



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

The Standard Bearer

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**Vol. 76, No. 11
March 1, 2000**

Followers of the Lamb

These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Revelation 14: 4b

What is the security of the child of God in the last days?

Revelation 13 describes the Antichrist: the beast and its false prophet. The descriptions of both the beast and the false prophet are frightening. The abilities and strengths given to Antichrist are formidable. The false prophet will be able to cause all, small or great, rich or poor, free or slave, to receive the mark of the beast. It is only with this mark that anyone may buy or sell. The power of the evil one to control buying and selling is a most frightening prospect. Will any believer give in to the demands of Antichrist? Will we be able to stand in that day?

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The answer is found in Revelation 14. This chapter begins with a vision of heaven where we see the Lamb and all the elect enjoying the blessedness of heaven (vv. 1-3). They are singing in victory. What is most interesting is that the elect people of God are described as the 144,000. This is a reference to those who were sealed, that is, secured in salvation (Rev. 7). Over against all the power of Antichrist, those who are sealed by God may be assured of their salvation. Not even the tremendous power of Antichrist will be able to take away their salvation or draw them away from the Hand which holds them. The powers against us are great. But greater is He whose seal we have on our foreheads.

John's vision begins with his seeing the 144,000 singing in heaven (Rev. 14:1-3). What follows is a description of the 144,000 who dwell securely in heavenly glory

(vv. 4, 5). One of the four descriptions is that "these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

This describes God's people as to their essence, not as to their consistent practice. While they were on the earth they did not perfectly follow the Lamb. But God saw them as always essentially in the Lamb, as one with Him. And those one with the Lamb essentially follow Him. It was the goal after which they always strove when they lived on the earth. Those who are singing in heaven are those who on earth followed the Lamb.

What is very striking is that the One they follow is the Lamb. This is obviously a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. The security of God's people is that they follow their Savior and Lord, not in His capacity as Lord and King, but as Lamb. According to our flesh we would like to follow a king. We like to follow

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.

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

Website for RFPA: www.iserv.net/~rfpa

those who win, who are first. But the salvation of God's people is that they follow the Lamb. Over against Antichrist stands the Lamb. It is in His capacity as Lamb that Jesus Christ obtained and maintains the salvation of His people. This means defeat — to the physical eye, from the viewpoint of this earth. And this means apparent defeat for those who follow Him. If the leader is the Lamb, then those that follow Him are sheep. How humbling! But also how comforting!

*** *** ***

They follow the Lamb in their driving motive.

In all that He did, the Lamb had as His motive this: love! He loved the Father who had sent Him, and He loved those given Him of the Father. There was no limit to His love, either for the Father or for the sheep. His love of His Father drove Him to obey Him — even unto death. His love was obedience. That was the primary evidence of His love. Because He loved His Father, He did what the Father willed. And He loved His own; He loved them more than He loved Himself. His love of His own made Him love them to the end (John 13:1), even though it meant the horrible cross.

Love is the mark of the new birth. Love shows that the life of the Lamb is within. Love is the proof that their faith is genuine. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (I John 4:8).

For those who follow the Lamb, loving as He loved means obeying His and their Father. Whatever the Father commands, the Lamb and His followers want to obey. Not their will, but His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. It is our love for God that makes us desire to obey Him. The Lamb's love motivates us to obey God in all of our life (I John 5:2).

One of the commandments of the Father is that the followers of the Lamb love one another. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought

also to love one another" (I John 4:11). Therefore, out of love for and obedience to the Father, the followers of the Lamb love one another. This obedient love governs all their actions toward each other. As the Lamb loved and loves their fellow-saints, so His followers love.

*** *** ***

Following the Lamb wherever He goes means a life of service.

The Lamb's life was to serve. First, He served God. His life was one of obedience. It was His food and drink to do His Father's will. The high point of the Lamb's life on earth was not any one of His miracles or His speeches, but His obedience. His was a life of active obedience. He came to do, not His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him.

Following the Lamb, we also must be obedient, doing whatever God commands of us. It is not enough that we know the way and talk about it. We must also walk it. There is no more effective sermon than a Lamb-follower obeying his heavenly Father, and doing it in grateful joy. The joy of God's people is the privilege they have to do their Father's will.

The Lamb's obedience was evidenced chiefly in a life of service. The Lamb laid aside His garments, took a towel, and served by washing the feet of His disciples (John 13:4). He declares that He came into this world, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20:28). It is indeed fitting that the Lamb is frequently referred to as "the Servant of Jehovah."

It is only in the school of the Lamb that God's people learn to serve. That is because when we follow the Lamb, then we learn to be humble. The Lamb was "meek and lowly in heart." He called His people to "learn of me" (Matt. 11:28). Jesus humbled Himself in the greatest possible way — from the lofty position of being equal to

God to the position of a servant, who then died the worst possible death (Phil. 2). Jesus was not ashamed to call us His "brethren."

The humility of those who follow the Lamb must be evident in the way they view themselves and others. Humility in Lamb-followers is that they look on others as being better than themselves. It means that they do not seek to find others with whom they can compare themselves favorably, but that they see themselves primarily in relationship to the Almighty and perfect God. They cower in the corners, conscious that they deserve only the worst from the God of heaven and earth. They humbly present only one plea, "Be merciful to me, the sinner." This humility in relationship to God manifests itself in that they see themselves as the least of all saints. Their humility is the power to endure the shortcomings of others because the humble one regards himself as the least worthy.

The Lamb's obedience meant that He endured all things. The Lamb of God denied Himself. He sought not to do His own will, but the will of His Father. In the depths of Gethsemane's garden He spoke from the highest point in His life, "not my will, Father, but thine." He declared plainly, "I seek not my own glory" (John 8:50). The Lamb "pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3).

The Lamb died for a people who "should no longer live unto themselves" (II Cor. 5:15). It

is when "none of us liveth to himself" (Rom. 14:7) that we show we have a right and true understanding of the meaning of the cross of Christ. Denying ourselves means that we consciously realize that we have nothing on which to rely but God alone. It is a committing of ourselves to Him. And it means that we submit our wills to Him. God justified and sanctified the wills of His

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own precisely so that they might do His will.

That the Lamb endured all things means that His whole life consisted in constantly laying down His life. In all of His daily struggles He offered Himself to God. And each struggle prepared Him for the greatest sacrifice. He endured when He was rejected by His own. The Lamb endured when He was misunderstood by His own disciples and when His family thought He was insane. He endured when the leaders of the nation of Israel declared Him a dangerous fanatic. And He was only doing His Father's will.

Following the Lamb whithersoever He goes means that we too must endure griefs.

As an apostle in the early church Peter knew what it was to suffer wrongfully, to be misunderstood, to be the subject of gossip. He declares that we are worthy of praise if we, "for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (I Pet. 2:19). Peter shows every follower of the Lamb that "even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who, when

he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:21,23). Following the Lamb means that we suffer. This suffering we must endure for God's sake, knowing His purposes are many, great, and high (Is. 55:9).

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Following the Lamb also leads to glory.

It was in the way of humble obedience that the Lamb was highly exalted and given a name above every name. That was the Lamb's way to glory. It is also ours. Only the way of the Lamb's footprints leads to glory for us.

First, let us realize in the midst of our sufferings and humble obedience that we never step where the Lamb did not also step. The way is not unknown to Him. All along it we see His footprints. He is "acquainted with all our ways" (Ps. 139:3). "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).

Second, it is only in the way of the awareness of our own weakness that we see God's great strength and all-sufficient grace. The cloud of witnesses may have

lost their physical lives, but they were given the grace to bear much suffering, and by being defeated in an earthly sense they learned that they were more than conquerors. The assurance of victory in Christ never comes in the way of physical victory, by physically defeating our foe. It is ours only by faith, not by sight.

Has God led you in a difficult way? Or is He presently leading you through a valley? In doing so, has He taken from you all on which you depended? This is the way God leads to glory. He shows us Himself and the power of His grace. It was precisely at the moment that Judas departed in order to betray Jesus, that the Lamb said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John 13:31).

The preparation to face Antichrist in the last days is not by doing something special or different. Every believer is equipped to face Antichrist the same way he is equipped to face any temptation or danger in this life. By following the Lamb now, we learn how to follow Him in the last days. Follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Follow the Lamb to glory. □

Editorial

Invalid Baptism by Women

In recent years, Reformed and Presbyterian churches have opened the office of minister to women. Among them are two churches to whom the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) are related historically and geographically and with whose members the

members of the PRC have close contact, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA).

In response to opposition to their ordaining women ministers, some have downplayed the importance of the decision. The CRC, for example, has argued that opening the offices of minister and rul-

ing elder to women is "merely" a church order matter, not a matter of the gospel and salvation.

This minimizing of the seriousness of the ordination of women to the office of the ministry is mistaken. Ordaining women as ministers touches the office by which it pleases Christ to give grace to His people. Question 65 of the

Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the Spirit of Christ “works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.” The consequences of putting people in this office who can never be lawfully called, inasmuch as Christ has forbidden their occupying and exercising this office, are enormous. These consequences will soon confront the PRC in a practical way. The PRC must be prepared to deal with these consequences properly, that is, in a way that honors Christ in His offices in the church.

Women preachers baptize. But the baptism administered by a woman is invalid, is no baptism at all. Three things are necessary for valid baptism: application of water, utterance of the name of the triune God, and the lawful call of the one baptizing.

Baptism performed by a woman minister lacks the third necessary element. The woman who officiates is not lawfully called to the office of Christ in His church. She cannot be. The King of the church has forbidden women to hold the office of minister in the church. “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (I Tim. 2:12). “A bishop must be ... the husband of one wife” (I Tim. 3:2). “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (I Cor. 14:34, 35).

The woman’s not being lawfully called to the ministry is a fundamentally different matter from that of a minister’s being an unworthy man. Long ago, the Christian church decided that the personal unworthiness of a minister, whether in doctrine or in behavior, does not render the sacraments invalid. Baptism administered by a heretical minister is valid bap-

tism. Baptism administered by an immoral minister is valid baptism. I myself was baptized by one whom the churches later judged to be heretical and schismatic.

But a woman, since she is barred from the office by our Lord, is not lawfully called. She is a mere intruder upon the office, regardless that her church connives with her at her intrusion. The majority vote of a synod cannot change this, any more than a majority vote of a synod can make a third sacrament, or the sexual connection of two males a marriage. The thing is impossible.

It is confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian that a lawful call is necessary for valid baptism. It is also confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian that women cannot be lawfully called.

The Westminster Confession of Faith mentions all three of the elements that are necessary for valid baptism, including the lawful call of the one who officiates: “The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the gospel, lawfully called thereunto” (28.2). Our Belgic Confession likewise teaches that a lawful call is indispensable. Article 30 states that sacraments must be administered by “ministers or pastors.” Article 31 insists that these ministers must be chosen to their office “by a lawful election by the church ... in that order which the Word of God teacheth.”

That women cannot be lawfully called, and therefore cannot administer valid baptism, the Belgic Confession indicates at the end of Article 30 where it demands that “faithful men” be chosen to the office of minister “according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his

epistle to Timothy.” This is the rule that expressly forbids women to hold special office in the church and that restricts the office of bishop, or minister, to qualified men, as the quotations from I Timothy earlier in this editorial demonstrated.

The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) expressly ruled out baptism by women, *because women cannot be lawfully called*: “We teach that baptism should not be administered in the Church by women or midwives.

For Paul deprived women of ecclesiastical duties, and baptism has to do with these” (chap. 20, “Of Holy Baptism”). The possibility that the occasion for this rejection of baptism by women was Rome’s authorization of baptism by midwives in no way weakens the force of the article against baptism by female ministers today. For the ground of

the rejection of baptism by women is the apostle’s exclusion of women from ecclesiastical office. To be valid, baptism must be administered by one who is lawfully called, and women cannot be lawfully called.

The agreement of the Reformed faith in Germany is evident from the Bremen Consensus. This Reformed confession dating from the 1590s maintains both that the administration of the sacraments belongs to the office of the ministry and that God’s Word excludes women from this office. Therefore, it rejects baptism by women. Baptizing, says the Consensus, “pertains to the office of the lawful ministers of the church, and the Apostle does not permit either private persons nor the female sex to occupy that office.”

However one may understand the implications of its doctrine for the validity of Roman Catholic bap-

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tism, the Scottish Confession of Faith (1560) clearly rejects baptism administered by a woman as no sacrament of Jesus Christ at all. The first thing necessary "for the right administration of the sacraments," according to the Scottish Confession, is "that they should be ministered by lawful ministers, and we declare that these are men appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the Gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk." Lacking this, "they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus."

Included in the very first objection that the Confession raises against the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church is this, that the Roman Catholic rulers "even allow women, whom the Holy Ghost will not permit to preach in the congregation, to baptize." This translation (in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane, Westminster, 1966) is far too mild. The original (as found in Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, Baker, 1983, in the old English) reads: "zea (quhilk is mair horrible) they suffer wemen, whome the haly Ghaist will not suffer to teache in the Congregation, to baptize."

In short, Scottish Presbyterianism, in common with all of Reformed Christianity, held that inasmuch as it is administered by one who is not a "lawful minister," baptism by a woman "ceases to be

a sacrament."

Invalid baptisms by women ministers, especially women ministers in Reformed churches, will soon become a practical problem for the PRC. It happens that individuals and families seek admission to the PRC from other Reformed churches, particularly the CRC and the RCA. Among them now may well be someone, whether adult or child of believing parents, who was baptized by a woman minister. The Protestant Reformed consistory that receives such members must investigate whether they were baptized by a woman. In such a case, the consistory will not be able to recognize this baptism, any more than it can recognize baptism by a private person, say, a nurse in a hospital. The consistory will have to administer valid baptism to the person, that is, baptism administered by one lawfully called. This is not "re-baptism," for the person baptized by a woman was never validly baptized.

The PRC have a solemn, sacred calling to honor the King of the church, His offices, and His sacraments.

An implication of the invalidity of baptism by women is that baptism administered by women is not a means of grace. The Spirit of Christ freely binds Himself to give the grace of salvation to Christ's people by means of the sacraments

rightly administered. There is no such promise regarding ecclesiastical ceremonies conducted in rebellion against the very will of Christ that makes a ceremony a sacrament, in this case the will of Christ that ministers be lawfully called.

And this takes us back to the basic issue: *preaching* by women is not a means of grace. Sacraments, after all, are adjuncts of the preaching of the gospel.

For the CRC, this dreadful state of affairs is direct divine judgment upon its decision of 1924 adopting the dogma of common grace. By that decision, the CRC deliberately opened itself to the influence of the world of the ungodly, repudiating the antithesis. Thus, the world's feminism found ready entrance into the CRC, and entrenched itself, in the form of women ministers.

The other avowed purpose of the CRC with its common grace decision of 1924 was to reject, and drive out of the CRC, the creedally Reformed and biblical truth that the grace of Christ in the preaching of the gospel and in the sacraments is particular, for the elect alone. The CRC was determined that the grace of the gospel and sacraments be for everybody.

Now, under the judgment of God, the CRC has preaching and sacraments—by its women ministers—that are grace for nobody. □

— DJE

Letters

Anglican Appreciation

For the most part, I have enjoyed receiving the *Standard Bearer*. We have much agreement in "a common faith" (Titus 1:4). No doubt, you know the "Reformed" nature of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Sadly, this is mostly forgotten by the Anglican communion at large.

I enjoyed your editorial, "How

Then Will We Live? (2)" [Jan. 15, 2000], especially the point on suffering for the true church and body of Christ. The real Church-Catholic is "cruciform" in the representation of His life (II Cor. 4:10, 11). Some of the hymns of Watts and C. Wesley are so rich here! And yet the Church is ignorant of these great hymns and songs. I would always seek to preach and use a

quote from the hymns of the Church-Catholic. In fact, good hymnology is the Church-Catholic (Col. 3:16).

I have a question as to the sacramental doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Are you Zwinglian, or are you with Calvin?

An Anglican "Presbyter"
[name withheld by request]

Response:

The Protestant Reformed Churches are traditionally and confessionally Reformed in their doctrine of the Lord's Supper. There is a real, spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper, as there is a real, spiritual presence of Christ in the preaching of the gospel. The believer who eats and drinks worthily receives the real body and blood of Christ, but by the mouth of faith, not the mouth of the body. Therefore, the unbeliever who may participate in the sacrament does not receive Christ, but only bread and wine.

One of our creeds is the Belgic Confession of Faith. In Article 35, it expresses our belief concerning the presence of Christ in the Supper as follows:

Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of his Sacraments in vain, so he works in us all that he represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding, and can not be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the mean time we err not when we say that what is

eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit through faith. Thus, then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of his Father in the heavens, yet doth he not, therefore, cease to make us partakers of himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates himself with all his benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both himself and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls, by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of his blood.

Further, though the Sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men: the ungodly indeed receives the Sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of the Sacrament. As Judas and Simon the sorcerer both, indeed, received the Sacrament, but not Christ, who was signified by it, of whom believers only are made partakers (Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, Baker, repr. 1983, pp. 429-431).

We are not ignorant of the

hymns of which you speak. However, our worship services use the Psalms for the worship of God and the instruction of the saints. The Psalms are not lacking the identification of the church as always a martyr church on the earth. This is one reason why, as nominally Reformed churches in North America are infected with the trivial "feel-good" religion of evangelicalism or yield to the triumphalist dream of common grace and postmillennialism, to "Christianize" North America, they abandon the singing of the Psalms. This versification of Psalm 44 is typical:

Thou, Lord, hast forsaken, to
shame brought our boasts;
No more to the field dost Thou
go with our hosts;
Thou turnest us back from the
foe in dismay,
And spoilers who hate us have
made us their prey.

I have some slight contact with the Church of England (Continuing), among whom is a very definite Calvinistic testimony, and am trying to increase the contact. □

— Ed.

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

Being Baptized in the Spirit (1)

The Truth Over Against the False Teaching of the Charismatics

Before going into the specific saving works of the Holy Spirit, such as regeneration,

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calling, justification, and sanctification, we take some time to consider the Spirit's work as a whole. There are many who deny the fundamental truths of the Reformed faith, who nevertheless claim that a mighty work of the Spirit is going on in their midst. One such

group, known as the Charismatics, claims to be the only group that has actually been baptized in the Holy Spirit. They call their gospel the *full* gospel, and accuse us of not preaching and teaching the full counsel of God, because we deny that God is still causing His people

to speak in tongues in the same way that He did back in the days of the apostles. Over against this error, it is important that we understand what it really means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Who are the Charismatics? The name Charismatics is used to denote those who, within many different denominations, claim that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second baptism received only by some Christians. They themselves claim to have received this baptism, and argue that this is evident from their being able to speak in other tongues, just as some believers did on Pentecost. As one might expect, this group also maintains that some of God's people are still able to perform miracles, just as they were performed by Christ and His apostles. The fact that these miracles are not being performed in our midst, they attribute to our lack of faith.

It is our intention not only to refute this false teaching, but also and primarily to set forth the truth of the Word of God on this subject. It is important that we refute false teachings. But when we do so, it is also important to remember that God sovereignly controls the wicked, so that they come up with the false teachings they maintain, and that He does this so that we might consider what the truth is over against their lies.

The Correct Position Set Forth

We consider, first of all, what it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist distinguished the baptism he was administering from the baptism Christ would administer, when he said,

I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. (Luke 3:16b)

The distinction John was making here is the distinction between the

sacrament of baptism and the actual, spiritual baptism; or, in other words, between the external washing with water and the real washing with the Holy Spirit. This is the distinction found in Article 34 of the Belgic Confession.

Therefore the ministers, on their part, administer the sacrament and that which is visible, but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort....

John the Baptist said he was administering only the visible sacrament, and that Christ is the One who performs the real baptism, the invisible washing and renewing of our souls.

This real baptism is the baptism *in* the Holy Spirit. The word translated "with" in Luke 3:16 is literally the word "in." To be in the Spirit is to be in the gracious dominion of the Spirit. That Christ baptizes us in the Spirit means that He cleanses us by pouring out His Spirit upon us, so that we are in the gracious dominion of the cleansing Spirit of God.

This baptism can, however, also rightly be referred to as the baptism *by* or *with* the Spirit. Questions 70 and 71 of the Heidelberg Catechism speak of Christ baptizing us *by* and *with* the Spirit. This means that Christ is cleansing us by means of His Spirit, whom He sends to us to wash away our iniquities and to conform us to His image.

But what about the blood of Christ? Does not baptism picture our being washed by the blood of Christ? Indeed it does. The Heidelberg Catechism says we are washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ (Q. 70, 71). The relationship between the blood of Christ and the Spirit of Christ is also explained in Article 34 of the Belgic Confession:

... as water washeth away the filth of the body when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled upon him, so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God.

Thus the relationship is that Christ washes us in His blood, and does so by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This spiritual baptism refers to the whole of our salvation. It refers to Christ's cleansing us both from the guilt of sin and from the corruption of sin. Or, in other words, it refers to our receiving both the forgiveness of sins and the deliverance out of those sins.

There is a sense in which this baptism is a one-time event, referring to the moment in which a person is regenerated, and receives by faith the blessings of both justification and sanctification. But there is also a sense in which this baptism is ongoing. When we sing the psalms we sometimes ask God to cleanse us from our sins. This indicates that the child of God in this life is constantly in need of the spiritual baptism, the spiritual cleansing, which continues to bring him out of his sins into the one body of Christ. But this baptism is still one baptism, a baptism we begin to receive at a certain moment in time, but that we continue to experience throughout our life on this earth.

The Two-Baptism Teaching of the Charismatics

The Charismatics say there is not one baptism, but two. The first baptism, they say, is performed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes an unregenerate person and washes him in the blood of Christ, with the result that he is born again and has the fruit of the Spirit. Every believer, they say, has received this baptism. The second baptism is performed by Christ. Christ takes a believing person who has

received only the first baptism, and washes him in the Holy Spirit, with the result that he receives power and has the gifts of the Spirit. These two baptisms can be contrasted as follows:

The First Baptism

Performed by the Spirit

A washing in Christ's blood

Result: New life, the fruit of the Spirit

The Second Baptism

Performed by Christ

A washing in the Spirit

Result: Power, the gifts of the Spirit

Those who have received the first baptism are merely Christians, but those who have received also the second baptism are super-Christians, endowed with power to do amazing things.

They attempt to prove this strange doctrine by the references in the book of Acts to believers who received the power to speak in tongues when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. These people, they point out, were already believers and had received the life of Christ. But when they received the second baptism, the baptism in the Spirit, they received power to speak in tongues and to go about saving others.

A second proof for their position is said to be found in the baptism Jesus received. They say there were two distinct operations of the Spirit in the life of Jesus. The first operation was when Christ was

conceived by the Holy Spirit. This operation of the Spirit gave Jesus merely life. The second operation of the Spirit took place when He was baptized in the Spirit, which happened right after He was baptized by John the Baptist. This second operation of the Spirit gave Jesus power, so that He could go about saving others. These two operations, they argue, correspond to the two baptisms that the Spirit-filled Christian receives. The first baptism gives him merely life, but the second baptism gives him the power to go about saving others.

Refutation of the Error of the Charismatics

We will begin by showing that the teaching of the Charismatics is false, and then proceed to show how we are properly to understand the passages to which they refer. First of all, the Scriptures explicitly say that there is only one baptism, and not two. Ephesians 4:4-6 says,

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, *one baptism*, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

It is interesting to note that this passage appears in a context which is setting forth the unity of the church. There is one baptism into the one body. A two-baptism doc-

trine divides the church. It results in there being a division between those who have received only the first baptism and those who have received also the second baptism, between Spirit-filled Christians and non-Spirit-filled Christians, between powerful Christians and powerless Christians.

Secondly, they separate the work of Christ from the work of the Spirit. The Spirit, they say, performs the first baptism, and Christ performs the second baptism. The truth is that Christ is the One who performs the one baptism, and does so in and by His Spirit. Christ pours out His Spirit into us, and the Spirit cleanses us from all our sins. In addition, there is not one baptism in the blood of Christ and another baptism in the Holy Spirit. Rather, as has already been set forth, the one baptism is a baptism in which Christ washes us in His blood, and does so by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But why then did Christ tell His disciples, who had already received the spiritual baptism, that they could not go forth preaching the gospel until they had received the baptism in the Spirit, and were thus endowed with power from on high? Evidently, there was a sense in which they had already been baptized, and a sense in which they had to wait until they were baptized. How is this to be explained? We will begin with this, Lord willing, in our next article. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "Wars of Words, Wars of Grace"

In an article appearing in the *Banner*, December 20, 1999, Dr. James D. Bratt gives a summary of some of the great "wars" in the

CRC during the past century. Dr. J. Bratt is professor of history at Calvin College and director of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. He has written extensively on the history of the CRC.

Dr. J. Bratt, in evaluating these "wars," comes to some striking and correct conclusions. His summary of these "wars" is as follows:

...the great battles fought in the Christian Reformed Church over the past century are instructive. They have come in three clusters. In the 1920s the CRC fought over common grace as a way of maintaining a strong Reformed identity through a harsh process of Americanization. This episode was settled with quick, decisive strokes. In the 1960s the denomination argued over how to under-

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stand the love of God on a North American scene that had become an attractive yet troubling home. This struggle was lower-key and muddier. Finally, from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, the CRC fought over the role of women as a way of deciding whether to be mainstream Protestants. This conflict, prolonged and intense, left plenty of displaced members and a reluctance to fight again. It might also have left a chance for reconstruction.

This summary, as well as the final conclusion, is of great interest in that Bratt appears clearly to link the three great battles in the CRC. His emphasis and insight ought to be carefully considered by the CRC. Though Bratt does not overtly take a position on these "wars," his fair evaluation and conclusion are telling: "If those who stay in the CRC have no reason to do so unless it is to remain Reformed, perhaps some of the best listening could be for the Spirit speaking through the church's confessions again. That could turn us from fighting words into channels of a future grace." His conclusion seems to be that in each of these "wars," there is departure from the confessions. Nothing less than a return to the confessions will keep the CRC in the camp of the "Reformed."

Let us hear from Dr. J. Bratt himself in his brief description of the "common grace war."

The tensions dividing the CRC in the 1920s arose directly out of the Great War of 1914 to 1918. As an ethnic church the CRC came under sharp suspicion during the war and felt compelled to adopt English as its official language. The "progressives" in the CRC wished to push the opening further and enter wholeheartedly into American life. Others saw more tumult than triumph in recent events and wished to hold back. Where and how the church was to be in the world was the underlying question; common grace became the issue.

The battle began in 1918, when some professors at Calvin Seminary complained that their colleague, Rev. Ralph Janssen, was teaching liberal views in his Old and New Testament classes. Rebuffed by the Board of Trustees and again by synod in 1920, they took their cause to the church at large by publishing pamphlets against Janssen. Meanwhile, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, the young pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, went after Janssen in his weekly column in *The Banner*. The progressives defended Janssen in their magazine, *Religion and Culture*; the conservatives prosecuted him in their monthly, *The Witness*. When the seminary board gave Janssen a year's "vacation" from his post in 1921, he fought back with pamphlets of his own. This was a war of words fought out by direct appeal to people in the pew who were connected by a tight communications network and a passionate concern for theology.

Janssen's prosecutors charged that he diminished Scripture as special revelation and Israel as a people set apart. Janssen replied that his opponents were un-Reformed in denying common grace and that this denial led them to misconstrue his teaching while holding an exaggerated view of the church's opposition to the world. The relevance of the case for the CRC ("Israel") and the pressing American "world" was plain to see. Synod 1922 therefore spoke volumes in demoting Janssen from his professorship.

The Janssen battle immediately gave rise to another. Now the progressives took the offensive by charging two of Janssen's prosecutors, Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Henry Danhof of Kalamazoo, Mich., with violating the Reformed confessions by denying common grace. Hoeksema and Danhof freely admitted the denial but argued that their denial of common grace was not unconfessional. Synod 1924 found against them by upholding common grace as being Reformed on three points. Synod quickly added that these points did not re-

duce the church's distance from the world and that Hoeksema and Danhof were correct in the essentials of Reformed doctrine. But the pair did not heed synod's injunction to conform on the three points and ran afoul of their respective classes. Shortly after, they organized their own denomination, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Hoeksema and Janssen were two of the boldest and ablest minds in the CRC. Each proposed a clear, logical, and opposite course for the denomination to follow in its adjustment to the American world. The CRC instead chose a minimum of Janssen's principle and a maximum of Hoeksema's mood. It built a fortress of Reformed distinctiveness where everyone would live together as one, reading off the same page.

The article continues by pointing out the controversies of the 1960s. Two men, both involved in missions, Rev. Harry Boer and Prof. Harold Dekker, debated the position of the church on reprobation and the extent of the atonement. Dr. James Bratt concludes:

Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, who would later serve as editor of *The Banner*, remarked that synod's "mountain" of labor had produced a "mouse" of a decision. But the two sides recognized something more momentous. After 40 years of conservative dominance, power in the CRC had shifted to the progressives. Their victory was sealed in 1972 when synod adopted "Report 44" on biblical authority. Scripture's truthfulness, the report declared, lay ultimately in its testimony to the redemption God wrought in Christ, not in the accuracy of its statements about every domain from biology to the historical record.

The 1920s battle began with Scripture and moved to God's grace; the 1960s skirmish moved from God's love to Scripture. Meanwhile, the CRC had moved out of its fortress into a house with windows open to the world. Yet

people were still supposed to read from the same book, even if they were on different pages.

The last "war" is that on women-in-office. Most of our readers are aware of the fact that this "war" has gone on from 1973 to today. Even now, though the "war" has been already won by the "progressives," the discussion continues. Bratt's conclusions also are very insightful:

Nonetheless, the battle proved that the church's doors were open. The CRC had also come to a new way of doing business. Already in the '60s battle, theological issues seemed something of a professionals' preserve, leaving laypeople more confused or apathetic than had been the case before. Now, in the '90s, the issues were not even noticeably Reformed in origin or argument. The denomination was battling the same question of gender roles as was the culture at large and was appealing to similar generic standards. The conservatives called on plain and simple Scripture; the progressives stood against inherited cultural definitions of gender. The process had become more overtly political too, with well-organized networks spread across

the denomination promoting either side of the issue. Synod looked less like a deliberative authority and more like a state legislature in late session: wrangling, weary, and factionalized. Perhaps this was the price it had to pay for its passing decisive action to one study committee after another. More likely, it was a sign of how much persuasion or education needed to be done among people who had moved into separate rooms in the same house, reading different books and gazing out the windows rather than at each other.

I appreciate the evaluation Bratt gives—and we too, PRCs, can thank him for that which he gives on the issue of "common grace." One can admire his concluding paragraph, "If those who stay in the CRC have no reason to do so unless it is to remain Reformed, perhaps some of the best listening could be for the Spirit speaking through the church's confessions again. That could turn us from fighting words into channels of a future grace."

One could wish that in this spirit some in the CRC would once more evaluate the three points of

common grace and especially the "free offer" of the gospel as well as the justice of the deposition of officebearers by the classes. But this should be done on the basis of the confessions and, of course, Scripture.

■ RCA-CRC Union Church

In this same issue of the *Banner*, there is a report of the first RCA-CRC Union Church. Two congregations in Holland, Michigan, one Christian Reformed the other Reformed Church in America, joined together on October 31 (Reformation Day). This church, now known as Maple Avenue Ministries, focuses its ministry "in a multicultural community." The congregation belongs to both denominations. For purposes of statistics, one-half of their total membership will be counted as "Christian Reformed," and one-half will be counted as "Reformed Church." One can only wonder what this will eventually mean for the two denominations. This could well serve as "proof" that the two denominations themselves ought to join together. I suspect that we will be hearing more arguments for such union in the future. □

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Gregory I: The First Medieval Pope (2)

Introduction

Though Gregory was born from wealthy and noble parents, he renounced the world

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with its luxuries and became a monk in a monastic order which he himself had set up. Because of his learning, his expertise in government diplomacy, his great piety, and his apparent humility he was chosen as pope by popular acclaim.

He was the first real pope in the history of Roman Catholicism; and from his chair in the papal see at Rome he extended his influence over all of the Western Mediterranean world, over all of Europe and North Africa, and, although to a lesser extent, over the Eastern

church. He was one of the most influential popes of all history, and his influence shaped the entire medieval papacy. It is not an exaggeration to say that every aspect of the church's life bears the imprint of Gregory.

Gregory's accomplishments were many, some good, most bad. We shall take a look at both kinds.

Gregory's Influence in Worship

Gregory took an interest in the worship of the church. To a certain extent, worship, especially in the West had developed extensively over the centuries and had assumed some fixed form. But Gregory, a skilled liturgist who was sensitive to the nuances of worship, made some changes, fixed for all time some aspects of worship, and added some elements heretofore ignored.

He introduced into the church the chant; and to this day those chants, known as Gregorian chants, are popular and common. The technical aspects of the music are beyond my understanding, but it is clear that Gregory introduced these chants, in part at least, in an effort to introduce music into the lives of the monks, but also to give the singing to choirs within the church and take it away from the congregation.

Gregory was also a preacher. In fact, he was a very popular preacher, who loved to preach and who, through preaching, influenced the thinking of the people in Rome.

One aspect of his preaching requires special notice. Although allegorical preaching was characteristic in certain parts of the church for many centuries, Gregory perfected and codified the art. Gregory did not know Hebrew and Greek and could not work with the original languages. Nor did he have any training in grammatical and historical interpretation. His allegorizing is an exegetical curiosity.

Gregory was able to find, either between or beneath the lines of Scripture, the whole history of Jesus Christ and a whole natural and revealed theology.

The names of persons and things, the number, and even the syllables, are filled with mystic meaning. Job represents Christ; his wife the carnal nature; his seven sons (seven being the number of perfection) represent the apostles, and hence the clergy; his three daughters the three classes of the faithful laity who are to worship the Trinity; his friends the heretics; the seven thousand sheep the perfect Christians; the five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she-asses again the heathen, because the prophet Isaiah says: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Gregory, in a way, canonized this form of interpretation. Because of his influence and because of his success as a preacher, this type of exegesis became a kind of norm for preaching. It even developed into a form of exegesis which required the exegete to find a four-fold meaning in the text.

This type of exegesis was utilized by the RC church to take the Scriptures away from the people of God. Who can understand the Scriptures except those trained, when these Scriptures have such strange and deep meanings? The Reformation, and particularly Luther, brought the church back to the literal interpretation of Scripture, for it is the literal interpretation which allows God's people to understand those Scriptures whether they be young or old, educated or uneducated, wise or simple. God writes Scripture for all His people.

Allegorical interpretation remains the curse of much exegesis in the church to the present.

Of even greater importance is

Gregory's development of the doctrine of the mass and of transubstantiation.

It is true that much controversy would continue to swirl around these questions for several centuries, and it is true that the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation would not be fixed as dogma for several more centuries; but Gregory began its real development. He taught that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, though a completed sacrifice, nevertheless continues in the mass. When the priest celebrates the mass, therefore, he reenacts the atonement on Calvary. To do this, the priest changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. And, because of that change in the substance, the church, through the mass, is able to bring various influences to bear on God in connection with the sins of the people. Gregory is, in fact, known as the father of masses and transubstantiation.

Because of the importance of the mass, the entire liturgy was organized around the mass. While preaching continued in the church, the mass became more and more the important thing. As the ages rolled by, preaching was gradually to go into total eclipse and the mass alone, with all its rituals and ceremonies, constituted the worship service. This practice too did not end until the Reformation.

Gregory the Monk

Gregory was the first monk to sit on the throne of the see of Rome. He became a monk early and never forsook his monastic ways. In fact, Gregory was partly instrumental in giving form and shape to medieval monasticism.

Gregory did much to formulate rules governing monasteries; but he also used his enormous influence to regulate monasteries throughout the Western church and to enforce the rules that had been made. Monasticism, in its very nature, can be conducive to a very ascetic life

which is given over to many outward forms of piety. Monasteries can also become, by their very nature, cesspools of corruption. The efforts to observe the vows of poverty and celibacy can (and did) result in drunkenness, gluttony, and fornication. Gregory imposed strict discipline upon wayward monasteries and ordered wicked monks thrown out of the movement — and, if necessary, the church.

In order to achieve his goal, Gregory made clerical celibacy the rule in the church. It had been widely practiced; it had been extolled as particularly virtuous; it had been enforced in some parts of the church. But many married priests could be found. That is, until Gregory. Celibacy was, from Gregory's time, required. In more evil times, concubinage was tolerated, but marriage was forbidden.

More than these things, Gregory, in his favor towards monasticism, gave to the monks the status of a kind of quasi-clergy. They were not exactly clergyman, but they were not laymen either. They hung somewhere in between. But, because all monastic movements and orders were directly authorized by the pope, and because these monastic orders were directly responsible to the pope and had to answer to no one other than the pope, they became a kind of pope's army. Future popes knew how to manipulate these monks to serve their own purposes. Monks became a plague on the church. Europe was full of them. They often wandered around, interfered in the affairs of others, preached, administered the sacraments, enforced papal decrees, defended the by-the-pope-defined doctrines, and generally made a colossal nuisance of themselves. It was Gregory who began this practice.

Gregory the Theologian

Although not original, Gregory numbered among his extensive gifts the abilities of a theologian.

In fact, his writings became standard textbooks in theological schools for several centuries.

Yet his theology was sadly deficient. Gregory maintained, of course, the decrees of the great councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon; he was orthodox in all matters for which these councils stood. But he nevertheless was a Semi-Pelagian. This is particularly distressing, for Gregory was in a position to do otherwise. It is true that the compromising synod of Orange (529) had adopted a kind of Semi-Pelagianism, and it is true that Benedict II had fixed these decisions for the church as dogma. But the question was still being discussed, and Gregory could have used his influence for good.

Gregory was a monk. And, as we noticed in an earlier article, monasticism and the doctrine of merit are two sides of the same coin. Augustine had no room for merit in his theology, for all was of God. Semi-Pelagianism did have room for human merit. Gregory led the church into this devilish error.

Gregory was a vigorous defender of ecclesiastical orthodoxy — in some instances. He fought tooth and nail against the Donatists in North Africa. Would to God he had been as courageous in his battle against the Pelagians. But Gregory wanted the doctrine of merit. He wanted it for his precious monks to make their life of self-sacrifice worthwhile. He wanted it for all the people of the church. And so he spoke of the value of good works because of their meritorious nature. By virtue of the merit earned through good works and penance, one could atone for the sins which a person committed and so earn favor with God.

It is not strange that this idea led Gregory to two other ideas. The first was the doctrine of purgatory, for a place had to be invented for those people who had done insufficient good works to atone for their deficiencies in life.

The second was the doctrine of works of supererogation, for there were some who did so many good works that they did not need them all to atone for their moral lapses and falls. Hence a bank of good works was built up, the assets of which could be used for others.

Everyone who knows anything about the Reformation knows what a lucrative business this became for Rome, which raked in much of the wealth of Europe by its preposterous and blasphemous doctrine of indulgences.

Thus also Gregory was not averse to denying the doctrines of sovereign grace. He taught freely a conditional predestination, a love of God for all men, a universal cross of Christ.

Gregory the Pope

Gregory always appeared in public as a humble man. He cultivated humility. He attempted to avoid becoming pope at all. He constantly referred to himself as Servant of servants. He refused the title of Universal Bishop. He protested every effort to be ruler in the church and among the nations.

But his protestations shall remain forever suspect, for his actions belied his words.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the medieval papacy was its insistence that the pope was not only the head of the church, but also the vicar of Christ in the political arena, and thus the king of kings. While it took centuries for the popes to realize this dream, there can be no question about it that Gregory began it.

The half-barbarian Lombards were a constant threat to Italy, and Gregory was the one most involved in defeating them. He fought the Lombards by obtaining troops and sending them against the barbarians; he engaged in negotiations with them and signed a peace treaty. He assumed responsibility for the political peace of the land.

I know that it can be argued

that when the barbarians sacked Rome and destroyed the Roman empire in the West, the church was the only surviving institution. I know that the pope was the most influential man in the Western church. I know that the pope was in the best possible position to deal with these barbarian threats. But one cannot stretch Scripture so far that one finds in it the right of the pope to exercise political power. This remains a papal claim, and if it were possible, the pope would once again claim rule of the nations. It is not impossible that this also happens.

One other fact underscores what I say. Through various events in earlier centuries the church owned vast tracts of land throughout all Italy, in Sicily, Dalmatia, Gaul (France), and North Africa. As the pope became increasingly powerful, he became the overseer and ruler of all these possessions. The government of these areas fell upon the pope, the revenues entered his coffers, the problems came to his desk, the decisions had to be made in his study. And the result was that he became a sort of king over a private kingdom of his own. One has said, "In a word, the temporal sovereignty of the papacy then had its beginning." The kingdom became known as the *patrimonium petri*, i.e., the patrimony of Peter.

And that brings me to another point. Already the pope was claiming his enormous powers on the basis of the Lord's words, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). In other words, Gregory was claiming to be the successor of Peter, and was teaching that Peter was the head of all the apostles and of all the church.

For many years conflict and controversy had raged between the bishop of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople concerning the question of who had preeminence in church matters. At Gregory's time, the patriarch of Constantinople

was claiming to be universal bishop. Gregory hated that and did all in his power to stop Constantinople's head primate from calling himself by a title which indicated the patriarch's claim to universal rule.

Gregory always railed against this practice of his rival in the East with many professions of humility and assurances that he wanted no part of such arrogance and blasphemy. But at the same time, his very ferocity revealed that Gregory considered himself to be what he was condemning in another.

And here Gregory acquired one of the worst stains upon his character. In order to get Constantinople's patriarch to cease calling himself universal bishop, Gregory enlisted the aid of a certain Phocas. This man was an absolute monster of sin and evil. He had murdered the previous emperor, his wife, and his six children, and had set himself on the throne. Phocas so debauched the throne and the palace that the people rose in rebellion against him, dragged him from his throne, mutilated him, and cut off his head. But Gregory, during Phocas' reign, enlisted the aid of such a monster by calling him high and lofty names, giving to him honorable titles, and fawning over him.

On another occasion Gregory did something similar. When the church in Gaul seemed unwilling to surrender its independence to papal control, Gregory enlisted the help of Brunhilda, a notoriously wicked woman, but one of considerable power. His theory was that the good she could (and did) do for the church merited sufficient forgiveness to cover her many and monstrous sins.

Popes after Gregory followed

the same ethical rule: The end justifies the means. As long as something was good for the church, it mattered not what means were used to attain that goal.

Gregory the Missionary

It is better to end on a more positive note, although also here things take a sour turn.

We noticed earlier that Gregory was deeply interested in missions, especially in Great Britain. He pursued his missionary labors after he became pope and did much to promote the Christianizing of barbarian Europe.

Two mission policies were adopted by Gregory which were to affect all future mission work.

The first was that missionaries were instructed to adapt themselves as much as possible to pagan practices, while giving these practices a Christian meaning and Christian facade. I suppose today that would be called cultural or cross-cultural adaptation in missions.

The second principle was to instruct the missionaries to convert, if possible, the ruler of a land and work through the ruler to make the entire country Christian. This was, as a matter of fact, done in England. King Ethelbert married a Christian wife, was himself converted and baptized, and gradually influenced his entire nation to become Christian. It was a successful policy.

Gregory died on March 12, 604, at the age of 64, after being pope for only 14 years. But Rome and Europe were never the same.

Only at the Reformation did God deliver His church from Rome's tyranny. □

Close to Thee, my blessed Savior,
Keep me walking day by day;
Let me feel Thy presence with me,
Be my refuge all the way.

Standard Bearer,
May 1, 1928

Door

A door as the means of entering and exiting a building is mentioned several times in Scripture with great significance. The door which Noah built in the ark was shut by the Lord (Gen. 7:16), denoting the perfect safety of Noah's family. At the time of the first Passover in Egypt, the Israelites put lamb's blood on the doorposts of their houses (Ex. 12:7) so that the plague of death did not enter their houses. The Israelites were commanded to bring their peace offerings to the door of the tabernacle where the priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the altar at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. 17:4-6). The women on the resurrection morning found the great stone at Jesus' sepulcher rolled back (Matt. 28:2), not that Jesus could exit the tomb, but that they might witness His resurrection.

Far more often, however, Scripture speaks of a door in the figurative sense. Explaining the parable of the sheepfold, Jesus says, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9). If any man enter in by Him, he shall be saved and find pasture. The sheepfold is the church, and pasture refers to all the benefits of salvation, especially the righteousness that is alone in the Good Shepherd, who giveth His life for the sheep (John 10:11). It is in this connection that we are to understand the "door of faith" that God has opened to the Gentiles (Acts 17:24). The door of faith gives access to Christ, and really this is a two-way door, for by it we pass into union with Christ, and all the benefits of Christ pass unto us. In this way the "other sheep" of Christ are brought in, and there is one fold and one Shepherd (John 10:16).

God gave an open door of utterance to the apostles to speak the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3), as He still gives to the church today. This is a great door and effectual, even though there are many adversaries (I Cor. 16:9). Paul received an open door to preach Christ's gospel in Troas, and was confident that he was a sweet savor unto God in them that are saved and in them that perish (II Cor. 2:12, 15). That God's opening of doors of opportunity to preach the gospel is *effectual*, that is, powerful according to His purpose, is shown by the three "door-miracles" of Acts 5, 12, and 16. The course of the gospel cannot be hindered by prison or bonds, by anything human or demonic. Christ promises to use churches which are faithful in doctrine and in walk to spread the gospel, for He promised the church at Philadelphia

an open door that no man can shut, after commending them for keeping His word (Rev. 3:8).

Doors can also be shut. Christ has the key of David and is the One who "openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7). The door to the marriage feast was shut forever to the unprepared, foolish virgins (Matt. 25:10). Although a door is not mentioned in Jesus' great discourse on the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19), the idea is very prominent. The binding and loosing on earth by the church in her disciplinary work that has validity before God in heaven is really the opening and closing of the doors of heaven. Christ has the authority to open and to close, to call into and to cast out, to give grace and to condemn.

The word door is also used in the eschatological sense. When the child of God sees the signs of the end of the world being fulfilled, he may know that the end is near, "even at the doors" (Matt. 24:33). We must be patient unto the coming of the Lord, suffering wrongfully, never holding a grudge against another, knowing that "the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9). That which is just outside the door is near at hand; He that is at the door is ready to judge all things righteously, destroy His and our enemies, and take us to heaven.

Perhaps the most difficult door-passage is Revelation 3:20, where Christ says to the faithful in the lukewarm church at Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The Arminian notion that Christ knocks at the door of men's hearts, waiting for them to open to Him and be saved, is foreign to Scripture and to this passage. As with Lydia in Macedonia, the Lord alone can open hard, depraved hearts (Acts 16:14). To say that the door is the door of the church at Laodicea is a bit forced, for Christ is speaking to individuals and promises to *come in to him*. Keeping in mind that the Lord is speaking to those whom He loves and has been chastening in that proud church, it is better to understand the door as referring to the conscience. If any man hears His voice and repents, he will experience in his conscience union with the Lord and covenant fellowship with Him. This may be in the way of overcoming the difficulties in the congregation, or in the way of coming out and establishing the church anew. To those who hear the Lord's voice and earnestly contend for the faith, the Lord grants to sit with Him in His throne. For this is the way Christ Himself overcame and is set with His Father in His throne. □

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Instruction in the Covenant Home (2)

Deuteronomy 6 gives us a beautiful picture of how instruction should be given in our covenant homes. So that we have this passage before us again let me quote especially verses 6 to 9. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates."

In our last article we noted that our children must first of all be taught the truths of God's sovereign grace according to which He saves His people. The whole book of Deuteronomy illustrates this. These truths must be taught to our children over and over again. Moses again and again reminded Israel who and what they were and the reason for which they were the special covenant people of the Lord. The speeches of Moses to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy recalled for them the wonderful and gracious way in which the Lord led His people from the bondage in Egypt and through the great and terrible wilderness to where they now stood at the borders of the land of promise.

Moses recounts how Israel was delivered by the mighty hand of

God through great wonders and terrible plagues which He did in Egypt. Moses reminds Israel of the glorious crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armies in the same sea. Moses details the years of the Lord's wonderful provision and protection during the wilderness wanderings. All these things were accomplished by the sovereign almighty power of God for the benefit of Israel, the covenant people whom God has chosen to be His own. At the same time, Moses reminds Israel over and over again of how sinful and unworthy Israel proved themselves to be. How many times they had tempted the Lord and provoked His anger against them. Moses tells Israel that they will receive all the blessings of the promised land as a gift of God's grace and not through their own labors.

These are the truths which the fathers and mothers had to tell their children again and again as they sat down together with their families in their homes. All these truths could be so easily forgotten by Israel. In fact, Moses prophesied that in the future Israel would indeed often forget. Moses knew that Israel was a stiff-necked people who would soon again depart from the Lord to serve idols rather than the living and true God. Apostasy would have very serious consequences. Apostasy would bring fearful judgments from the Lord. So it is so important that Israel be diligent in the instruction of their children.

We believe that all of this history of Israel is typical of the far more wonderful history of the mighty deeds of the Lord that He has now done for us through His

Son Jesus Christ. We live in a more glorious day than Israel did. We have greater revelation from God than Israel did. God has fulfilled all the types and shadows of the Old Testament through the sending of Christ into the world. The wonderful works of God on our behalf through the cross and resurrection of Christ far transcend in glory and greatness the mighty deeds of the Lord in the history of Israel. All the works of God in Christ are sovereign and gracious works for a people who are in themselves miserably unworthy and unable to do anything for themselves.

We always need to instruct our children in these things in our covenant homes so that our children will remember them. The history of the wonderful saving works of God must ever be kept alive in our homes and in the hearts of the members of the covenant family through the constant retelling of them as we sit down with our children in our homes. We must take the time and expend the effort as parents to do this every day. There are few things more important than this in our day-to-day life. They must therefore have highest priority every day. Worldly concerns must not crowd out this important calling we have as parents.

Because the children of Israel were the covenant people of God saved by the mighty power and sovereign grace of God, the children of Israel must live in the land as God's special people in obedience to the law of God. They must be a holy and peculiar people unto the Lord, different from all peoples of the world and consecrated to the Lord their God.

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The life of God's covenant people must be one of gratitude to God for His great salvation. The life of gratitude is described in the book of Deuteronomy as one of keeping the commandments and statutes and ordinances of the Lord. Deuteronomy means, significantly, the second giving of the law. Keeping the law of God would be so important for Israel. We believe that this is true for God's covenant people today. In our world of ungodliness, the law of God is not only forgotten but constantly contradicted and brazenly transgressed. The law of God is mocked and ridiculed on every hand. This is done in the public schools of our day. This is done among those with whom our children inevitably interact in the world. Even in the apostate church the law of God is compromised in every way. In such a world it is urgent that we instruct our children in the law of God. We must do that chiefly for the glory of God and also out of fervent spiritual concern for our covenant children. We must pray that the Lord by His Spirit will write His law in the hearts of our children.

The passage from Deuteronomy 6 quoted above describes beautifully the manner in which covenant instruction is to be given in our homes. It pictures what we might call the covenant life of the home of the God-fearing. Let us consider some of the details of this description. Moses first of all tells the children of Israel that the law of God must be in their hearts. How significant this is. A man who attempts to instruct his children, but who does not have the law of God first of all in his own heart, will be a miserable father. While no one, of course, can look into our hearts, our demeanor in the home will soon reveal to our children whether the law of God is in our hearts. We might be able to live as hypocrites before the world but not before our children.

That the law of God is in our

hearts means that we love God and love His law. Keeping God's law is our joy and delight. We know that in the way of the keeping of the law of God we experience the favor and blessing of the Lord. There is no greater good than this. Keeping the law is not a drudgery, not something grievous, not something that we imagine will cause us to miss out on the best things in life in this world. Keeping the law of God is good and wise and will lead to genuine spiritual prosperity. In the way of keeping God's law we have the assurance that God is our mighty God and He will be our keeper day by day. This is the great joy of God's people in the world.

Moses tells parents in Israel the law of God must be taught diligently to the children. They must put forth a great effort to do this. The people of Israel must constantly be reminding their children of the commandments of the Lord. They must warn their children about every way of sin that leads away from the perfect law of God. They must teach their children the great reward of keeping God's law. They must show them how law-keeping involves every part of our life on earth, our personal life, our relationships with fellow members of our family, and all our activity in our homes.

Moses tells the children of Israel to talk of the commandments of the Lord "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The picture here is plain and simple and forceful. The law of the Lord must be the subject of constant conversation from morning to night in the home. There is conversation in the home about all kinds of things. In the course of the life of the family there are hundreds of subjects and issues that arise. There is conversation about events taking place in the world. There is conversation of happenings in the lives of the family and

the children. There is conversation about father's occupation and mother's role in the home. There is the daily example of how father and mother live with each other as husbands and wives in day-to-day life. There is conversation about how money is spent. There is conversation about entertainment in and outside of the home. There is conversation about the education and schooling of the children and about events that take place from day to day in the lives of the children while at school and at play. There is conversation about the church in the world and the lives of her members. There is conversation about what the young people will do when they go out for the night with their friends. There is conversation about dating of young people and the activities they engage in. There is conversation about the future careers of our children. All of these conversations in the covenant home must be guided by reference to the law of God. That is the real meaning of covenant life in the home.

Moses tells the people of Israel concerning the commandments of the Lord: "thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hands." The figure again is simple and plain. Our hands are used for doing our daily occupation. As we go about our daily occupation we must be constantly reminded of the commandments of the Lord, so that they might really be the guide of all that we do. The commandments of the Lord must be the standard by which all things are judged, according to which sin is condemned, and according to which principles of the righteousness of God are put into daily practice. It is a miserably poor parent who tries to instruct his children in the law of God in his home while at the same time he is corrupt and deceitful in his daily occupation. This kind of inconsistency will have devastating consequences for the children in the home. It will convey to them the idea that even though the law

of God is taught us in our homes we need not really follow it in our daily lives.

Is father known in the business community merely as a man who has great skills and knows how to make a lot of money, or is he known especially because of his reputation of being honest and righteous and trustworthy? Is it evident that father is this because he fears God and loves His commandments? Is father known as a man who cares deeply for the welfare of his neighbor?

Is mother known because she is glamorous in the world, because she dresses very attractively, and because she is popular in the community? Is she known as one who strives to be right up there with the men in society and is aggressive in her own career outside the home? Is she known as one who spends all her time shopping for clothes for herself or for luxuries in the home to keep up with the neighbor? Is she known as the town gossip and as one who constantly meddles in the affairs of others? Or is she rather like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, known because she devotes herself, selflessly and humbly, in sincere loving devotion to her husband and to the care and instruction and discipline of her children? Is she known as one who busies herself in good works, in works of charity and hospitality?

Moses tells Israel that they should have the commandments of the Lord as frontlets between their eyes. Frontlets in Bible times were ornaments used to adorn the head. Because of their prominent place on the body, they were immediately noticed. In the world there is such great concern about the adornment of the body, outward adornments. There is such great concern to have others look at us and notice us and think that we are great because of our bodily appearance. Apparently that was true already centuries ago in the days of Old Testament Israel. Today that

is true more than ever. Think of all the time and energy and money that is spent on outward adornments, such as the latest fashion in clothes and expensive jewelry. How much time is spent on applying makeup to the face? Think of the hundreds of different kinds of perfumes available and their great expense. Think of all the emphasis on diet programs, aerobics classes, and beauty salons. How many belong to organizations like health and fitness clubs today? Do we show our children in our everyday life the vanity of so much of this? Do we show our children that true adornment for the child of God is godliness and good works? Do we spend the same amount of time and energy and diligence in studying the Word of God and beautifying our hearts and souls as we do for earthly and outward adornments?

The last figurative expression Moses uses to describe how the law of God must be central in our homes is this: "thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." The meaning is that the laws of God will be seen by all those going out of and coming into our homes. First of all, we ourselves will be reminded of the laws of God as we go from our homes. We will be reminded of them daily as we go out to work and as we go into the world for social activities and for entertainment purposes or for whatever reason. This figurative expression suggests also that all those coming into and going from our home will know that our home is governed by the law of the Lord. It is immediately obvious when one enters such a home why this home is distinct from the world. It leaves an impression on all those who come in and go out of this home. This is a place where the fear of God is and where His commandments are kept!

The main point of all of this, however, is that all of this must be the makeup of our covenant home

for the purpose of the instruction of our children in the fear and love of God. Our family life must be so ordered by the law of God that it is evident that we are truly the Lord's people redeemed by His grace. We strive diligently to walk in His fear and to show our gratitude to Him for His great salvation.

This is a beautiful ideal. We immediately recognize that we fall far short of it even if our home is the best covenant home. There is so much reason for improvement. There is such urgent need for diligent striving. There is so much need for daily prayers for the grace of God.

The home that is ordered by the grace of God and by the law of God will be a blessed home. It will be a place of stability, order, peace, and safety. Our children will learn that as they grow up in such a home. They will love to live in this place. The covenant home that is so ordered will be a refuge from the world, where God will be our keeper and the keeper of our children. The covenant home, kept by God according to His law will be the sphere in which our children will grow up and be well equipped to be servants of the Lord in His church and citizens of His kingdom. □

Fathers ... Teach!

O fathers, teach your children
To keep God's holy law,
To honor and obey Him
And fear His name with awe.
Hold His own word before them;
Their pattern you should be
So future generations
Will still His mercies see.

And so God's covenant mercies
Are passed on through the years
From fathers to their children
God's saving love appears.
Take heart, instruct, correct them
Till their response is given.
For you are guiding them aright
In paths that lead to heaven.

Thelma Westra

How We Live in our Homes: Encouraging Rays (3)

In previous articles we have attempted to scratch the surface of what it means to live in Christ, including what the implications of this are for us as we live in our homes. For we must live in our families and homes as we indeed are *in Christ*. This must be evident in our lives, even as a ray of light is evident to our eyes as it reflects off a facet of a gem. And Christ's work is as a gem!

The problem is that we by nature do not reflect His work very well. Especially as parents we can easily become discouraged in the high and all-encompassing calling of instructing our children in the words of our Lord. Sometimes it seems as though God must work in spite of us rather than through us! Teaching our children as we ought is an extremely demanding business.

But there is hope. For we are in Christ! And He in us! We and our children have been baptized into His perfect, holy life and light. He works that holy life in us, so that we are truly in Him. And if we are in Him, we are out of the bonds of Satan and the world.

We *must* live as such. We *will* live as such. Because He has very really put us in Him and He in us.

The following stories are true. They have been gleaned from a variety of covenant families. And they reflect those rays that emanate from Him who causes the beginning of that holy life within us. Our sin gets in the way. Our natures get in the way. But His beginning work is there, nonetheless.

May we be encouraged in the battle.

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A candle burned in the centerpiece of the table, and a little boy stood nearby to watch the flame with fascination. He saw how the fire illumined the dimly lit room, and he saw how the wax began to melt and drip down the side of the candle.

"Dad, what makes the wax melt?" he asked.

"The heat of the flame makes it melt," answered his father. "It shows us how Jesus' heart melted like wax. Fire is a picture of God's wrath, and when His wrath comes down on the heart, it makes the heart melt." He reached for his Bible to show his son. "Here it is in Psalm 22. 'My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.' Jesus' heart had to melt for us, for you and for me."

The little boy studied the candle with renewed interest.

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She had been sick all day. Having the flu was not fun! And she had plenty of time to think. "You know what?" she finally said, "I haven't fought with my sister all day."

Mother and Father smiled. "Usually we can't see how our affliction can be good for us until it's all over," said Father.

"But you can see it even now while you're sick! That's very good," Mother added. "God makes it so that our afflictions are good for us." She softly sang, "Affliction has been for my profit, that I to Thy statutes might hold...."

It really was for her profit! But still, being sick took much patience. The little girl leaned back upon her pillow and sighed.

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"Grandma, could you help me with something?" asked a young boy.

"Sure, come here. What is it you need?" she offered.

"I can't figure out this question for Sunday School. Can you tell me how the world is a scaffolding for God's children?"

"Do you know what scaffolding is? That it's often used in construction?"

He nodded.

"Well, let's see," she thought a moment, "maybe this example will help. The Romans were in power

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at the time of Jesus, and it was the Romans who built many roads, connecting many different countries. God used those roads for the church and the apostles to be able to spread the gospel."

He thought about her explanation a few moments. "Yes," he finally nodded, "I think I understand now. Thank you, Grandma!"

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Father opened the Bible and began to read from Mark 11:

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

He stopped reading and looked up. "Colt? What did Jesus want with a colt?" he asked.

"Er, um ... to ride on it through the city," said one small voice.

"But the people wanted Jesus to be their king. Do kings usually ride on donkeys?" asked Father.

"No, they ride on beautiful horses," said another child.

"But then why didn't Jesus ride on a beautiful horse?"

"Oh, I know!" said another child. "To show that He was lowly."

"Yes," nodded Father. "He wasn't a king like other kings, was He? He rules the whole world, but not like other kings. Other kings can't rule hearts. Jesus reigns in our hearts by grace."

Father's eyes returned to the Scriptures and he continued reading where he had left off.

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"Put that down!" scolded Mother. "I told you not to touch that." She firmly took her daughter by the hand and led her away from the source of the temptation.

"I'm sorry, Mommy," said the little girl. Tears began to form and well up in her eyes. "Really I am," she sniffed. She knew her mother was displeased, and she hated to displease her mother.

"Are you really sorry? Not only because you disobeyed me, but also because God is not happy with us when we sin?"

The little girl nodded. She wiped away another tear.

Mother gathered her young daughter into her arms. "Only God's people are sorry for their sins. Did you know that? That's because He puts His Spirit in their hearts."

The little girl rested her head on her mother's shoulder and was comforted.

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"Yuck! Do I have to eat it?" whined a little girl.

"Yeah," added her brother with a grimace, "I don't like it."

Father frowned. "Yes, you have to eat it. It's good for you. Your mother worked hard to prepare it especially for you. And we must be thankful to God for the food He gives us. He feeds the sparrows, and how much more He feeds us!"

The children sighed and attempted another bite.

Then the youngest of the group piped up in her small, little voice, "Mm, it's good, Mom. Thank you."

"You're welcome," said Mother.

After the meal was complete and the plates were empty, Father said, with meaning, "Let us thank God for the food He has given us tonight...."

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"I love the snow. It's so pretty!" sighed a little girl as she looked out the window one cold and snowy afternoon.

"It is pretty, isn't it?" said her mother. "God made it for a picture. Jesus' blood covers our sins and makes us white as snow. Pure and clean."

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"I had it, it's mine!"

"No, it's not, it's mine!"

"Give it back or...."

"What's going on here?" broke in Mother. She didn't have time to wade through the excuses and explanations. "You sit here, and you sit there, and I'm going to give you both a Bible. Now, both of you search and find a verse that talks about how we shouldn't fight. When you each find one, I want you to read it to me."

Though somewhat slow to begin, the children paged through their Bibles to find a verse.

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"Do you know exactly what this girl believes?" a mother asked her teenage son.

He shrugged.

"If you're going to be friends with her, you can't wait to find out. You *may not* wait until it would be painful to break up. You have to be resolved — and strong. You have to be willing to sacrifice for the sake of Christ. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' You know you can't marry or date someone who doesn't believe the same things that you do." She paused. "We tell you these things because we love you."

He nodded. He had some things to think about.

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The children filed into the family van, still exuberant from the effort required of them to sing the songs they had practiced for so long, but this time to sing them before an audience.

"That was a wonderful program," said Mother. "What a joy to hear you children sing God's praises!"

"It certainly was," added Father. "In fact, it's amazing that you can do that. Only God's people can sing like that. It's a privilege for

us to be able to praise God with our voices in song. And God hears those praises, too."

The children beamed and laughed and talked as they drove back home. It had been a joy for them as well.



How do we live in our homes?
And for that matter, how do we

live at all? The Spirit, through the apostle Paul, sums up the answer in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

May we so live in Christ, who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, who is the author and finisher of our faith — who lives in us. □

Book Reviews

Portraits of Faithful Saints, by Herman Hanko. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1999. Pp. xiii + 450. \$32.95 (Hardcover). [Reviewed by Prof. Russell Dykstra.]

Portraits of Faithful Saints is a truly fine work about men and women who have played some role in the history of the church of Jesus Christ. The book is comprised of fifty-two chapters on individuals who ought to be (or become) household names in Christian, and especially Reformed homes. Such men as Polycarp, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine are included in the ten chapters on the ancient church. In the medieval period, another ten chapters discuss, among others, Alcuin, Bernard of Clairvaux, the Waldensians, and Wycliffe.

The period of the great fifteenth century Reformation receives the best coverage in the book with some twenty individuals, from the reformers (Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc.), to the political side of the reformation ("The story of Two Fredericks"), to the church political, ("Andrew Melville: Father of Presbyterianism").

The book concludes with pertinent biographies of individuals in Post-Reformation Britain and the Netherlands, and finally, three theologians in the United States.

Written in a very popular style, the book is unencumbered with footnotes or technical data. (In fact, one of my few criticisms of the book is that the quotations should be referenced.) The chapters are brief — averaging about six pages. The writing is forceful and captivating. The lead sentence in each chapter draws the reader in, and before one knows it, he is turning the page and is soon into the heart of the chapter. Take, for example, the opening of Chapter 7 on Augustine: "There are times in the history of the church of Christ when God has such an important work for a man in the defense and development of the faith that in a special way God determines his life, almost from infancy, to prepare him for his calling."

Or consider how the book leads into the life of Columba: Missionary to Scotland — "Noah, after awaking from his drunken stupor, blessed his two sons, Shem and Japheth. Japheth's blessing was that the day would come when he would dwell in the tents of Shem. With the work of the apostle Paul, and in subsequent centuries, God

brought Japheth into the tents of Shem as the church was established first in Antioch, Syria...."

Each chapter is indeed a portrait — graphically describing the saints for the mind's eye. These brief portraits are gripping, memorable, and often moving. In the chapter on Peter Datheen, Hanko describes the persecution of the Dutch under the Roman Catholic Spanish rulers.

It was a time of terrible cruelty and suffering. Because many noble and courageous Protestants made good confessions to the assembled crowds while the fires were burning their flesh, the Inquisition ordered that their tongues be screwed with metal screws to their jaw bones and the whole cauterized with a hot iron so that the swelling would make it impossible for them to speak. The persecution became all but unbearable: towns were emptied, factories were idled, market places were without buyers or sellers, homes were dark — almost all life came to a stop. The stories of the courage and steadfastness of God's people under the tortures of apostate Rome bring tears to the eyes.

The chapters do not merely tell the lives of the men and women. The strong point of the book is that it sets forth the particular signifi-

cance of each figure – that is, the specific purpose of God, in as far as it can be determined, for ordaining and creating, and using each person for the good of His church. In many cases the chapter titles indicate the particular significance, as in “Anthony: Ascetic among Ascetics,” or, “Gottshalk: Martyr for Predestination,” or, “Martin Bucer: Ecumenist of the Reformation.” However, even if the title does not explicitly reveal it, the text of the chapter will – for most of the chapters are written with the significance of each one as the theme.

The perceptive reader will notice that a fruit of this method of writing is that each portrait shows how *God* used each of these believers. The book deliberately emphasizes God and His work, thus avoiding undue praise of men.

The pictures set forth the saints as they were, with their warts. Consider Hanks’ initial description of Franciscus Gomarus, the opponent of Arminius.

It is a surprising fact of history

that oftentimes, in doctrinal controversy, the heretic is a nice man, while the defender of the faith is, from many points of view, a miserable character.... [Then, after listing numerous examples from history, Hanks continues:] So it was with Gomarus. Even his friends found him obnoxious at times and barely tolerable. His opponent, Jacob Arminius, popular with students and ministers, gracious, kind, tolerant, filled with concern for friend and foe alike, presents quite a contrast. But Arminius was the heretic, and Gomarus stood for the truth.

Since the purpose of each chapter is to reveal the God-ordained place of these saints in the church, their lives are woven into the history of the church. Almost without realizing it, the reader will absorb a great deal of church history as it relates to each figure.

The book has some very helpful features for keeping the history straight. At the beginning of each of the seven sections, a time line is presented containing the names

and dates of the individuals included in the section, as well as significant events in the church and in world history in that era. In addition, the book includes a bibliography of suggested books, both general church history and biographies and original works of men found in the book.

The book is highly recommended. Families would do well to read the book and discuss it together at the supper table or the Sunday coffee. Bible societies could profitably discuss a chapter a meeting as a second half of their meetings. Teachers should find the book highly practical, for reading to the class (say, at the level of middle school or early junior high) and for assignments in church history. Seminary students will find it helpful for identifying the particular significance of these varied saints in the line of church history. All believers will be instructed by the errors and encouraged by the triumphs found in the lives of these faithful saints. □

Report of Classis East

January 12, 2000

Classis met in regular session on Wednesday, January 12, 2000 at the Southeast PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. Doug Kuiper served as chair for this session.

The January session is typically a busy one and this was no exception. Classis heard reports from its Stated Clerk, Classical Committee, and church visitors. Classis decided to forward information gathered by the church visitors to synod 2000 regarding the suggestion of synod that congregations set aside retirement money for pastors who are not in social security and regarding the continuing subsidy for the small congregation in Wyckoff, NJ. The church visitors

report that 10 of the 14 pastors in Classis East are not in social security and, in all cases, the congregations they serve are making some provision for retirement. Covenant PRC’s response to questions put by the church visitors relative their subsidy is that they have a firm desire to continue as a congregation. They realize that receiving subsidy is a privilege and that their calling is to be energetic in evangelism in order to wean themselves from support someday, the Lord willing.

The study committee appointed at the September, 1999 classis meeting to consider synod’s decisions re the appeals (to synod) of Rev. J. Laning and Calvin Kalsbeek presented its report. Classis decided to adopt the following advice of this committee (summarized): 1) that Classis East inform synod 2000

that classis did not depart from the concrete case dealt with at the May 13, 1998 meeting of classis (the committee gave evidence of this from the appeals themselves); 2) that Classis East erred in its decision of May 13, 1998 when it did not uphold the appeal of a brother against a decision of a consistory (the committee gave evidence that a divorce had been pursued to the end rather than separate maintenance as the consistory believed); 3) that classis sustain the appeal brought by this brother in May 13, 1998 and judge that the consistory involved should have initiated discipline of the person pursuing the divorce for sin against the seventh commandment; 4) that classis declare that all subsequent decisions taken at its September 9, 1998 meeting now fall away.

Classis also dealt with an appeal from Rev. Richard Flikkema against a decision taken regarding his ministerial credentials by the Covenant PRC. Classis did not uphold this appeal.

Classical appointments were approved for the Hull, IA PRC. A schedule was presented and adopted.

The following were elected to serve as delegates to synod 2000: **Ministers:** *Primi:* R. Cammenga,

B. Gritters, K. Koole, J. Slopsema, C. Terpstra; *Secundi:* W. Bruinsma, Dale Kuiper, Doug Kuiper, A. Spriensma, R. VanOverloop; **Elders:** *Primi:* D. Doezeema, D. Kregel, C. Kuiper, E. Ophoff, Sr., A. Rau; *Secundi:* P. Adams, J. Buiter, C. Jonker, T. Spriensma, P. VanDerSchaaf.

In other voting, Revs. Bruinsma and Gritters were elected to three-year terms as *primus* and *secundus*

delegates *ad examina*. Revs. Slopsema and VanOverloop were elected as church visitors with Rev. Dale Kuiper as alternate. Rev. Doug Kuiper was elected to a three-year term on the Classical Committee.

The expenses for this session amounted to \$1,108.51. Classis will meet next at the Hope PRC on May 10, 2000.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

Rev. R. Moore, our churches' missionary to Ghana, West Africa, reported recently on some exciting developments concerning the work in Ghana. Our churches' Foreign Mission Committee and the Council of the Hull, IA PRC, the calling church for Ghana, have given their approval to rent a piece of land so that our Mission will have a place in which to preach the Word of God for the present and future. Rev. Moore was told that they could rent the property with a view to applying the rental value to the purchase of the land if our synod approves of this proposal in June.

The mission group in Ghana is now working with the property to prepare it for holding their worship services. The Lord willing, the site will be cleared and leveled, with a group of young men from the Cantonments area and others coming together to dig holes for the poles that will be set to hold a roof over the worship site. Rev. Moore has also obtained or will be obtaining permits for the work they are

doing and to get electricity to the site.

This on-going work has also led to opportunities to speak to some in the area as to what the Mission is all about. Some have shown an interest also to come and worship with the group.

Rev. Moore also reports that he had the opportunity to speak to the Senior secondary students at a Presbyterian secondary school in late January. The group of students expressed a real appreciation for the Word that was brought before them. We echo Rev. Moore's words when we are reminded through this work in Ghana, as well as our other missions, that, "We will wait upon the Lord to lead others to come under the blessed preaching of the Word even unto their salvation and for their comfort."

Rev. J. Mahtani, our churches' missionary to Pittsburgh, PA, and Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for Pittsburgh, visited with a group of interested saints in the Washington, DC area on January 20. At the group's request, the topic presented that evening was "The History and Distinctives of the PR Churches." This group is very interested in establishing a distinctively Reformed witness in that area.

From Washington, DC the two pastors traveled on to Fayetteville, NC to visit a group there who desire to see a Protestant Reformed church established in that area. This group has been worshipping with PRC video tapes for a couple of years now. They, too, hosted a discussion on "The History and Distinctives of the PRC" and were also able to enjoy Sunday worship services conducted by each pastor.

Fayetteville's Steering Committee plans to look at a couple of offices that are available in their area with a view, possibly, to establishing a mission office from which they would continue to do the work of the Fellowship.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL hosted a lecture on February 4 in their sanctuary. Rev. G. VanBaren spoke on the subject, "Hell, Temporal or Eternal."

In additional evangelism news, we include an excerpt from the bulletin of the South Holland, IL PRC. From Lanham, Maryland, "Our Evangelism Committee(PCUSA) is putting together a conference on Reformed Evangelism. We want to make many sound resources available at this time. If you would be so good as to select the ten most

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

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suitable titles and quote us a price, we would be most grateful...." And a few weeks later: "What a feast you have sent us! We have already made a couple of decisions. 1. We will be happy to offer back-issues of the *Standard Bearer* with subscription cards. 2. We will offer the pamphlet "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith" as part of our conference package, that is, to every one who registers."

Congregational Activities

Last year our First PRC in Holland, MI celebrated their 70th anniversary as an organized church. To help with the celebra-

tion, First's Council appointed a Historical Committee to coordinate that milestone. But perhaps more importantly, this committee was also called upon to organize and see that First's archives were all in order. Somewhat related to the history of First, this committee recently arranged a visit to a historic church in the area, the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church. This was an original congregation of the CRC(1857), and the building dates back to 1862. The visit included a 45-minute talk/slide presentation, after which they were allowed to browse through the building and its historical items.

Minister Activities

Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, received the call to serve as pastor of the vacant Hull, IA PRC.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Doug and Teresa Kuiper in the birth of their daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, born Saturday, January 22.

Food for Thought

"The Christian home is the Master's work shop where the processes of character molding are silently, lovingly, faithfully and successfully carried on."

— Richard Monckton Milnes □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address synod 2000, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 1. Please send material to:

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope PRC in Redlands expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to fellow member Shirley Meulenberg in the recent loss of her sister,

ALIDA PLUGER.

May the Lord comfort her and her family with His Word and Spirit. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:1, 2).

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and consistory of Southeast PRC express their sympathy to Rev. Breen and his wife in the passing away of his brother,

FRANK BREEN,

of Coopersville, at the age of 87 years.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:2-4).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.
Ed Hekstra, Clerk