from the death of Augustine to the Protestant Reformation (430-1517), was the Roman Catholic papacy. It dominated all the history of the Western Mediterranean world and Europe, and its influence was inescapable in the Eastern church until the great schism between east and west in 1054.

The papacy determined, more than any other institution, political, economic, and ecclesiastical life during this millennium. But the man who, more than any other, shaped the medieval papacy was

Pope Gregory I, known throughout history as Gregory the Great. Although he was a child of the ancient period of church history, he stood with one foot in that period and the other foot in the medieval period. And, by shaping the medieval papacy, Gregory formed the medieval Romish church. He determined its direction for the entire millennium. He set the pattern for the entire medieval period in his exaltation of the power of the papacy, in its political rule of the nations, in its liturgy, in its theology.

He was, in fact, the first pope. Other men who are called popes preceded him. Earlier men made the same extravagant claims for the papacy which he made. Others exerted some influence on the affairs of men and nations from their position in the See of Rome. But Gregory was not called "The Great"

without reason. He was the first true pope.

It is interesting to know something of the life of the man and to know something of his views on all sorts of ecclesiastical matters simply because the Medieval Period of church history never departed significantly from what Gregory taught and promoted. Though one travels the whole distance from Gregory to the Reformation, one feels the hand of Gregory wherever he turns. He is a man worth looking at.

The Times in Which Gregory Worked

One could hardly imagine worse times than the years of Gregory's life. The great barbarian migrations had resulted in the near death of all civilization in Europe and the West. The Eastern Roman Empire survived in the

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

Byzantine Empire until the capture of Constantinople in 1453. The West was overrun.

These barbarian migrations had almost destroyed Europe. One historian writes:

Italy ... was exhausted by war and overrun by the savage Lombards, who were still heathen or Arian heretics, and burned churches, slew ecclesiastics, robbed monasteries, violated nuns, reduced cultivated fields into a wilderness. Rome was constantly exposed to plunder, and wasted by pestilence and famine. All Europe was in a chaotic state, and bordering on anarchy. Serious men . . . thought that the end of the world had come.

Gregory himself, in one of his sermons, said:

What is it that can at this time delight us in the world? Everywhere we see tribulation, everywhere we hear lamentations. The cities are destroyed, the castles torn down, the fields laid waste, the land made desolate. Villages are empty, few inhabitants remain in the cities, and even these poor remnants of humanity are daily cut down.... We see how some are carried into captivity, others mutilated, others slain....

The times were grievous indeed.

Gregory's Early Life

Gregory was born in 540, 110 years after the death of the great Augustine. He was born from the ancient Roman nobility, for his ancestors for many years had belonged to the senatorial class in the Roman Empire. Over the years the family had acquired vast holdings, immense wealth, and a huge castle for a home.

But the home was also a Christian home, and the early influences on Gregory were religious influences — even though his education prepared him for governmental services. When Gregory's father,

Gordianus, died, his mother, Sylvia, entered a convent. She gave herself over so completely to an ascetic life and to piety and godliness that the Romish church later canonized her.

Gregory seemed to be destined for a life of governmental work, and was, in fact, appointed by the emperor in the East to the office of Imperial Prefect, the highest government post in Rome — and in the entire West. The year was 574; Gregory was only 34 years old.

Gregory the Monk

Apparently the religious influences of Gregory's childhood and youth continued to work on him, for shortly after his appointment to Rome's most prestigious post, he renounced the world completely, changed his father's palace which he had inherited into a monastery, and became a monk in it. The enormous wealth which he had inherited he used partly to found six monasteries in Sicily, all of which were given land holdings; and the remainder of the wealth of his ancestral patrimony he gave to the poor. He was a penniless monk in a lonely monastery which had once been his home.

But he soon attracted attention and others joined him in his ascetic life. A monastic community was established. Gregory gave himself over so completely to ascetic practices that, because of his frugal meals and self-discipline, he permanently harmed his health.

Even though he had turned his back on political service, the government would not let him alone. In 579 the church appointed him as a deacon, and the government sent him as an ambassador to the court in Constantinople. In the seven years he continued there, he did invaluable service for the government.

In 585 he returned to Rome and became abbot of the monastery which he founded. Although Gregory continued in government service, the direction of his life had

fundamentally changed. One interesting aspect of this change was his sudden interest in missions. The event reads like a story.

One day while in the slave market in Rome Gregory saw three Anglo-Saxon boys offered for sale. He was struck by their appearance, for they had light hair, fair complexions, and sweet faces. After some inquiry he learned that they were heathen idolaters from another country and nation. When he discovered that they were Angles, he said: "Right, for they have *angelic* faces, and are worthy to be fellow-heirs with *angels* in heaven."

Gregory learned that the name of their king was Ella, to which he responded, "Hallelujah; the praise of God the Creator must be sung in those parts."

Gregory rushed from the slave market to the papal residence and pleaded with the pope to send missionaries to "Angle-land," i.e., England. He offered to go himself and even started out for that land. But he never arrived, because he was summoned back to Rome. He could not be spared in the holy city. In 590, by the popular acclaim of the clergy and the people, he was elected pope.

From all outward appearances, Gregory did everything in his power to escape being pope. He considered himself unworthy of this exalted position, and would have, if possible, escaped from the responsibilities. It seems as if he was coerced into accepting the election. Yet, one ought to be a bit cautious. Gregory was not always the man he seemed to be — as we shall learn.

The papacy did not change his manner of living, however. He continued to live frugally and, faithful to his monastic vows, he practiced the ascetic life even while pope. Because the papacy already then had vast land holdings, the revenue was enormous. But he refused to allow this revenue to be used to satisfy the covetous greed

of those who surrounded him, but engaged in personal acts of charity. It was not uncommon to see Gregory out in the streets personally distributing food and money to those in need. And through others he fed hundreds, cared for the sick, clothed the beggars, and alleviated the suffering of those around him.

He became a powerful pope.

A historian has described Gregory in the following way:

He is one of the best representatives of medieval Catholicism: monastic, ascetic, devout and superstitious; hierarchical, haughty, and ambitious, yet humble before God; indifferent, if not hostile, to classical and secular culture, but friendly to sacred and ecclesiastical learning; just, humane, and liberal to ostentation; full of mission-

ary zeal in the interest of Christianity and the Roman see, which to his mind were inseparably connected. He combined great executive ability with untiring industry, and amid all his official cares he never forgot the claims of personal piety.

We shall continue our discussion of Gregory in another article. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "False Prophets; Real Profits"

The above title is one taken from an article of P. Andrew Sandlin appearing in *2000 WorldNet-Daily.com*. I'll quote from that later. The reference is to the "prophecies" of many Christians who insisted that the Y2K bug would create havoc in the world and bring an end to civilization as we know it. They have entered the 21st century with "egg on their faces." (Of course, they have still plenty of additional eggs on hand for the disasters they so firmly believed and proclaimed would happen.) They have not only made tremendous fools of themselves, but have given occasion for many to mock the name "Christian." Many of these same prophets of doom made evidently a great deal of money selling their books about the disaster. Many also sold supplies to those who would be adequately prepared to live through this dreadful event.

One of these "false prophets" was Gary North, the Christian Reconstructionist who was willing to "stake his reputation" on his prophecy for doomsday on January 1, 2000. An erstwhile friend, another Christian Reconstruc-

tionist, Sandlin, wrote the scathing article (with the title above this writing) pointing out the horrible "crime" of North which has become the occasion of much mockery and scorn in the press.

An interesting report appeared in the *Christian News*, December 27, 1999, quoting from David W. Cloud, *Fundamental Baptist Information Service*. I quote part of this.

For the last two years many influential Christian ministries have been proclaiming doom and gloom associated with the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer problem. Those who have joined the doomsayers bandwagon to one degree or another have included Gary North, Michael Hyatt, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, James Dobson (who gave much airtime to Michael Hyatt), Don McAlvany, D. James Kennedy, R.C. Sproul, Larry Burkett, Grant Jeffrey, Steve Farrar, Chuck Missler, and Hal Lindsey.

The doomsayers claim that the Y2K problem is so enormous and the time to fix it so short that it is insurmountable. The astonishing doom and gloom scenario that has been devised by Y2K prognosticators envisions the collapse of the banking system, long-term power failure, a breakdown in the police and military, airplanes falling out of the sky, public health systems breaking down, no more court system, social anarchy, and many other things.

Gary North, who says he de-

cided to stake his reputation on his Y2K predictions, anticipates that the Y2K Bug "is going to take down every national Christian ministry" and will bring in famine, pestilence, failure of public health systems, no more court system, no more public schools, etc. North predicts an economic collapse that he describes as "the mother of all bank runs." Not to be outdone, Don McAlvany warned of "the mother of all electrical blackouts" (McAlvany Intelligence Advisor, February 1998). Grant Jeffrey, in his book *The Millennium Meltdown*, predicts a global crisis, the scope of which we have not experienced since World War II. Dr. D. James Kennedy warned that the Y2K Bug is a dark cloud that "is going to catch the unprepared and drench them like they have never been drenched." Larry Burkett predicts an economic disaster, with a 25 percent failure rate of small businesses in America and as high as 15 percent of large corporations. Dr. R.C. Sproul said we may see "the meltdown of civilization with one billion fatalities—the end of the world as we know it" ("The Great Collapse." *Tabletalk*, April 1999). Hal Lindsey, on his television program, warned that Russia's nuclear missiles might be launched due to the Y2K problem. Michael Hyatt's book *The Millennium Bug* is advertised as a manual to "protect yourself and your family from the coming chaos as critical computer systems crash around the world." The

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back cover of the book warns of planes unable to fly, military defense systems failing, and employers going out of business. Jerry Falwell has devoted at least three televised broadcasts and several articles in his *National Liberty Journal* to "the Y2K Computer Crisis." Falwell's video "A Christian's Guide to the Millennium Bug," which retails for \$28, stated: "Y2K may be God's instrument to shake this nation, to humble this nation." Viewers are urged to stockpile food, water, gasoline, and ammunition.

Many of the Y2K doomsayers have made a lot of money from the anxiety they have helped to excite. For example, Michael Hyatt, author of the popular and influential book *The Millennium Bug*, which has been at the forefront of stirring up the Y2K craze, markets a "Y2K Food" package for \$3,395.

The above was written in a publication of David Cloud dated December 14, 1999—weeks before the "disaster" which was supposed to occur on January 1, 2000. Well, all these "prophets" came with false prophecies about doomsday—and must join the ranks of so many others who have likewise been exposed in all of their foolishness.

Interestingly, a fellow Christian Reconstructionist but antagonist of Gary North, P. Andrew Sandlin, emphatically denounces North (of course, after January 1 passed by somewhat uneventfully) in an Internet "newspaper" called *2000 WorldNetDaily.com*.

What we also know is that the Y2K doomsayers were wrong. Not mistaken. Wrong. Very, very wrong. Egregiously wrong. Horribly wrong. In the case of the explicitly Christian doomsayers, sinfully wrong.

Sinfully wrong? Yes. While the secular doomsayers simply capitalized on their profound lack of omniscience, a few Christian doomsayers boldly claimed to enlist the sovereign, Triune God in their predictive campaign of head-over-heels apocalypticism. It was,

as we shall see, their collusion hatched in Hell.

These prophets did not only counsel preparation for certain, impending disaster — when, in fact, it did not come in any form. They did not only deny that the problem could be fixed — when, as it turns out, we are not fully certain it even needed to be fixed. They did not only attack a fundamental mechanism of the free market (division of labor) — when for years they had claimed to be rigorously biblical free-market economists.

They did not only counsel uprooting one's family to move to Y2K-friendly rural areas and resort to pre-capitalist, poverty-inducing self-sufficiency — when those who followed their advice stood to suffer profoundly if their predictions were wrong (or if they were right, for that matter). No, it was not enough to jeopardize people's lives (under the pious guise of trying to save them).

In addition, they acerbically attacked those who refused to jeopardize people's lives, those that counseled moderation, like the Rev. Brian Abshire and Mr. Walter Lindsay. They positioned themselves as the only biblically faithful remnant, excoriating all Christians who refused to follow them down the primrose path to huckleberry-picking poverty. Their prophecies were unequivocal:

The millennium bug will hit all over the world. Every society will suffer the terrible consequences of the unofficial decision of a handful of technologists a generation ago to save two digits on an 80-digit punch card. The ludicrousness of that decision will be visible to all.

The article continues:

The Christian doomsayers were flying high, cocky and confident, characteristically insulting, intransigent, imperious. The lead-dog of the prophetic pack, an orthodox Calvinist, exulted:

I am placing the Christian Reconstruction movement's reputation on the line. I represent this movement. ... I have made yak (he meant Y2K; perhaps the Y2K bug infected only his computer system) my personal

crusade. I am now widely identified as the doomsayer, which is correct. Links to my site are posted all over the world, from Red China's Web site to the World Bank's — even in the New York Times. So, if I prove to be wrong, Christian Reconstruction will be pilloried. Those pastors who are afraid I'll be proven wrong are trying to separate their ideas from mine on yak. But it will do them no good. When a representative takes this strong a position on a widely known issue, he sets the pattern for those who are part of his movement. That's the way representation works, for good or evil.

At the time, I publicly but gently (oh, so gently) reminded this doomsayer that while he was betting the farm on a Y2K disaster, it was his farm alone he bet. He was free to destroy his reputation, and he surely has. He was not free to destroy everybody else's. Biblical representation is covenantal (Rom. 15:12-21); it is not speculative. He may claim to represent whomever he wants to represent. But all claims are not true. Saying it's so don't make it so....

...Even if a prophecy were fulfilled, if it seduced the saints away from the Lord and the Faith, the prophet who issued the prophecy was proven false and was to be executed. False prophets can sometimes utter accurate prophecies.

Accuracy is not an infallible criterion of divine approval. The fundamental issue is ethical, not predictive. Further, we read in Deuteronomy 18:20-22:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

This is all simple enough. God's prophets must pass two tests: 1) their word must never lead the saints away from God or the Faith, and 2) their prediction must come

to pass infallibly. If they do not meet these tests, they are not God's prophets. "Thou shalt not be afraid of him." We must never be afraid of men professing to speak in the name of the Lord, once we discover that they lie to God's people. Liars are evil. Liars in the name of God are reprehensible.

Showing Their Inconsistency

If we hold the historic Protestant view of revelation and the canon of Scripture, we deny that prophets in the sense limned in Deuteronomy survive the canonical era. In short, we don't need prophets, because we have the whole Bible. One Y2K false prophet assured his readers that these laws relating to the tests of and penalties for false prophets expired in AD 70.

He offered no Bible verses to

verify this, and his argument did appear self-serving. It was especially ironic, since he claimed to be a theonomist — advocating "the abiding authority of Old Testament law." Just not this Old Testament law about false prophets....

...In Old Testament Israel, these prophets would have been stoned by now (and not on millennium-celebratory Dom Perignon, either). They had better be relieved that their efforts to install a Christian commonwealth grounded in the civil laws of the Old Testament (the laws prohibiting false prophets, of course, being the notable exception) have not yet succeeded. (There is, I imagine, an up side to the incremental advance of the kingdom of God after all.)

So — the end is not yet. Gary

North and others have made fools of themselves. Christianity has been accused of promoting panic among many. And it appears that some of these "prophets" have made large profits.

But, sadly, many say, "Where is the promise of His coming? All things continue as they always were." Let us never be fooled by this thinking. His coming is at hand. We are called to watch! But let us not fall into the error of so many in the past, thinking we can declare the day and hour of His return — or the coming of His kingdom. The Word of God quoted above from the Old Testament is truly applicable: a "prophet" is revealed by the prophecy he utters. □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

SOTERIOLOGY

Article I

Distinctively Reformed Soteriology

With this article we begin the fourth section of Reformed dogmatics, known as *soteriology*. Soteriology is the study of how God saves each individual whom He has chosen. Whereas the next section, known as *ecclesiology*, deals with how God saves the church as a whole, this section deals specifically with the individual child of God and considers how God delivers him from death and raises him to a heavenly

life in Christ. Although Christ saved us almost two thousand years ago when He died for us, the blessings of salvation have to get to us, for us to be able to benefit from them. It is the section on soteriology that explains how Christ causes this to happen.

We could sum it up by saying that soteriology deals with how God realizes His covenant within us. The covenant is the bond of friendship between God and His people in Christ. When Christ died for us He established this covenant, by paying for our sins and earning for us the right to enter into this covenant. But we do not actually enter this covenant friendship un-

til Christ sends into our heart His Spirit, who quickens us and causes us to enter into fellowship with Him. How the Spirit of Christ takes a dead sinner, quickens him, and efficaciously brings him into the covenant friendship of God is the subject of soteriology.

It is of utmost importance that, when speaking of these glorious truths, we set them forth *distinctively*. To set forth a doctrine distinctively is to set it forth in such a way that only those who truly believe this doctrine will confess it. For example, many who claim to be Reformed refuse to believe the biblical doctrine of creation, and instead hold to the lie of evolution.

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Some of these will admit that God created all things out of nothing. They will say that God started the evolutionary process by creating all things out of nothing. Therefore, we must confess the doctrine of creation in such a way that we distinguish ourselves from these people. We can do this by saying that God created all things out of nothing *in six literal days*. This is a simple example of what it means to set forth a biblical doctrine distinctively, and thus to distinguish us from those who are not truly Reformed. This is the way we must set forth all the doctrines of the Reformed faith, and this is the way we intend to set forth the glorious truths of soteriology.

The Widespread Denial of Salvation by Grace Alone

The churches that have departed from the truth all teach, in one way or another, that a man's salvation is based upon something that he must do. Some say it is based upon good works that he must perform; others say it is based upon a decision that he must make. In either case, they teach that salvation is not by God's grace *alone*. Even if they teach that God helps each person to do what he must do, they are still saying that whether or not a person is saved depends upon some activity that he must perform.

The Romish church obviously teaches this. For centuries they have taught that a man earns at least part of his salvation by his good works. But this lie is also being taught by all those who maintain that God offers to save and desires to save each and every individual who hears the preaching of the gospel, and promises to save them, on the condition that they accept His offer. Many refuse to admit that this is a denial of the truth that God saves His people by His grace alone. But that it is so can be easily demonstrated. If God wants to save each person, then why are some people not

saved? The only reason that could be given for this is that these people refuse to do their part and cooperate with God in this work of salvation. In other words, there is a work that man must perform, on the basis of which God will reward him by saving him.

Although there are many people who teach this while claiming to be Reformed, the fact is that they are denying all five points of Calvinism. This can be illustrated as follows:

Total Depravity: They teach that the natural man still has enough good in him to cooperate with God and embrace the offered salvation.

Unconditional Election: They teach that man's salvation is conditional, and therefore that God's election is conditional.

Limited Atonement: If this grace, which they call "common grace," is given to each individual, then this grace must have been earned for each individual by Christ on the cross.

Irresistible Grace: They teach that this grace of God not only can be resisted, but is resisted.

Perseverance of the Saint: They teach that many who receive this grace nevertheless perish everlastingly.

Because there are many who claim to be Reformed who nevertheless deny the truth of the Reformed faith, it is especially important today that we express the truth of these doctrines distinctively, so that God's people may clearly understand them.

Reformed Soteriology Set Forth Distinctively

Total Depravity:

To say, "Man by nature is dead in sin," is to state the truth, but it is not enough to distinguish us from those who deny this truth. Since the Scriptures explicitly say this (Eph. 2:1), those who deny to-

tal depravity will grant that this is true. Nor is it sufficient to say that everything that man does by nature is sinful. Many Arminians will say the same. Rather, we must say that man by nature is dead in sin, so that he is unable to do anything that is the least bit good, and everything that he does do is sin. This latter statement sets forth the truth of total depravity distinctively.

That this latter statement is true is evident from Romans 14:23, where we read that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Since an unbeliever does not have faith, it follows that there is nothing good in anything he does.

Unconditional Election:

Many explain this truth by saying merely that God chose certain people before the foundation of the world. But this statement does not sharply distinguish us from those who deny the biblical doctrine of predestination. Most Arminians will grant that the above statement is true. Therefore, to set forth this truth distinctively, we must say something like this: In eternity, God *unconditionally* chose certain persons and reprobated others, and His decision was not based upon anything that these persons would do in time.

Most Arminians say that although God did choose only certain people, and did this before the foundation of the world, He chose those whom He knew would believe on Him. But this would mean that God made His decision on the basis of what man would do in time. Such a doctrine teaches that God's will is dependent upon man's will. Therefore, to distinguish ourselves from this error, we must clearly state that God's decision was not based upon anything that God saw that man would do in time.

Limited Atonement:

To set forth this point distinctively, one merely needs to include

the word "alone." One who says that Christ died for His people is making a statement with which many will agree. But one makes a distinctively Reformed statement when he says that Christ died for His people *alone*, and that He did not die for those whom God had reprobated.

Irresistible Grace:

To be distinctive it is not enough to say that Christ draws and saves all of His people, or that no one can come to God unless Christ draws him. Rather, we must maintain that God draws *only His people*, and that He draws them *irresistibly*. Many maintain that God is drawing everyone who hears the preaching, but that most people resist this drawing operation of God. But Christ teaches differently when He says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Christ says that everyone He draws He will also raise up and save on the last

day. He does not draw the reprobate. He draws only His people, and He does so irresistibly, yet in such a way that He causes them *willingly* to come to Him.

Perseverance of the Saints:

It is not possible for one whom God has regenerated to fall away from the truth and perish everlastingly. Many who deny the truth of salvation by grace alone will admit this. But if we say more, and confess that everyone to whom God gives grace will be preserved by this grace, so that he will live forever with God, we make a statement that those who hold to the error of common grace will not make. They will say that what we say is true of saving grace, but not of common grace. This, however, is a distinction that they have invented. The fact remains that they teach that God gives His grace to all who hear the preaching with the desire that they be saved, and that this grace fails to accomplish its purpose, for many who receive this

grace nevertheless perish everlasting. But the comforting truth of the gospel is that all those to whom God shows His love and grace will forever be preserved by Him.

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We have briefly gone through the five points of Calvinism to show what we mean by setting forth the truth of Reformed soteriology distinctively. It is the calling of God's people to do this. This is the confession that glorifies God and is a blessing to God's people. Those who do not love the truth flee from this proclamation, but those who do love it are irresistibly drawn by it.

These are the kind of statements we must make in our preaching, in our articles, in our pamphlets, and in our personal witnessing to others. Therefore, in these articles we will be making an effort to point out how the various truths we are discussing are to be set forth, so that they are distinctively Reformed confessions of the truth of Scripture. □

When Thou Sittest In Thine House

Mrs. Connie Meyer

How We Live in Our Homes: Encouraging Rays (2)

As we have seen in a previous article, "in" is a little of a word that is worth our consideration. The supreme object of this little preposition is found, always and ultimately, in only One

— Jesus Christ our Lord. It is *in Christ* that we live and move and have our being. And it is only in Him. This is true for us and for our children. And this has implications for us as we raise our children, for we must be living as those who are indeed *in Christ*.

Now we will take up the jeweler's loupe and examine this little gem more closely. We will look at some specific rays that have

emanated and reflected from only one facet of it, a facet that applies to our families and homes.

The calling to live *in Christ* as parents and children in our homes is a high calling, a calling which is humanly impossible. And that's the point. We do not, cannot, and may not live in ourselves. We live *in Christ*. Such a life then is possible. Such a life that obeys the injunction of Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

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to instruct our children diligently and constantly in the words of our Lord is, in Christ, the life for which we realistically can and must strive. Of course, we are not able to do it perfectly. But in Christ we are able to make a beginning. Though it be extremely small and sinful, and though it be a constant battle with our own flesh and the world of sin around us, it is a beginning.

What are these specific rays we will examine? They are evidences of these beginnings, imperfect though they may be. These “rays” are the beginnings of Christ’s work in us in our families, His work as He leads parents in the instruction of their children — His children. And also note that the “rays” recorded here are actual vignettes of interactions between parents and children in covenant homes. They are not fiction. They are real and they can be done — in Christ.

May we be encouraged in the battle.



The first snowflakes of winter began to fall. A mother and daughter watched from the window as the bits of snow floated gently to the earth. The ground was not cold enough to sustain their frozen designs, but their course through the air was slow enough to give a fleeting glimpse of a few of them.

“I can hardly believe that *all* those snowflakes have a different design,” said the daughter.

“Yes, it is amazing. It shows how mighty God is. How infinite!” the mother responded.

“Are all the designs of this snowfall different even from all the other snowflakes in the snowfalls from last year, and the year before that, and from all time?” asked the little girl.

The mother had to pause a moment. This was more than even she had imagined! But yes, that’s what it means to be infinite. She nodded and said, “God is able to make even that many different de-

signs. No wonder we’ll be able to learn more and more about Him for all eternity!”



The last morsel of the meal disappeared and Father reached for the Bible. He found the place where they had left off reading the evening before. All around the table became silent and hands folded in stillness, ready to listen. Then Father began to read from the fifteenth chapter of Judges:

Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi. And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee....

Father stopped after reading part of the passage. “Why did Samson let the men of Judah bind him?” he asked.

Each child looked to another. Then finally someone volunteered, “He knew he would be able to break free anyway.”

“And,” added Father, “this way he would be brought right back into the middle of his enemies, so he could fight them again.”

Mother added a question as well. “What did Samson’s strength picture? Does God make us strong, too?”

The oldest child attempted an answer. “Yes, but not physically. He makes us strong spiritually.”

“He was very brave, wasn’t he?” said Father. “May we be so brave and courageous to stand — to stand for the truth.”



The light was fading as she tucked the blankets in neatly around her son. Then she reached for their favorite Bible story book and snuggled next to the little boy, opening the book to one of the first stories it contained. But this record of the first murder in the history of mankind was not one of the most pleasant stories to read.

“So why did Cain kill Abel?” asked her young son.

“He slew Abel because he was jealous of Abel. And being jealous showed that he wasn’t repentant. He wasn’t a child of God.”

The sadness the little boy felt over the death of Abel was apparent in his eyes.

“But God had another child chosen in His thoughts,” she added. “His name was Seth. God chose His people even before He made the earth. He loved His people then already. It was all in God’s plan.”

“Before the earth began?” he repeated. She nodded.

His eyes grew big as saucers, and in quiet yet profound reverence he said, “God is awesome — so awesome.”



What was that noise? The clock showed it was well past midnight. But there was that strange muffled sound again. Mother got up to investigate. Yes, it was coming from down the hall. Someone was crying, even sobbing. Alarmed, she hurried into the room.

“What’s wrong?” she asked as she put her arm around her oldest son.

In between sobs, he explained his fears to her as best he could.

“So you’ve been talking in school about the last days?”

He nodded. He had become terrified of the final persecution and tribulation as he continued to think about it after going to bed.

They sat together in silence for some time.

She wasn’t exactly sure how to

comfort him, but finally a few words formulated in her mind. "You don't have to be afraid. I can't deny that Scripture talks of terrible things that happen to God's people on this earth, but God gives us everything we need to stand firm in it. His grace is always enough. And His Spirit will even put the right words in our mouths!"

They sat in silence awhile longer. She chose her next words very carefully. "When you read of how saints have died for their faith in the past, were they screaming in terror? No. Many were singing hymns when they died! Even Paul and Silas sang the night they were in prison." She paused and added, "Do not fear. God takes care of His people."

She watched and wondered whether these words would be enough to help him. But after several more sniffs and a little more discussion, he nodded and said, "Yes, I think I can sleep now."

He returned to his bed, and she to hers, a silent, thankful prayer upon her lips.

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"So you'll be moving into your own apartment tomorrow?" a mother asked her oldest daughter.

Of course she knew her daughter was leaving, but somehow it was hard to imagine she had grown up so fast! Her daughter nodded.

"There's one thing I don't want you to forget when you are there. Always take time for devotions at mealtime — even when you're by yourself. If you neglect it just once, it will be easy to forget again, and even easier to forget the next time. You're the head of your household now."

Her daughter nodded again. It would take work to remember.

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A question had been bothering her for some time. Maybe her father would be able to answer it.

"Dad?" she queried.

"Yes?" he raised his eyes from the book he was reading.

"Well, I have a question. Why couldn't God save us without the cross? I mean, why couldn't He just say it, and we'd be saved?"

"Hm," he stroked his chin, "that's a good question. Let's get a *Psalter* and — yes, here it is, in Lord's Day 4. 'Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished? By no means.' And here in question and answer 12 it says, 'God will have his justice satisfied: and therefore we

must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another.' And that other can only be Jesus. Do you see?"

She nodded, though she only began to see just a little.

He handed the *Psalter* to her. "Here. Read these questions over for yourself. That will help."

So she read them over some more.

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The children were about to go out the door.

"Wait!" said Mother, and the children looked back at her expectantly.

She paused and said with emphasis, "Be kind. Be good. Be godly."

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We make so many mistakes. We have so much to learn. We have so many areas in which to grow. The fact is, we can do nothing without Him. But we are not without Him. We are in Christ and He in us. He is the "beginning" in us!

May we be encouraged in the battle.

(The Lord willing, we will look at several more "encouraging rays" next time.) □

Contending for the Faith

Rev. Bernie Woudenberg

Conditions and the Covenant

... if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Romans 11:6

The controversy of 1953 centered in many ways in the word "conditions" and the propriety of its use regarding the covenant of grace. This is to be regretted, for that question touched only obliquely on the heart of what

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this whole matter was actually about, as some tried repeatedly to point out. But the debate over "conditions" would not be put down. It was simply too attractive a matter for debate, one on which nearly everyone could have an opinion, no matter how simplistic it might be (particularly, perhaps, because on its acceptance there seemed to hinge the possibility of a major growth in our small and struggling denomination). But in the end this focus probably did more to confuse the real issue than to clarify it. Still, it was there; and if we are to understand the dimensions of what took place, we must come to terms with the implications of this matter as well.

That the word "condition" cannot be rejected outright follows from the fact that what are grammatically called "conditional sentences" appear so often in the Bible, in the original Hebrew and Greek as well as in the varied translations taken from them. In fact, the conjunction "if," the most distinguishing mark of a conditional sentence, itself appears in Scripture well over a thousand times, to say nothing of the innumerable instances in which it is simply understood, or in which another word of similar import is used. It is a construction that cannot be ignored (although we should note that its import is not always the same).

Conditional sentences as such constitute a basic linguistic tool of logical thought and speech, pointing out as they do the existence or nonexistence, probability or possibility, of basic relationships between various realities in life and categories of thought. Compound in structure, conditional sentences are made up of two distinctly different clauses. The one, grammatically called the protasis, is introduced, either by actual statement or implication, with the conjunction "if," and indicates something that may or may not exist. The other clause, called the apodasis, is introduced, again through actual

statement or by implication, with the conjunction "then," and designates a category of reality or thought that does or does not exist in relation to that indicated by the protasis. If the one entity does or does not exist, then the other in turn will or will not, may or may not, exist in relation to it as well. And so in the end these sentences form bridges of identification, and constitute some of the most basic building blocks of all logical thought. In fact, the correct recognition of the existence or nonexistence of these relationships is essential to the understanding of the revelation God has given us concerning the cosmos, that unified inter-related whole which constitutes the creation in which we have a place (particularly so when it came to the matter of God's law).

That this is so, we see if we go back to the first issuance of the moral imperative underlying the law, Genesis 2:17: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Although neither "if" nor "then" appears as such in this statement, these words are clearly understood. God was telling Adam that, if he would eat of the tree of knowledge, then that life as he knew it, one of an intimate fellowship of love with God, would cease. Adam would die, morally and, in the end, physically as well. The command was, of course, with reference to a particular situation in which Adam personally was involved. He alone was confronted with that particular tree; but the command reflected the universal identity between obedience to God and the experience of life. Without the one the other could not exist. Adam at that point, however, was in a state of perfection, and the negative form of this command, delineating the possibility of sin, did nothing to influence Adam toward it. Rather, that tree, and the legal prohibition concerning it, only brought to his awareness the

consciousness that good was what he loved, and sin that which he hated. While eating of the fruit of the trees of the garden, he was careful to avoid that one which was forbidden. It was only when Satan the deceiver came that this changed. Satan set forth the false proposition that by freeing himself from the word of God and determining for himself what is good and what is evil, Adam would make himself the god of his own life, and the evil forecast by God would never come to pass. With this blatant untruth, Satan became the instigator and author of sin; and Adam with all his descendants died, just as God had warned. For the first time since his creation, Adam found himself with a troubled conscience and thoughts that he felt compelled to hide, thoughts he cared to share neither with Eve nor with God.

All of this comes out even more clearly when we move on to the next presentation of the principle of divine law, again in conditional form. It was after Adam's son Cain had murdered his brother, Abel. Both he and God knew what he had done; in fact, God assured Cain that Abel's blood was crying to Him from the ground. And then, once again, God set forth His moral imperative. As He put it, Genesis 4:7, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Here, in two parallel constructions, Cain was being reminded of the legal relationship which exists between the works of men and the law of God.

To begin with, God put it positively, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Here, doing well, the protasis of this condition, designates obedience to God's word, which relates to what the apodasis designated as being accepted of God, a synonym for being spiritually alive, or having an organic relation of fellowship with

God. It was that which his father Adam had known before the fall, and what his brother Abel had come to by means of his "more excellent sacrifice" (Heb. 11:4). And, in turn, it was Cain's rejection of this that had left him angry and defensive, driving him to the murder of his righteous brother.

So God went on, expressing the same principle over again in a negative form: "and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." God was driving home to Cain's consciousness what was going on in his heart. He had not done well, as he knew; and so sin had pounced upon him, offering to be at his service in pursuing the carnal dreams and desires of his sinful heart, while leading him on the road to death. It was a death that would not come simply by means of a quick execution, but rather which would continue to speak to his heart, as for the rest of his days he would wander restlessly, seeking a place in this world which he loved but would never really possess. The law of God would not allow him to forget, but neither would it ever change his heart. As the Scriptures make plain throughout, the law reminds of sin, but never saves.

This comes out again and again as we make our way through the record of Scripture. The same principle given to Adam and to Cain is repeated over and over again, as in Leviticus 18:5: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD," which was later taken up by Paul and stated in this way, Galatians 3:12: "And the law is ... the man that doeth them shall live in them." It is a spiritual principle that is always true. Those who do the works of the law of God fully and completely have life in them. Life and the works of the law go together; and where one of these is lacking, the other will not be ei-

ther, which the conditional constructions of the law bring out rhetorically in very emphatic and inescapable terms. The problem is that pointing this out is never enough to change it. Sin is not a simple matter of ignorance, so that, if a man knows better, he will change. Sin is a deep-set corruption of the heart; and pointing out the sinfulness of man's works only arouses his sense of denial and rebellion, increasing his sin. Through the fall of Adam, the conditions of the law had become conditions of unreality. While it is always true that if a man keeps the law he will live, the fact is that no mere man ever does. Thus all are now by nature morally dead, as Paul said, Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The conditions of the law lay out the works of man, next to the perfect principles according to which the world was made, and thereby bring out how far each falls short of finding life in these works. The conditions of the law never saved a soul.

And it was this that made it so surprising that Dr. Schilder, a scholar committed to the principles of predestination and the sovereignty of God in all things, not only identified himself with a conditional view of the covenant, but, even more, did so in the forensic terms of the law. It is to be recognized, of course, that he expressed many reservations as he sought to preserve the orthodoxy of his teachings; and that can be appreciated. He was insistent that, while there are conditions in the covenant, these can only be met by the grace of God; and, thus, those who meet these conditions have no claim to merit for what they have done. Even the idea that conditions are prerequisites to salvation (the view Hubert DeWolf took up as his cause) he emphatically rejected as Arminian and heretical. Neither was Schilder ever one to

compromise the full reality of double predestination, as some of his followers seem to have done. But, through this all, he was very determined to view the covenant as forensic, a relationship of law, as he once said in a speech he made entitled "The Main Point of the Covenant":

if God from His side makes a covenant relationship between Himself on the one side and man on the other side, then it is possible. Then there is a legal relationship, then there is blessing or (covenantal) curse, then He lures with promise or threatens with (covenantal) punishment.

And so he asked rhetorically in his pamphlet *Extra-Biblical Binding: a New Danger*: "The big question that now appears is: What happens at baptism? Do I receive a dogmatic statement: God brings all the elect to salvation? Or am I addressed with a legal statement, in which I am personally and individually involved?" There was no question that he intended the latter to be so. For Schilder the conditions of the covenant were conditions of law, those which point to the works which God demands as something that must be done by man in order to live. And that was the problem with his conditions — they presented that which is promised by God as an uncertain thing dependent upon the works of men. He essentially was moving the covenant out of the sphere of grace, as Paul said, Romans 11:6, "if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

Hoeksema could not accept that. He, after all, had been raised in the tradition of Herman Bavinck, who had written of this very thing in his *Magnalia Dei* (entitled *Our Reasonable Faith* in its English translation):

Election implies that God grants

man freely and out of grace the salvation which man has forfeited and which he can never again achieve in his own strength. But if this salvation is not the sheer gift of grace but in some way depends upon the conduct of men, then the covenant of grace is converted into a covenant of works. Man must then satisfy some condition in order to inherit eternal life. In this, grace and works stand at opposite poles from each other and are mutually exclusive.

If salvation is by grace it is no longer by works, or otherwise grace is no longer grace. And if it is by works, it is not by grace, or otherwise works are not works (Rom. 11:6).

These were the kinds of things that Hoeksema wanted so very much to discuss with his friend. From the start he had recognized that the things Schilder and he were saying about the covenant were not compatible, and would

have to be discussed together at length before the Protestant Reformed and Liberated Churches could ever come together ecclesiastically. But at heart he always believed that, if such discussion could be carried on in a spirit of mutual respect for each other, and with a willingness to bow before the Word of God, these differences could be worked through. But for him, it was never to be. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Martin VanderWal

The King's Way Prepared and Traveled

Matthew 3

The great King of the Jews demands a certain preparation before His visitation to His people. The way must be prepared. A messenger must announce the coming of this Dignitary, and arrangements must be made. Christ is coming, and John the Baptist prepared His way. It is the work of the forerunner to prepare His way, making all the necessary arrangements.

But what peculiar arrangements we find! And what a contrast with earthly royalty! Certainly, an earthly king will send an entourage preceding his personal appearance. Such forerunners will make sure that accommodations are prepared, travel arrangements are made, personal visits are prop-

erly scheduled, and security is provided. The visits will take place in the city, to maximize their effectiveness—the greatest number of people in the shortest possible time. As such cities are the political centers, it is here that the important people live, the people worthy—more or less—of the king's visitation. He is likely to have an interest in seeing them above any others.

How strange the work of John the Baptist, then, as it precedes the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ. He does not do his work in the city, but in the wilderness, far away from the din of the crowded streets. He does not wear such clothes as will impress those who see him. People will not be able to see, in the forerunner, the vast wealth and power of the kingdom this messenger represents. The luxuries of life he does not indulge in. He has a bare, meager existence. What kind of a King, and what kind of a kingdom does this messenger repre-

sent? A kingdom so unlike any earthly kingdom that it must be the kingdom of heaven.

In close harmony with the mode of this herald is his message: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is the means by which this messenger prepares the way. Matthew, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, draws a wondrous tie between this message and the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Isaiah, in chapter 40, verse 3. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." From the next verse of Isaiah's prophecy we see exactly how this preparation is to take place. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

The one word by which John reflects the commandment given in Isaiah 40:3, "Prepare ye the way of

Rev. VanderWal is pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

the Lord," is the command to *repent*. The great highway of the King is to be built by repentance. By repentance, the once proud sinner is humbled: the mountain is made low. By repentance, the sinner is exalted to salvation: the valley is raised. The highway is prepared, and the penitent eagerly stand along its shoulder, waiting for the coming of the King. For this King, bringing righteousness, means life to them.

John's work is to prepare the way by calling attention to the fact of sin. All must come to the conclusion that they are sinners, and, as such, are unworthy of the love and favor of God. They must come to know the truth that they are wholly undeserving of any place in that kingdom as far as they themselves are concerned. They must behold the King as their only hope of entrance into the kingdom. The only entrance must be by His good graces, and not by their own merit.

Multitudes find entrance into this kingdom in the way that John prescribed. "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan" come to John. They are baptized by Him in the river Jordan, while confessing their sins. They are humbled by the preaching of John. They understood that they were sinful and perverse, wholly unprepared for the coming of the King. They mourn over their sin, humbling themselves. They are baptized by John, as a symbol of that repentance, receiving the cleansing of their sins. By this means the people are prepared for the coming of the King.

There are, however, those who will not have this kingdom. They will not enter into it. They have no knowledge of their need of this particular King. They stand obviously apart from the multitudes of Jerusalem and all Judea. They have come, not to be baptized of John, confessing their sin, but merely to observe. They have no sin to be repented of, no guilt to be washed away. As such, they scoff at this

holy messenger. But John is not to be shaken or cowed by their casual attitude. Toward them he grows most fierce, denouncing them as children of the devil. Upon them he pronounces the heavy wrath of God, that wrath about to be revealed. They may not take refuge in the fact that they are the mere physical children of Abraham. Fact is, God was able to raise up physical children of Abraham out of the stones of the wilderness. Their heritage was of no advantage to them without the cleansing from sin. They had no entrance into the kingdom apart from the King.

They must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. A good tree bringing forth good fruit. That good fruit was to be found in repentance first of all. The first step was a certain humility, a humility by which they might identify themselves with the common multitude. They had to see themselves as sinners, under the curse of the law. They had to recognize that their father was not only Abraham, but also Adam. They must understand that, as the children of Adam, they are wholly corrupt, even dead in sin. They had to be washed and cleansed, just as much as the worst sinner.

Thus it must be with every generation. As each generation is born into the church, that generation must not think that they have so-and-so to their father. They, too, must recognize that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and that they have no entrance into that kingdom, except by the same cleansing from sin as their parents. Those tenderly nourished from youth in the bosom of the church have set before them the very same calling: Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

The meeting of the messenger and the King is most unusual. The King seeks out the messenger, and asks that he do to Him what he has done for the multitudes. He seeks to be baptized. Why should the King be baptized? As Jehovah,

the One for whom the way must be prepared, He is righteousness Himself. It is only by His righteousness that there is any entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The sinners need Him. He has no sins to be confessed and repented of. He has no need for the baptism of John, for He himself came, exactly as John had declared, to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. We can very easily understand John's reluctance: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Why must the sinless and righteous be baptized by the sinful John? Even John, himself so separate as a Nazarite and the herald of the king, has need to be baptized of the King.

The reason for the baptism of Christ is one of pure grace. As the King answers, so it must be. "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The confession of sins made by the people whom John baptized implied a certain lack. On account of their sins, they were without hope of eternal life in themselves. They needed a perfect righteousness, by whose power they would find the love and favor of God resting upon them. They needed the righteousness of this King. That righteousness, though existing outside of them as an alien righteousness, had to be communicated to them. Somehow, they had to know that the King's righteousness would be theirs. This communication was part of baptism. Those baptized formed a certain class. The marvelous grace is rich in its expression here. The righteous King so identifies Himself with this people, so condescends to be baptized with their baptism, that they might know that His righteousness is their everlasting possession.

Such is what we must understand about the glorious signs found in connection with Jesus' baptism. There were two signs, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased." These signs we must see in the closest connection with Jesus' baptism, as that baptism signifies His identification with His people. This is God's eternal good pleasure, which is declared to rest upon His Son, exactly as His Son undertakes to justify His people. Through Christ, that same good pleasure comes to rest upon all those who are in Him. First, by election; second, by faith as the fruit of election. Those penitent, waiting the arrival of their Righteous King, are comforted with the truth that His righteousness is theirs.

The same thing we must say of the other sign, the descent of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ as authorizing, equipping, and directing Him to His great work as the Mediator of His people. But we must also attend to the particular form the Holy Spirit took in that descent: the form of a dove. Most commentators agree that the significance of this form teaches us the gentleness of Christ in His work toward those humbled in penitence. He gently and tenderly restores them to communion with God. This stands, therefore, in marked contrast to His work toward the reprobate wicked, hardened in impenitence. He comes to those in the power of God's wrath, to burn them with unquenchable fire. For

the penitent believer, He is a most gentle and merciful King, crowning all those who come to Him with His righteousness. He grants to the most unworthy sinner a glorious place in His kingdom.

The baptism of Christ gives to our baptism its rich meaning and significance. This is one of the greatest reasons why we must identify John's baptism with the sacrament as instituted by Christ prior to His ascension into glory.

By our baptism we are so closely identified with Christ that we are cleansed by His blood of our sins and made partakers of His righteousness. Our baptism signifies our entrance into the very same kingdom that John proclaimed. By the reality of our baptism into Christ — to which the sprinkling of water points — we receive the same Holy Spirit and the same glorious word of God that His good pleasure rests upon us.

Questions for Meditation and Further Study:

1. What aspects of Matthew 3 demonstrate that the nature of the kingdom is heavenly and spiritual, rather than earthly and carnal? How does Matthew 3 provide a firm foundation for the Reformed doctrine of amillennialism? On this matter confer Romans 14:17.
2. How does the context of Isaiah 40:3 contribute to the proper understanding of John's preaching as fulfillment of that prophecy? Does the Holy Spirit's descent in the form of a dove address the work of Christ as a shepherd?
3. How can John's address to the Pharisees and Sadducees serve as a warning to us against abusing the

grace of God's covenant? In that light, what calling must we set before our children, and with what urgency? Are the words of verse 11 appropriately addressed to these Pharisees and Sadducees? Why or why not?

4. How do the signs recorded in connection with Jesus' baptism prove the doctrine of the Trinity? How does the particular manifestation of each person demonstrate His unique property, both in the Trinity and in the working out of our salvation? How does Christ's receiving the Spirit here differ from the work of the Spirit prior to this time? □

Book Reviews

Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, by Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki & Cherith Fee Nordling. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999. 122 pp. \$6.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

This small book (it really does fit in one's pocket) will prove

extraordinarily useful to the reading layman and the student of theology, whether seminarian or minister.

It consists of a concise description of more than 300 important theological terms. These terms include doctrines, e.g., amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism; names of many prominent theologians, both ancient and contemporary, e.g., Au-

gustine and Karl Barth; church assemblies, e.g., the Synod of Dort ("biased against Arminianism"); movements, e.g., Holiness Movement; significant words and phrases in foreign languages, e.g., *homoiousios*, *homoousios*; and more.

The list is surprisingly comprehensive. It is up-to-date, including such entries as "post-modernism" and "panentheism." The descriptions are strikingly ac-

curate, clear, and pointed. This is the description of "amillennialism":

The belief that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 do not represent a specific period of time between Christ's first and second comings. Many amillennialists believe instead that the "millennium" refers to the heavenly reign of Christ and the departed saints during the Church Age. Amillennialists usually understand Revelation 20 to mean that the return of Christ will occur at the end of history and that the church presently lives in the final era of history. *See also* premillennialism; postmillennialism.

As this description indicates, the *Pocket Dictionary* is helpfully cross-referenced.

There are, of course, exceptions to the accuracy, usually involving doctrinal differences. The authors erroneously define "total depravity" thus: "Total depravity, therefore, does not mean that humans are thoroughly sinful but rather that they are totally incapable of saving themselves." These exceptions are rare.

The book is an exceptionally fine work for its purpose. ■

Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle, by Henri Blocher. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. 158 pp. \$18 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

No one who read the author's treatment of Genesis 3 in the earlier book, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), will be surprised at the message of this follow-up work. The message of *Original Sin* is rejection of the Reformed doctrine that Adam's disobedience in Paradise is imputed to all humans by virtue of Adam's representative headship. Accordingly, the book denies that depravity of nature,

with which all humans are born, is punishment for the transgression of Adam, for which transgression all are responsible before God.

The book denies the doctrine of original sin.

It does so carefully, even cautiously, and, therefore, subtly. The author is "steeped in the Reformed tradition" and shows a certain respect for it. He likes to remain as close to the doctrine that he rejects as possible. He acknowledges that a sinful condition follows Adam's sin, both in Adam and in us all. The sinful condition of the race is due to the race's relationship to Adam. But the relationship is not that of representation by a federal (that is, covenant) head. Rather, it is the "organic solidarity of the race." The sinful condition of the race, therefore, "is not a penalty, or strictly the result of transference, but simply an existential, spiritual, *fact* for human beings since Adam." The condition is "voluntary," a "disposition of the will" (pp. 128, 129).

The basis of the rejection of the Reformed doctrine of original sin is an erroneous interpretation of Romans 5:12-21. Blocher explains the passage as teaching that "the role of Adam and of his sin in Romans 5 is *to make possible the imputation, the judicial treatment, of human sins*" (p. 77; emphasis Blocher's). Adam's sin makes possible the imputation of the sins of others; it is not itself imputed to others. Somehow, the disobedience of Adam opened up the way for God to condemn every human *for his own personal sins*. Blocher's interpretation of Romans 5 avoids "the unattested and difficult thesis of the imputation of an *alien sin*" (p. 80).

Conclusive against this interpretation of Romans 5:12-21 are the clear statements by the Holy Spirit (not a "rabbinic" Paul) in verses 18, 19 that the offense of the one man effected the condemnation of all and that the disobedience of one man constituted the many, sinners.

The implications of Blocher's doctrinal innovation are significant. He himself calls attention to one: breaking down the radical difference between the Augustinian and the Pelagian doctrines of original sin (p. 123).

The other implication is incapable by virtue of the inspired structure of Romans 5:12-21. This structure consists of the parallel, "as by Adam, so by Christ." If Adam's disobedience merely allows God to condemn the race for their own misdeeds, then Christ's obedience merely allows God to justify humans on the basis of their own right deeds. The interpretation of Romans 5 that manages to avoid "the unattested and difficult thesis of the imputation of an alien sin" must also avoid the equally difficult thesis of the imputation of an alien righteousness.

This is the teaching of Pelagian works-righteousness. It is the denial of the gospel.

What rendered this rejection of original sin certain was Blocher's earlier denial (in his *In the Beginning*) of the historicity of Genesis 3—a denial repeated in this book (cf. pp. 41, 50, 51). Denial of the historicity of the opening chapters of the Bible (they are a unit) results in the loss of the gospel of Jesus Christ: no Adam, no Christ; no federal headship of Adam, no federal headship of Christ; no imputation of Adam's guilt, no imputation of Christ's righteousness; no original sin, no justification; no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, no cross.

There is in this book a clear, sharp warning to those churches which, though traditionally Reformed and conservative, are now opening themselves to doubt concerning the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis. Blocher would be considered, and probably considers himself, an evangelical, even conservative, Reformed scholar.

The first chapters of Genesis are not a myth. They are history. The myth is that a church can let

go the historicity of the opening chapters of Genesis without losing the gospel. ■

John Calvin, Heart Aflame: Daily Readings from Calvin on the Psalms. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 1999. Pp. xii + 366. \$14.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

For those whose devotions include a disciplined daily reading of a brief exposition of Scripture, this will be a welcome volume. It consists of single-page excerpts from John Calvin's commentaries on the Psalms for each day of the year.

A gifted interpreter of the Word, Calvin was especially graced to do justice to the experiential nature of the Psalms. His

commentary on the Psalms is well-suited for the personal worship and meditation of the Christian. The language is simple and clear. Like the Psalms themselves, Calvin addressed the saints, not the scholars. Thus, he spoke to believing scholars as well.

The book has Calvin commenting on the Psalms in order from Psalm 1 through Psalm 150. No Psalm is ignored. Obviously, to arrive at readings for 365 days some Psalms must bear more than one reading. The Psalm or passage of a Psalm being commented on is identified.

An example is this section from the daily reading for Day 132, based on Psalm 51:8, 9:

There is no true or solid peace to be enjoyed in the world except in

the way of reposing upon the promises of God. Those who do not resort to them may succeed for a time in hushing or evading the terror of conscience, but they must ever be strangers to true inward comfort. And, granting that they may attain to the peace of insensibility, this is not a state which could satisfy any man who has seriously felt the fear of the Lord. The joy which he desires is that which flows from hearing the word of God, in which he promises to pardon our guilt, and readmit us into his favour. It is this alone which supports the believer amidst all the fears, dangers, and distresses of his earthly pilgrimage; for the joy of the Spirit is inseparable from faith.

The reader is warned in a preface by an unnamed compiler that the book uses the translation of Scripture of the NIV. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. C. Hanco, one of our churches' emeriti ministers, was admitted in early January to a hospital in Grand Rapids, MI for pneumonia. After about one week there, he moved to Brookcrest Nursing Home in Grandville, MI, where, as of this writing, he continues to make steady improvement. Let us continue to pray for him, as well as all our ministers, missionaries, and professors.

Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC, has declined the call he had been consid-

ering to serve as undershepherd of the Hull, IA PRC.

Because of that decline, the council of Hull formed a new trio, which consisted of Rev. J. Laning, Rev. C. Terpstra, and Rev. R. VanOverloop.

Rev. and Mrs. Smit and family were blessed the morning of January 1 with the birth of a healthy baby boy, Jay Allen. We extend our congratulations and give our thanks to God for His covenant blessings.

Congregation Activities

On January 3, work began on an extensive renovation project on the interior of the Doon, IA PRC. This scheduled, month-long renovation included, first of all, the repairing and strengthening of their roof trusses. Part of the renovation also included in-

stalling a new and better air-cooling system, new carpeting in their narthex and sanctuary, a new exhaust fan in the attic, and three ceiling fans in their sanctuary. Plans also called for new sheet rock on the ceiling of the narthex and sanctuary, followed by texturing and painting of the walls and ceiling of the narthex and sanctuary.

Doon decided earlier last year to go ahead with this ambitious project because they wanted basically to eliminate the unsightly cracks and discoloration that had formed on the ceiling of their sanctuary. They also had to strengthen a weakening roof, replace worn-out and torn carpet, and maintain cooler temperatures and a fresher air supply during their worship services, especially during the hot summer months.

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

During this renovation, Doon's worship services were to be held in the Doon Community Center, with all catechism classes and Bible Study Societies meeting at the Northwest Iowa P.R. Christian School.

The Senior Bible Fellowship of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI began the new year with a study on our churches' liturgical forms and our form of worship. These meetings were to be led by Prof. R. Decker and were open to any other members of Faith's congregation who might like to join in what promised to be a worthwhile and important study.

The council of the Cornerstone PRC in Schererville, IN gave their Building Committee permission to conduct a drive for their building fund in December of last year. The council also informed their congregation that they have completed the purchase of property for a future building site, and more importantly, the property is also completely paid for. Sounds like a nice way to enter a new year.

In a follow-up to a recent news item about a possible daughter congregation being formed by members of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, we can report that Hudsonville's consistory has appointed a committee to work toward such a goal. This committee is made up of two consistory members and four men from the congregation. We will keep you informed.

Mission Activities

News from Rev. R. Moore, our missionary in Ghana, West Africa, is that the worship services are being very well attended. Average attendance has been between 60 and 70 the last couple of weeks. An outdoor tent was set up for the special Christmas Day service, and more than 100 were in attendance. Rev. Moore has also been told that their library will be enriched by the generosity of a brother in the States who is sending his personal library so that the group in Ghana can have more books to read.

We rejoice that the Lord is

blessing the work there and pray that He will continue to sustain Rev. and Mrs. Moore, as well as all our missionaries and those who help them as they labor for the gospel in a difficult field away from family and friends. Let us remember them in our daily prayers.

Young People's Activities

The Young People of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL recently began a study of "Rock Music." Both young people and parents were encouraged to read this informative paper written by Prof. H. Hanko so that they could learn more about this subject.

The council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI recently expressed their appreciation to their Young People's Society for having been responsible for the cleaning of their church for one month.

Food For Thought

"Man's faith may fail him sometimes, but God's faithfulness never fails him."

—W. Greenhill □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TEACHER NEEDED

The Board of the Reformed Heritage Christian School Association is inviting applications for a full-time teacher (grades 9-10) which will begin in August of 2000, the Lord willing. Successful applicants must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical inerrancy, six-day creation, male headship, the antithesis between Christianity and the world, and covenantal theology. Reformed Heritage Christian School is located in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Applicants should send a letter of application and resume to Steve DeVries, 1103 Turwill Lane, Kalamazoo, MI 49006. For more information, phone (616) 382-2761.



The 75th Anniversary Celebration is less than one year away. The dates are, D.V., June 19-23, 2000. Plans are already being finalized for this historic time in our churches. God has truly given us a heritage to be thankful for.

The Celebration has been organized to include many worthwhile spiritual activities as well as recreational activities. There will also be an international flavor with fellow believers attending, the Lord willing, from Singapore, Australia, and possibly other countries. We encourage you to bring your entire family to stay on campus. If you cannot stay on campus, we would welcome you to come for as many days as possible.

The daily schedule and activities being planned are as follows:

Monday:

Noon to 4 p.m.
5:00-6:00 p.m.
7:30-9:00 p.m.

Registration, check-in, and free time to enjoy fellowship
Dinner
Evening Program

■ Church History Video Commemorating our 75-Year History

■ Keynote Address presented by Cal Kalsbeek

9:00-11:00 p.m.

Time for fellowship

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PRC, Grandville, MI, assures members Gerrit and Jeanette Boverhof of their Christian sympathy regarding the death January 8, 2000, of their beloved brother and brother-in-law,

PETE BOVERHOF.

May the family take comfort in God's promise to the children of Israel from Exodus 6:6: "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments."

Marvin Kamps, President
Natalie Jefferson, Secretary

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 2000 - 2001 academic year should make application at the March 21, 2000 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 21 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Secretary

* * * * *

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Tuesday and Wednesday:

7:00 a.m. Morning Devotions

7:30-8:30 a.m. Breakfast

9:30-11:00 a.m. Children's Bible School and Adult Sectionals

■ Children ages 3-14 will divide into sectionals to discuss Christian armor, work on appropriate crafts, sing, and make new friends.

■ Adults will divide into several different sectionals, including topics on: Singapore, Pittsburgh, Spokane, Missions Overview, Group Singing, Devotions for Men & Women, Evangelism, Scriptorium (Old Manuscripts), Organist/Pianist Recital (share music and play), and Historical Overview of the PRC.

The sectionals are an opportunity to learn, discuss, and share ideas about the above areas. Each sectional will have a moderator who will start with a short overview of the sectional. The moderator will then lead a discussion or a question/answer session on the subject. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fellowship with other members of the same faith. You will meet new individuals and share your thoughts and opinions on the subject of the sectional. The sectionals will be repeated the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday which will allow all attendees an opportunity to participate in several of the sectionals throughout the Celebration.

11:30-12:30 p.m. Lunch

1:00-4:30 p.m. Field Day or Leisure Activities

■ For the children and adults we have the following planned

■ Competition softball for the children

■ Competition soccer for the children

■ Competition volleyball for the adults

■ Leisure Activities include:

■ Volleyball — unstructured

■ Pool/Gym

■ Church Tour. Visit old First Church in Grand

Rapids and Seminary Tour

■ Horseshoes

■ Boccee Ball

■ Photo/Nature Trail

■ Care Packages for Myanmar. We are looking

for volunteers to put together small first-aid and health kits to be shipped to Myanmar. We would ask all Celebration attendees to bring a small item for donation. Volunteers would sort, package, and box up small kits for shipping. We are also looking for donations to cover shipping costs.

■ Organ Recitals

■ Auto Harp

■ Animal Kingdom Videos (rainy-day activity)

■ Closest to the Pin Contest

■ Off-campus, unstructured opportunities include:

shopping, golf, Frederik Meijer Gardens, VanAndel Museum, Grand Rapids' Children Museum, Gerald R. Ford Museum, and much more.

5:00-6:00 p.m. Dinner

7:30-8:30 p.m. Evening Program

■ Singing

■ Announcements

■ Tuesday's Speech: Based on the Celebration Theme, "Living Out of Our Heritage" on the topic of "A Beautiful Heritage," by Rev. Jason Kortering

■ Wednesday's Speech: based on the Celebration Theme, "Living Out of Our Heritage" on the topic of "A Present Necessity," by Prof. David Engelsma

9:00-11:00 p.m. Time for Fellowship

The Standard Bearer

**P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603**

**PERIODICAL
Postage Paid at
Grandville,
Michigan**

Thursday:

- 7:00 a.m. Morning Devotions
7:30-12:30 p.m. Breakfast, Children's Bible School, Adult Sectionals, and Lunch are the same as Tuesday and Wednesday.
1:00-4:30 p.m. Family Fun Day or Leisure Activities
- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Moonwalk | ■ Powerball |
| ■ Velcro Wall | ■ Kids Caterpillar |
| ■ Bungee Run | ■ Rock Climbing Wall |
| ■ Giant Slide | ■ Pony Rides |
| ■ Face Painting | ■ Caricature Drawings |
- 5:00-6:00 p.m. Dinner
8:00-9:00 p.m. Evening Program (later time to accommodate Young People's Banquet)
- Singing
 - Announcements
 - Speech: Based on the Celebration Theme, "Living Out of Our Heritage," on the topic, "A Sure Light For the Future," by Rev. Carl Haak
- 9:30-11:00 p.m. Time for Fellowship

Friday:

- 7:00 a.m. Morning Devotions
7:30-8:30 a.m. Breakfast
9:00-11:00 a.m. Pack up and say goodbye to old and new friends

The Celebration week is full of many spiritual and recreational activities for the whole family to enjoy. That is why we recommend staying on campus. It is a wonderful way to make new relationships with other believers from throughout God's world. In conjunction with the Celebration the Young People's Convention will be held the same time and place, but they will have designated dorms for their lodging and many separate activities. The young people will already be there, so make this a family week.

Even though the registration deadline has passed, there is still time to reserve your place during this Celebration week. We do ask that everyone who plans to attend the Celebration fill out a registration form so we can obtain an accurate count of those attending. Registration forms should be available in your churches or you may contact us at 1-800-527-8243 and request one.

We believe that this 75th Anniversary Celebration will be something that your family will enjoy reminiscing about for many years. We also pray that God will use this to strengthen us in our faith and encourage us for His work in the future.

The 75th Anniversary Committee

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

MR. and MRS. LARRY KOOLE

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on February 6, 2000.

We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful for their godly instruction and guidance they have given to us. Our prayer for them is that God will bless them with many more years together.

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

- * Scott and Suzanne
Charity, Trenton
- * Mark and Cynthia
- * Brian and Tara
- * Lisa
- * Laura
- * Brenda

Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Peter Boer and his wife Eunice and their family in the death of her father,

MR. DONALD VANDER WEIDE.

May the Lord's mercy and grace sustain them in their sorrow, and may they be comforted in God's Word from Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, Pres.
David M. Ondersma, Clerk