



# *The Standard Bearer*

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

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**Vol. 76, No. 13  
April 1, 2000**

# Glorying in Tribulation\*

*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.*

Romans 5:3, 4

**A**nd not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." Thus the apostle introduces this mighty and, from a worldly point of view, strange confession. To what he has already said, he now adds something. In the preceding verse, the apostle has said that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. In the original Greek, "rejoice" in verse 2 is the same word translated "glory" in our text. We stand in the grace of peace with God. Standing in this grace of peace with God, we "glory" in

hope of the glory of God. The glory of God will be reflected in His people. But not only so. There is more to be said. We glory in tribulations also.

This is strong meat, in the form in which it comes to us. Probably, we can hardly digest it. It would be much easier for us if this word of the apostle were cast into the form of a doctrine, or if it would come to us in the form of an admonition. For example, in James 1:2 we read: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

In the text, the apostle places us on such heights that it would seem that we would have to let it go. For we do not easily do what the apostle does in the text. Perhaps, in the fullest sense we never do it. Oh, it is easy, when all is sunshine and prosperity, and when

there is no sorrow, affliction, and trouble, then in the abstract to say, "We glory in tribulations also." But when the enemy comes — when adversity, sorrow, trouble, affliction, and tribulation come — then to say, "We glory in tribulations" — this is different.

Still it stands to reason that the text must be true in this very form. Although it may be true that in our conscious life we do not experience it, the people of God, in their deepest heart, glory in tribulations. We must look at the text in this light.

If we read this word carefully, we see that the apostle points out to us a way from hope to hope. Notice, the apostle starts by saying, "We glory in hope of the glory of God." He continues, "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and

\* Sermon by Herman Hoeksema, as transcribed by Martin Swart.

Hoeksema was the first editor of the *Standard Bearer*.

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patience, experience." Finally, he lands at hope again, when he says, "experience worketh hope." The apostle starts at hope, and he finishes at hope. That which lies between the two is the way of tribulation. In picturing this way, the apostle points to two stages. In the first place, it is a way that leads to patience. In the second place, it is a way that works experience.

### What It Is

Tribulation is suffering. Tribulation is a word which frequently occurs in Scripture and which signifies "to distress, to oppress, to press upon someone from all sides, so that his place in life gradually becomes narrower." Tribulation is so to press upon someone that he cannot find a place in life anymore. This suffering includes all kinds of affliction, none of which may be minimized. For this suffering is as deep as human life. All that is implied in the suffering of this present time is of such a nature that it oppresses us.

This oppression may be caused by many things. It may be a suffering for Christ's sake directly. Most probably, this is the suffering which the apostle has in mind. For in the original we read, "We glory in the tribulations." We suffer for Christ's sake because Christ becomes manifest in our lives. And the world hates Him. This direct suffering for Christ's sake is a suffering which, from a human point of view, can be avoided. You can avoid this suffering by covering up Christ in you. You can avoid it by becoming unfaithful. By covering up Christ in your life, you become too abominable for the devil even to trouble you. But the more Christ becomes manifest in your life, the more you will suffer. This suffering may manifest itself in that you are mocked. Or it may manifest itself in losing a job, or gaining one. But it is a suffering

for Christ's sake. With a view to this suffering, the apostle says, "We glory in tribulations."

There is no reason, however, why we should limit this word to direct suffering for Christ's sake. There is also an indirect suffering for Christ's sake. In a sense, all suffering is for Christ's sake. When judgments, war, oppression, famine, afflictions, and sickness enter into the world, the child of God suffers too. Always his suffering is a suffering for the kingdom of God's sake. The kingdom of God must come through these things. When there is suffering of the body, when there is war, affliction, trouble, and tribulation, the apostle places this confession on our lips: "We glory in tribulations."

Don't you think that it makes us ashamed to read this word of the apostle?

The apostle has in mind all the suffering of this present time. He says, with a view to all the suffering of this present time, that we glory in it.

Do not misunderstand this. The apostle does not say that the relation of this suffering to glorying is merely a matter of circumstances, as though he says here that, even though there is suffering, trouble, and affliction, we nevertheless glory in hope. Even this is beautiful to see. We do not see even this so much. We see this more in stories. We do see sometimes that people, in the midst of suffering, glory in hope. But it takes a long time to learn it. But this is not the meaning. As long as we do not say more than this, we have not reached the height on which the apostle stands.

For the apostle literally says that we glory *because of* these tribulations. There can be no mistake about this interpretation. We read often in Scripture of glorying. The apostle speaks of glorying in God. He speaks of glorying in Christ.

He speaks of glorying in the cross. When we read of glorying in God; of glorying in Christ; of glorying in the cross, the meaning is that we glory *because of* God, *because of* Christ, *because of* the cross. Our glory is in God; it is in Christ; it is in the cross.

So it is in the text. We glory *because of* tribulations. The reason for our glorying, our rejoicing, is the tribulations. We have something good to say about these tribulations. We do not only rejoice in hope of the glory of God. There is also something else for us to glory in. Our glorying is not only in the future. We glory also in the present. We glory also in tribulations.

### Why We Do It

How is this possible? Is the Christian morbid? Has he a morbid mind, that he rejoices in that which grieves others, so that he loves suffering? God forbid! The child of God does not love suffering. He is afraid of it. The Christian feels suffering far more keenly than anyone else. For he has been reborn. The principle of the life which he has received is resurrection life. It is a living life. The world cannot receive it. But the Christian has received resurrection life. Because the life which he has received is resurrection life, the Christian dreads suffering. Resurrection life wants glory. The result is that the Christian feels suffering more keenly. No, the Christian does not want suffering.

Does the Christian then set his face like a flint and assume the attitude of one who does not care? Does he challenge suffering? Does he harden himself to it? God forbid! This is sinful. God does not want His child to harden himself against suffering. God wants him to feel it. The Christian is no Stoic.

Is he then a Christian Scientist? Does he try to convince himself that suffering is just imaginary? God forbid! For the apostle tells us that these tribulations are so real

*By  
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even to  
trouble  
you.*

that they work something. They have an effect.

The meaning, then, is not that the Christian loves suffering for suffering's sake. Nor is the Christian indifferent to suffering. Nor does he harden himself to it, or call it imaginary.

The Christian loves suffering for its fruit's sake. Suffering bears fruit. This fruit outweighs the tribulations by far. This fruit is heavenly; the tribulations are earthly. The fruit is eternal; the tribulations are temporal.

This fruit is only for the spiritually-minded. If you would rather have earthly treasures and pleasures than patience, you do not understand the apostle. If you would rather have earthly treasures than patience, you do not glory in tribulation. But for the Christian, who is spiritually-minded, tribulation worketh patience. Tribulation is to him like a bitter medicine, bad to the taste, but very necessary to health. It is an operation that is necessary for spiritual and heavenly health.

The spiritual health worked by tribulation is patience. There is a certain natural patience. We see it among the people of the world. But we must not confuse this natural patience with the patience of the people of God. The man of the world can sometimes be patient in suffering. But we must not confuse this natural patience with spiritual patience. There are certain natures in the world that can stand much suffering.

Spiritual patience is different. Spiritual patience is a grace. It is that grace by the power of which the soul becomes willing with the will of God to walk in the way of suffering, knowing that it all must work for his good. A spiritually patient person is one who is strong enough to say, "No matter what the way may be, Thy will is my will, and with pleasure I walk in it." This is patience.

Patience is worked by tribulations, but not so, that tribulation

works grace. Tribulation does not work patience if there is not a principle of this patience in the heart. The text does not speak of the work of tribulation as such. Tribulation also works rebellion. But the apostle is speaking of the experience of the Christian. The Christian learns patience through tribulation. He *learns* patience. When he first comes into tribulation, he does not feel patient. But as he continues on that way of tribulation, he gradually learns to be patient. "Tribulation *worketh* patience." When God leads His people into tribulation, while chastening them with one hand, He strengthens them with the other hand. In this way tribulation worketh patience.

And patience worketh experience. A better translation, if there were such a word, would be "triedness." The Dutch has the word "*bevinding*," which means "triedness, to be tried." The apostle means to say that you have been through the fire. Now you have a "tried" nature. You were a child of God before. But you had never been tried. Now you have been put to the test. You had never been through the fire of tribulation. But God brought you into tribulation. In this tribulation you were patient. In this patience you were tried. You were found to be genuine. It is an unspeakable joy to be tried by the fire of tribulation and to come out victorious. The Christian has a "tried" character.

Experience, or "triedness," worketh hope. The apostle began with hope, and he closes with hope ... hope, tribulation, patience, experience, hope. There are different stages of hope. We go through tribulations, patience, and experience, in order to come to the highest stage of hope.

The Christian's hope includes three elements. It is a looking for-

ward; it is a certainty; it is a longing. It is a looking forward: the Christian looks for his hope in the future. It is certainty: the Christian is certain that he will reach it. It is a longing: the Christian reaches out for it.

The "triedness" of the Christian strengthens the Christian in the assurance that he will certainly reach his hope. In the midst of tribulation, the principle of the Christian's life cries out for the hope of the glory of God. He is strengthened by tribulation. It is not good to have prosperity. You cannot say of prosperity that it worketh patience. The Christian's hope is strengthened by tribulation.

### What Is Its Ground

Upon what ground does this glorying Christian stand? Where must one stand in order to say, "I glory in tribulation"? The apostle says that we know it. We are assured that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. Because we know it, we glory in tribulation.

Here you have a ladder. It reaches up to heaven. At the top, you have the highest stage of hope. Below that highest stage of hope, you have experience; then, patience; then, tribulation; then, peace with God; then, justification by faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the ground for the Christian's glorying is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and we glory both in hope of the glory of God and in tribulation. Our glorying in tribulation is rooted in our justification by faith. Say it, and you will glory. Stand on your own righteousness, and you cannot follow the apostle in this confession. But stand in the grace of the peace with God, and you will have peace with all things — with tribulations also. □

*When  
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# Hoeksema's Romans Sermons

If the Protestant world were informed that a publisher was soon to publish a hitherto unknown set of Calvin's sermons on the entire book of Romans, there would be excitement and anticipation. Similar, I trust, will be the response by the readership of the *Standard Bearer* to the announcement that the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) is presently working on the publication of a complete series of sermons by Herman Hoeksema on the epistle to the Romans. This big project, involving considerable editing of the original manuscripts, is now a long way towards completion.

The book will serve the church in a number of ways. It will provide a clear, faithful commentary on the book of Romans, especially for Reformed pastors and church members. The RFPA plans to issue the book as a "devotional commentary on Romans." It will make a substantial contribution to the body of Reformed doctrine. And it will shed important light on both the theology and preaching of Herman Hoeksema. Particularly as regards Hoeksema's preaching, it will dispel, once and for all, any lingering notion that his thoroughly doctrinal preaching was not at the same time warmly experiential and pointedly practical.

## Hoeksema's Scribe

The explanation of the existence of these sermons in written form is a story in itself. So far as I have been able to determine,

Hoeksema's own outlines of his series on Romans no longer exist. But as Calvin had his scribes in Geneva, to whom we are indebted for the sermons by Calvin that we possess, Hoeksema had his scribe. He was Martin Swart, a member of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan from its beginning in 1924 to his death in 1977. For many of those years, Mr. Swart took down Hoeksema's sermons by his own system of shorthand. Older members of First Church remember seeing Mr. Swart absorbed in his writing, service after service, as Hoeksema preached. Those were the days before tape recordings. Immediately upon returning home, Swart would write out the sermon in full, with a pencil. Later, he transcribed the sermons into spiral notebooks, with a pen.

The sermons have never before been published, except for a few that have recently been published as meditations in the *SB*. The meditation in this issue on Romans 5: 3,4 is one of the sermons.

There is one other exception: the sermons on Romans 9-11 were published in 1940 as *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*. Strangely, this book omitted a sermon that appears in the Swart manuscripts: the sermon on Romans 9:17, 18 entitled "God Raising Up Pharaoh." On the other hand, *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* included a sermon on Romans 10: 16-18 that is not found in the Swart manuscripts. The RFPA reprinted *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* in 1979 (including the sermon on Romans 9:17, 18). It too is now out-of-print.

Although the sermons on Romans 9-11 in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* are substantially the same as those in the Swart manuscripts, there are significant differences. The heavily edited version in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* is more dense, dogmatical, and difficult. In contrast, the sermons in the Swart manuscripts are more lucid and lively. Undoubtedly, the explanation is that the Swart manuscripts give the sermons as Hoeksema actually preached them.

For example, in the first sermon on this section of Romans, the sermon on Romans 9:6-8 concerning two kinds of children in the sphere of Israel, Hoeksema begins the third division of his exposition in the Swart manuscript with the words, "This is a very practical



The Scribe

Word also for today." These words are missing in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*. He continues:

There arises in the church a carnal seed. You and I bring them forth. The result is great heaviness and sorrow of heart. There is in the church a great sorrow and heaviness of heart for the minister when he sees the children of the church go the way of destruction, especially if he is in a congregation for a long time. These children grow up with him, and he learns to know them. What would he like to do? I would like to take them all along to heaven. So would you. I instruct them, I preach to them, I admonish them. And what do they do? They trample it under foot. The result is great sorrow and heaviness of heart for the minister. But you can't change it.

The thought is found in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, but in a quite different, objective form.

Even some of the sermon topics, or chapter headings, are different. Evidently, Hoeksema originally preached on Romans 11: 16-21 taking as the theme, "Humility Toward the Old Branches." In *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* the theme became "Holy Branches."

Shortly before Martin Swart died, he gave some 70 notebooks of sermons by Hoeksema to one of his sons. Included is the complete series on Romans. The son, to whom the sermon manuscripts belong, has authorized the RFPA to publish the sermons.

#### **A Valuable Commentary on Romans**

They are a treasure.

The series is a complete exposition of the book of Romans. There are 96 sermons in all. The first is on Romans 1:1-4. The series concludes with a sermon on Romans 16:25-27.

From scattered remarks in the sermons themselves and from evidence in Martin Swart's notebooks, I have been able to date the deliv-

ery of the sermons as the late 1930s. An Old Year's sermon that appears in one of the notebooks just before the sermon on Romans 12:2 speaks of the quick passing of the year 1938. The sermon on Romans 13:1-5 confirms the date. In the sermon on civil government, Hoeksema affirms that Hitler is the "power" in Germany and Mussolini, the "power" in Italy. In keeping with this time of the actual preaching of the sermons is the fact that there is repeated mention in the sermons of material "depression." The United States was just coming out of the "great depression" and was just entering into World War II. The publication of *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* in 1940 is in accord with this dating.

In the late 1930s, Hoeksema, who was born in 1886, was in his early 50s. He was at the height of his physical, intellectual, exegetical, homiletical, and doctrinal powers.

The sermons attest this. They are models of biblical interpretation, of homiletical arrangement of material for preaching, of Reformed doctrine served up as the spiritual food of the saints (many of them uneducated men and women), and of practical application. The Reformed minister who will make a careful study of them will find these sermons a very valuable supplement to his course in homiletics in the seminary.

Their main value in the forthcoming commentary will be their sound, penetrating exposition of the book of Romans. With all the theologians of the Reformation, Hoeksema was convinced of the special importance of Ro-

mans for the Christian faith and church. In the opening words of the last sermon in the series, he referred to Romans as "one of the richest and most beautiful parts of the Word of God."

Whatever the commentary may lack in detailed analysis of grammar (and Hoeksema did discuss the grammar, although in a way that the factory-worker with an eighth-grade education—the Martin Swarts—could follow), it makes up in simple, profound explanation of the meaning of the text. The main theme, or thought, of the epistle, Hoeksema saw as righteousness by faith alone. To it, he returns again and again throughout his interpretation. Therefore, the RFPA will title the work, *Righteous by Faith Only: A Devotional Commentary on Romans*.

#### **Precious Doctrines**

The doctrines are precious. In his treatment of Romans 3:21, 22, Hoeksema takes up the question, whether God is righteous because He conforms to some law or other: "There is no standard by which



*The Preacher*

God can be judged. God is absolute.... God is above all law. There is no law for God, for there is for Him no lawgiver and no judge.... God is His own standard and judge. He eternally passes judgment upon Himself and pronounces Himself righteous."

Explaining the phrase, "the righteousness of God ... is manifested," in the same passage, Hoeksema makes an intriguing case for the eternal justification of the elect church:

This righteousness always was. By "always" I mean that it is eternal. This righteousness always was. Where? In God's mind, that is to say, in God's counsel.... It is essential that we maintain this. There is no change in God. It is not so, that in God, in God's heart, in God's mind, His people appear as sinners, so that God hates them and damns them. And then God changes His attitude toward them and justifies them. This is impossible.

The interpretation of "he that spared not his own Son" in Romans 8:32 is gripping. Here Hoeksema shows that he practiced what he preached about the "liberty of exegesis," that is, that exegesis not be enslaved to dogmatical theory. Having noted in passing that the statement is of "dogmatic interest," he goes on:

But this is not the purpose of the text. The purpose of the text is to reveal something that I tremble to say. The purpose of the text is—I say it with all reverence—to point to the tragedy of God's own suffering, when He delivered up His Son to the cross. If the text does not mean this, it means nothing. Don't you see that the text teaches that it cost God something to be for us? ... The phrase is something like that which we read in Genesis, where God says to Abraham, "Offer unto Me your only son, Isaac." ... If Romans 8:32 does not mean that through the flesh of His Son, there was in God that which corresponds to what we feel when

we nail our only son to the cross, the text means nothing. How this is I do not know.

I dare say that Hoeksema was uniquely qualified to interpret Romans. Few men are able to explain the book of Romans to the church. For there are very few expositors of the Bible who combine utter fidelity to Scripture as the inspired Word of God with unconditional submission to the sovereignty of God. How many, for example, can do justice to Romans 5:15 ("much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace") by explaining that God's decree of Adam's fall is justified in that "God brings us to a glory [in Christ] that is as far above the original glory in Paradise as Christ is above Adam"?

Even Calvin stumbled, seriously, in his commentary on Romans 5:12ff. His interpretation of the "all men" to whom justification of life comes through Christ is erroneous. With their miserable penchant for finding and resting in the errors of the orthodox teachers, the present-day defenders of universal, resistible grace in the preaching gleefully appeal to this mistake in Calvin, in order to undermine Calvin's own theology. Hoeksema gives the correct interpretation in his commentary on Romans 5:18:

The simple meaning is this: all men in the one man, and all men in the other man. Just as on the one hand the rule is, through one man condemnation upon all who are in him (and this is all men), so through one man justification of life upon all who are in Him.

### Moving Expositions

The sermons are moving. They are now cold words on 60-year-old pieces of paper. They are no longer the utterance of the living voice. Lacking is the charisma of the dynamic, deep-throated speaker. And still they are moving. The meditation in this issue is proof.

We suffer for Christ's sake, be-

cause Christ becomes manifest in our lives. And the world hates Him. This direct suffering for Christ's sake is a suffering which, from a human point of view, can be avoided. You can avoid this suffering by covering up Christ in you. You can avoid it by becoming unfaithful. By covering up Christ in your life, you become too abominable for the devil even to trouble you. But the more Christ becomes manifest in your life, the more you will suffer.

Applying Romans 2:1 ("Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest"), having exposed our proud tendency to play the judge in God's courtroom by judging others, Hoeksema cries out:

Come down from the bench! Come down to the floor of the courtroom! On the floor of the courtroom is a lawyer. Man has no excuse. But for him who places himself on the floor of the courtroom, among the condemned, there is the righteousness of God. Jesus Christ is his eternal defense and apology.

The exposition of Romans 2:17-21a strips the elect, regenerated sinner of all his own righteousness as he stands in judgment before God.

When that day comes, and we shall be judged by our works, we cannot say, "I have been Christian." For then the Lord will say, "That was a privilege, but it is not a work." In that day, you cannot say, "I went to church and was a member." The Lord will say, "That was a privilege, but it is not a work that can be the basis of your righteousness before Me." You cannot say, "I was Reformed and knew the truth." The Lord will say, "That was a privilege, but it cannot be the basis of your righteousness." You cannot say, "I have rejected every heresy repugnant to the truth, and I have fought Arminianism and Pelagianism and all false teaching." The Lord will say, "That was all right, but it cannot be the basis of your righteousness."



Not even our repentance can be part of our righteousness with God. The exposition continues:

You cannot even say this: "I have repented; I have repented of my sin. Because I have repented of my sin, I expect to be justified." For the Lord will say, "Did you? Did you always repent? 'Patient continuance in well doing,' did you always do that? All your life?" Then you will have to say, "No, I repented once in a while." And our impenitence will be so great, that we will be worthy to go to hell with all our repentance.

### Practical Applications

In the practical part of the epistle, chapters 12-16, Hoeksema becomes specific in his instruction and admonition, just as did the apostle. Explaining the weaker brother of Romans 14:1-3, Hoeksema describes him with contemporary illustrations. He is the "delicately construed" Reformed farmer who is "too weak to put

lightning rods on (his) barn." He is the sincere Christian who "cannot see how you can take out fire insurance and serve the Lord," supposing that "fire insurance is a lack of faith."

Although he does full justice to the apostle's exhortation to the stronger brothers to receive the weaker brother, Hoeksema will not have a congregation dominated by the weaker brother.

The congregation consists of stronger brothers. The weak brother is an exception. When you have a church that is weak in this respect, it is in danger. The reason is that the conscience becomes narrower and narrower. One says, "We may not have picnics." Another says, "We may not have banquets." A third says, "We may not have programs." A fourth says, "We may not go swimming." A fifth says, "Girls may not bob their hair." But if we have a congregation that consists of weak

brothers, we have a congregation that presently does not know how to move about anymore.

But this is not the worst. The worst is that the weak brothers make "these things their religion."

I will be practical also.

This is a book to anticipate. The RFPA is currently working on a number of other worthy volumes as well. For their book publishing, they need money. When collections are taken for book publishing in the Protestant Reformed congregations, let us give liberally. Those whose investments and business dealings are successful, in God's providence, in our prosperous society might consider large gifts to the book publishing department of the RFPA to be a worthy investment in the kingdom of Christ. Designate the gifts for book publishing.

And read. □

— DJE

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# BRF Family Conference 2000

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Readers of the *Standard Bearer* may like to know that the family conference sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) will meet this summer in Wales as scheduled. There was some question about this because of the necessity recently to find another site for the conference.

The dates are July 22-29.

The location will be the Cefn Lea Conference Centre south of Newton in the central part of Wales. I have it on firsthand re-

port that the new site of the conference has "more extensive facilities" than the one originally reserved for the conference. Those with access to the Internet can visit the web site of Cefn Lea at <[www.cefnlea.wyrecompute.com](http://www.cefnlea.wyrecompute.com)>

The theme of this year's conference will be the "Messianic Kingdom of God." Over the course of the week-long conference, Prof. H. Hanko and the editor of the *SB* will give six speeches on this topic. Prof. Euros Jones will speak on "Griffith Jones and the Welsh Christian Schools."

The family conferences of the BRF are held every two years in the different countries of the United Kingdom in turn.

The conferences are of a relaxed nature. There is plenty of time for recreation with family and friends. Organized tours to scenic and historical sites in Wales will be part of the program.

The British Reformed Fellowship is an organization dedicated to the promotion of the Reformed faith in the British Isles. Included on the board of the BRF are men from the Covenant Protestant Re-



formed Church in Northern Ireland.

Especially those in the British Isles who are interested in the historic Reformed faith and life and who desire the instruction in the Word and the fellowship with likeminded saints that the conference will afford are warmly invited to join us in Wales this summer. But the increasing number of participants from North America, including a goodly number of young

people, are welcome, as those who attended two years ago well know. They have become evangelists of the conference. To their friends in North America, the Fellowship extends a hearty invitation to enjoy the 2000 Conference.

Information about the conference can be obtained from, and booking (registration) can be made with:

Mr. Paul Hayden  
Yr Hen Ysgol  
ABERGWYNGREGYN  
Gwynedd  
LL33 0LR  
North Wales

In North America, the contact person is:

Mr. Bill Oomkes  
6299 Wing Ave. S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49512  
USA

E-mail: oomkes@iserv.net

— DJE

## Letters

### **Ironic Site Selection**

As the Protestant Reformed Churches prepare for the celebration of our seventy-fifth anniversary, I wonder if anyone else sees the irony in the selection of this place to celebrate? If the Lutheran churches had celebrated their anniversary at the Vatican

seventy-five years after the theses had been nailed to the church door, that esteemed professor of theology who had nailed the ninety-five theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg would have nailed them to the wall and then dieted on the worms.

I pray that our denomination remains faithful to the truth and

that God remains faithful to His people. May the Lord not strike our churches with a severe case of historical or spiritual amnesia. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Let the celebration begin!

Thaddeus M. Lubbers  
Grandville, Michigan

## All Around Us

## Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ "Science vs. Science"

In *World Magazine* of February 26, 2000 an article appears presenting the "scientific" evidence of intelligent design in creation. The arguments appear to come from those who are not necessarily all Christian and probably do not believe in the literal account of creation in Genesis 1-3.

The testimony of Scripture, of course, should ever be remembered: *"Through faith we under-*

stand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). Many, therefore, could well conclude that the present universe demands some "Intelligent Designer," without confessing that Scripture presents Him as Jehovah God. Some of these quoted, however, claim to be Christian.

In 1987, when UC Berkeley law professor Phillip Johnson asked God what he should do with the rest of his life, he didn't know he'd wind up playing Toto to the ersatz wizards of Darwinism. But a fateful trip by a London book-

store hooked Mr. Johnson on a comparative study of evolutionary theory. And by 1993, Mr. Johnson's book *Darwin on Trial* had begun peeling back the thin curtain of science that shielded evolution to reveal what lay behind: Darwinian philosophers churning out a powerful scientific mirage.

*Darwin on Trial* was the result of Mr. Johnson's years-long, lawyerly dissection of arguments for evolution. The forensic strategies of prominent evolutionists like Richard Dawkins and Stephen Joy Gould reminded Mr. Johnson of courtroom sleight-of-hand: Their materialist definition of terms decided the debate before

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*Rev. VanBaren is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

opening arguments could begin. "I could see," he said, "that evolution was not so much science as a philosophy that Darwinists had adopted in the teeth of the facts."

The article continues by pointing out that Mr. Johnson insists one must ask the right questions in order to enter a meaningful study of the subject.

The article then quotes a second man, Michael Behe, who was forced to consider the issue of evolution in which he had believed most of his life. After serious reflection, he wrote:

"Although I had pretty much believed evolution, because that's what I was taught, I always had an uneasy feeling and questions in my mind," said Mr. Behe, a Roman Catholic who grew up in a family of eight children in Harrisburg, Penn. "After reading Denton's book (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*), and seeing his rational, scientific approach to the problem, I decided I had signed on to something that just was not well-supported. And, since evolution is such a strong component of many people's view of how the world works, I started to wonder: What else have I been told that is unsupported, or not true? It was a very intense, intellectual time."

That intensity ultimately gelled into *Darwin's Black Box* (Free Press 1996), a book that hit secular scientists like an atom bomb. Charles Darwin himself had already provided a pass-fail test for his theory: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." Mr. Behe's book (now in its 16<sup>th</sup> printing) was the first to administer Mr. Darwin's own test at the molecular level. Using simple yet scientifically bullet-proof analyses, Mr. Behe showed that even at the cellular level many structures are "irreducibly complex," meaning that all parts of a structure have to be present in order for the structure to func-

tion at all. Thus, the slow, gradual changes proposed by Darwin were as likely to have led to the spontaneous formation of complex structures as are flour, sugar, eggs, and milk likely to gradually coalesce into a wedding cake.

Mr. Behe wrote: "Applying Darwin's test to the ultra-complex world of molecular machinery and systems that have been discovered over the past 40 years, we can say that Darwin's theory has 'absolutely broken down.'"

Several other scientists are mentioned who have come likewise to the conclusion that only "intelligent design" can explain the existence of the universe and the complexity of life on this earth.

In the meanwhile, evolutionists are mounting their counterattack. Because Kansas Board of Education decided last August that evolution ought not to be taught as a scientific fact in public schools, students from that state were threatened with exclusion from large universities. *World* magazine mentions:

The threats began with a letter by Herbert Lin, published in the Sept. 17 issue of *Science*. Mr. Lin, associated with the Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, proposed that colleges and universities refuse to recognize Kansas high-school biology courses.

In October, *Scientific American* editor-in-chief John Rennie turned up the heat, urging college admissions officials to "Make it clear that...the qualifications of any students applying from that state in the future will have to be considered very carefully. Send a clear message to the parents in Kansas that this bad decision carries consequences for their children."

Responding to such efforts at thought control, Berkeley law professor and Darwin critic Phillip E. Johnson quotes a Chinese paleontologist who told him, "In China we can criticize Darwin but not the government. In America you can criticize the government but not Darwin."

This article then points out some of the arguments that "intelligent design" presents to support their opposition to Darwinism:

Darwinists would have you believe that the debate is about whether to teach a literal interpretation of Genesis as science, forbidding teachers from presenting scientific evidence for the Darwinist position. A better description of the question under debate is whether to teach materialist philosophy as science, forbidding teachers from presenting scientific evidence against the Darwinist position. There are at least six major problems with Darwin's theory.

First, the predictions of Darwin's theory are contradicted by the fossil evidence. If the Darwinist theory were correct, then species ought to appear and die out gradually. Each species should change slowly but continuously, and the history of life on earth should reveal accumulating improvements in "fitness." What the fossil record actually shows is that species appear and die out suddenly. Each species tends to remain the same until it disappears. And the history of life on earth shows small variations among a small set of basic designs. As the Harvard Darwinist Stephen Jay Gould admitted in 1977, "The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology."

Moreover, natural selection is not dynamic but conservative. One reason for the patterns evident in the fossil record is that the overwhelming majority of mutations are harmful rather than beneficial. Natural selection—the weeding out of imperfectly adapted organisms—turns out to work against radical change, not for it.

A fatal difficulty for Darwinism is that it cannot explain irreducible complexity. Natural selection cannot produce "irreducible" complexity—in which every part of a system must be present for the system to work at all—because in natural selection, the parts of liv-

ing systems must evolve one by one, with each new part making the system work a little better. Yet irreducible complexity turns up throughout the machinery of life, for example, in the clotting system for blood, the light-detecting system for cells in the retina of the eye, and the repair and transcription systems for DNA.

Even if Darwinism could explain irreducible complexity, it could not explain preadaptation. Adaptation can work only if there is something to adapt to. For example, insect mouths couldn't adapt to flowers unless there were flowers. Guess what: There weren't. Writes Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, "insects had evolved at least ten elaborate forms of mouthpieces, uniquely 'adapted' (one would say) to their feeding upon flowers, one hundred million years before there were any flowers on Earth." Examples of such "preadaptation" turn out to be easy to find.

Yet another problem is that Darwinism cannot explain how life arises from nonlife. Natural selection kicks in only after things that live and reproduce exist; it cannot explain how they come to be. Scientists do know a number of ways to get organic from inorganic molecules, but none of them could have produced compounds like DNA under the conditions now believed to have existed in the years before life appeared.

Finally, there hasn't been enough time for the "impossible" to occur. In 1954, Harvard biochemist George Wald admitted that the chance development of life from nonlife was fantastically improbable, but argued that given enough time, "the 'impossible' becomes possible, the possible probable, and the probable virtually certain." Few biochemists take this view today, largely because the time available for life to have arisen is getting shorter and shorter. Mr. Wald himself thought two billion years had passed between the time the oceans stopped boiling and the time life appeared. New estimates suggest that his guess was forty times too long.

Is there any scientific reason to

shut out the evidence that living things have been designed? Not one. Scientists sift evidence of intelligent design in numerous fields: For example, archaeologists consider whether the objects they dig up are rocks or tools, and forensic pathologists figure out whether the marks on bodies are better explained by sickness or violence. Is biology somehow different than the other sciences? Science should mean finding the explanation that best fits the evidence—not finding the explanation that best fits the dogma that "nature is all there is."

## ■ And now: Feathered Dinosaur Link

Recently many newspapers and magazines, including the well-known *National Geographic*, presented pictures and descriptions of a "find" in China of a dinosaur with feathers. It was considered proof that there was a link between birds and dinosaurs. But, alas, the wool (or should I say: feathers?) had been pulled over many eyes. *USA TODAY* reports in its January 25, 2000 issue:

The "missing link" dinosaur-bird featured by *National Geographic* magazine in November is a fake.

Archaeoraptor, the unofficial name of the fossil, is actually two animals pieced together either as an honest mistake made by its discoverers in China or as a breath-taking forgery. The composite, on display at the National Geographic Society in Washington until last week, consists of a birdlike upper torso and the tail and feet of a small raptor. The magazine described it as a "true missing link in the complex chain that connects dinosaurs and birds."

The specimen, smuggled into the USA from China, was found at a gem show last year in Tucson by Stephen Czerkas, owner of the Dinosaur Museum in Monticello, Utah. He purchased it for \$80,000,

and made a deal with *National Geographic* to study and publicize it and ultimately return it to China.

How *National Geographic* finds itself at the center of a scientific embarrassment is a tale as layered as the 120-million-year-old sediment from which the fossil reportedly was unearthed.

"Assuming that all the evidence is in and it is a composite, not since I've been editor has anything happened like this," *National Geographic* editor Bill Allen told *USA TODAY*. "At any time prior to publication, if we had been informed of any problem at all, we would have yanked (the article)."

The composite nature of the fossil was not detected by the magazine's team of scientists, and a scientific paper that was submitted to both *Science* and *Nature* was never published. As a result, *Geographic* was on its own with no independent review of the fossil.

Allen says he was notified Dec. 20 by a Chinese doctoral student and member of the *Geographic* team that the fossil was not authentic. The society modified text on the public display to say questions had been raised about the fossil's origins. *National Geographic* will publish a correction in its March issue.

But Storrs Olson, curator of birds at the Smithsonian Institution's Natural History Museum and an outspoken skeptic of the bird-dinosaur link, says he warned the magazine in November, when the article was published, that there were serious problems with the fossil. He says he was ignored.

"The problem is, at some point the fossil was known by *Geographic* to be a fake, and that information was not revealed," Olson says.

So the evolutionist will seize upon any "straw" to support his theory of evolution—but again ends up with "egg on his face." □

# Elders Who Know the Sheep

**A**fter the shock of the first few consistory meetings is over, and the elder takes stock of his gifts and calling, he ought to be busy getting to know the flock under his care. He already knows them partially. Now the knowledge must increase in both breadth and depth. Aside from other essential labors to qualify himself for the work (see the following articles, God willing), he must come to know the sheep.

## Necessary knowledge

No one will disagree that without this knowledge an elder is really impotent for the work. Consistories resolutely refuse to nominate for office any member who has recently joined the congregation. He may have served well in another congregation. He may have many gifts. His gifts may be greater than those of officebearers currently serving or nominated. But they will not propose his name to the congregation. He does not *know* the congregation.

As an elder, each man must be familiar with the needs of the sheep and lambs under his care. Because he needs to be friendly, a nice person, and the members will like him and be comfortable with him? Of course. But more so because he must represent Christ, who knows His sheep; is good to them; is their

Friend (Prov. 18:24). The sheep like Him very much. And Christ is familiar with every one of His sheep.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep.... My sheep hear my voice, and I *know* them...." (John 10:14, 27).

The Good Shepherd's knowledge of His sheep is an eternal, *electing* knowledge of love. Why, the Father gave Him the sheep according to that decree of love. So Jesus lays down His life for them, redeeming them. He "giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Having done so, He comes very close to them. He calls them to come to Him. He leads them out, goes before them, holds them in His hand, speaks to them (John 10:3, 4, 28).

If the elder represents Christ, He must love the sheep first. Loving them, He "gives his life" for them, comes close to them, leads them out, goes before them, speaks to them. How great a love! How impossible a work! Pray for grace!

Christ's knowledge of the sheep is also *familiarity* with them. In John 10, Jesus meant more than His and His Father's electing knowledge of the sheep. He meant that he was familiar with them. Our shepherd knows all about us. He understands our physical needs, our spiritual wants and infirmities. He's familiar with our past, our hurts, our scars, our limps. He's very well aware of our desires, our discouragements, our disappointments. Because of this, He's able to succor us in time of

need (Heb. 2:18). How sad if He did not know us. How hesitant we would be to come to Him if it were so.

Good elders will also want to become very familiar with the sheep under their care.

## Knowing names, needs, history

They'll know the *names* of them all. In the smaller congregations there won't be one he doesn't know. In the larger congregations, he'll at least know the names of them all in his district. The little ones too. Especially them. Jehovah calls all of his sheep by name (Is. 45:3, John 10:3). The beginning of the elders' work is to know the sheep by name.

It's not that difficult to learn the names. It takes only a little effort. Sit down with the church directory each week. Take out the list of the names under your care before church in the consistory room. Pray for their needs. Quite soon you will know them all.

Know their occupations, their special needs, their weaknesses, their families, and their family history. Know their sorrows. Understand their joys and rejoice with them.

Above all, know their spiritual needs. You are shepherds of souls! What do the young people think about confession of faith? Are the children spiritually minded? Do they participate in catechism? Do they know their lessons well? What kinds of discouragements may the family be facing? What pressures may threaten their mar-

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riage? Are there financial struggles? Are the single members content in their way? Does the childless couple rest in God's will? What kinds of friends and acquaintances do they have?

### A few suggestions

To accomplish this takes great effort. But it's all worth it and will be blessed by God. The kind of effort I'm thinking of includes things like:

1) *Talk to them after church.* Go out of your way after church to talk to the families and individuals under your care. It's easy to remain in your comfortable group without ever venturing out to meet and speak to the flock. That's not faithfulness to the Good Shepherd who has called you to care for His sheep. Besides, how appreciative the sheep are to hear you asking about their needs, in a gracious way talking to them about school, or the sermon! What to talk about? Perhaps you could read the *Beacon Lights* or *Standard Bearer* on Saturday evening so that you can ask them if they've seen this "very interesting article." By all means, seek them out and find out their needs. What better time to start than in the social hall after church?

2) *Make notes in your personal church directory.* You need to remember specifics. Jot notes about occupations of young people, girlfriends' names, future plans, items you've discussed with them. You shouldn't forget that this one's son's wife left him, or that one's grandfather in another town is dying of cancer. Jot down what you could ask them the next time you see them. Remember to follow up on a conversation you had with them a month ago. You have an interest in remembering the special needs and circumstances of the flock. When you visit the family on the regular family visitation, these notes can be in front of you.

3) *Visit with them personally.* If it's possible, ask the clerk to assign your family visits to the families

in your district. Elders must make the family visits profitable by preparing for the visit. Especially they do well when they think about the specific visit they will make, keeping in mind the unique needs and circumstances of the home they come to.

4) *Talk to them spiritually.* Remember you represent the good Shepherd. There is nothing wrong with talking small talk with them. But let's not hesitate to show interest in spiritual things, and in their spiritual needs. This is more difficult. But elders who are praying for the spiritual needs of the flock will be able to do this. The sheep will love you for this. Believers will anyway. That the others won't, doesn't matter.

5) *Pray for them regularly.* The elders' meetings include prayers for the saints under the elders' care. Those prayers are vital in the labor of the elders. Remind your pastor and fellow elders who open and close these meetings to make these prayers petitions for the sheep. In addition to this, we elders ought to pray privately. Take the church directory. Look at the names of those under your care. Think of their specific needs. Pray. Be an advocate. Bring their needs to the Great Advocate (I John 2:1). We love the sheep. We pray for our own children. Praying for "our" sheep should be naturally part of our work as under-shepherds.

6) *Call them.* Don't forget that even a brief telephone call can be used by God to encourage the saints in their needs.

7) *Pray for genuine love for them.* The only thing worse than no concern is feigned concern. Only God can help us truly love the sheep. No one may accept nomination who does not love genuinely. God answers prayers by deepening and purifying it.

8) Discuss with your fellow elders what other items could be added to this list.

### Benefits

The profit of elders' faithfulness in this respect is that God will bless it for the good of the sheep to the glory of their Shepherd. I remind us once more: the need for our faithfulness here is not that the people will like *us*; rather, that they will *love Christ*. Because we represent Christ to them, our love for them and our care conveys the love of Christ to them. That we love them assures them of *Christ's* love. We must make that plain. I pray that we love the saints personally. They may know that. But I pray fervently that the saints know God's love for them. They must know that. The better we know the sheep, the more powerful a tool we will be in God's hands to bless.

What importance and benefit is there that we know them *by name*? That they may know that we care for them! That God knows *us* by name is indication that we've found grace in His sight (Ex. 33:12,17). They must learn something about God through our work. His grace is known to them in part through our work.

Besides, getting to know the people of God in that way helps us to see problems before they become so severe there is little that can be done. Your knowledge of the flock will help you anticipate problems rather than react to problems. We desire no less for our own children!

Then, the sheep dare to come to you. They have seen your interest and know your sympathetic heart. Trust has been established. If they have become your friends, they will come to you as a kind and sympathetic friend and able counselor.

Do elders sometimes lament that few members of the congregation come to them with their needs? Does the minister become overloaded with the pastoral care of the flock? One reason may be that the sheep just don't "know" the elders and the elders don't "know" the sheep. In the same dis-

course in which Jesus said, "I know them," He also said: "The sheep follow him, *for they know his voice.*" Do they hear the voice of Christ in

your voice? See the love of Christ in your heart? Sense the wisdom of Christ in your mind?

God help all our elders who

love Him and His Great Son. May He use us, strengthen us for the work, and bless the flock under our care. □

**That They May Teach Them to Their Children**

**Miss Agatha Lubbers**

## **Establishing Schools to Provide Reformed Covenant Education (5)**

**F**our articles (cf. Nov. 15, 1998; Feb. 15, 1999; March 15, 1999; and October 1, 1999) have summarized and reviewed the early writings by Herman Hoeksema and George M. Ophoff concerning Reformed Christian education and Christian schools.

I have indicated that articles respecting Christian education during the very early years of the publication of the *Standard Bearer* influenced the thinking of those who labored to establish and develop the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Although the schools were not to be schools governed by the churches, the schools were to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions — the truth preached and taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The Protestant Reformed Christian Schools are controlled and governed by believing parents who are responding in faithfulness to the promises they made at the time of the baptism of their children. They promised that they would to the utmost of their power see to the pious and religious education of their chil-

dren. This means, if at all possible, schools that are Reformed, Christian schools.

The Protestant Reformed Christian schools have adhered to the doctrines taught in the church — doctrines that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Reformed confessions. These doctrines regulate the lives of the people of God in every area of life, including the education of the covenant children. In order that the schools would remain Reformed and Christian, it was taught and maintained that the Reformed confessions must be an important part of the statements of principle that would direct the instruction in the schools.

The First Reformed Christian School of Redlands, California began sessions in 1934, because those who established it took seriously the teachings and beliefs of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School was established in the late 1940s, the Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School was established in 1950, and since then many other PR schools were founded because parents and many others were committed to the teachings and beliefs of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Articles written in 1926 by Rev. George M. Ophoff and in 1932 by Rev. Herman Hoeksema stated that

Reformed, Christian schools must be distinctive, and the teachings must be true to the Reformed confessions. Any movement away from these confessions and any denial of the necessity of these confessions for the regulation of the instruction and administration of the school would be detrimental to the instruction given in the schools.

It has always been a vital concern in the PRC that the teachers in our schools must be well prepared to infuse their instruction with Reformed principles. Teachers who were being prepared for work in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools during the 1940s had an opportunity to study with Professor Ophoff in an organization called the PRC teacher-student club. The meetings of the organization made it possible for teachers and future teachers to receive specific instruction and to have an opportunity to discuss important aspects of the instruction of the covenant youth in the schools. During the 1950s, after the Grand Rapids schools had been established, the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools sponsored seminars that were attended by ministers and teachers and those training for the teaching profession. At the present time teachers have an opportunity to attend a seminar called Principles and Practices in Reformed Education. This semi-

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*Miss Lubbers is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan*

nar is taught and directed by Mr. Jon Huiskens and is sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

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In the preceding article in this series, I began to review the analysis and critique by George M. Ophoff and Herman Hoeksema of the six "Specific Principles" for Christian Education. These principles were part of a booklet entitled *Basic Principles of Christian Schools of America*, published July 1925 by the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), now Christian Schools International (CSI).

Article 4 examined "Principle a," which speaks concerning the Bible as the Book of books. Both G.M. Ophoff and H. Hoeksema were critical of "Principle a" because of its vagueness and because it left room for too many incorrect interpretations. They said that modernists and higher critics would be able to agree with it because it lacked the necessary specificity and distinctiveness. By specificity Ophoff and Hoeksema meant that the language should be so specific that there was no possibility for any interpretation but the correct scriptural and confessional interpretation.

In this article we examine "Specific Principle b," the second of the six "Specific Principles" published and adopted by the NUCS.

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### **An Examination of the Review, Critique, and Restatement of the Specific Principles**

The second of the "specific" principles is the following:

God is Triune (Matt. 3:16, 17). He is the Creator of all that is, Sustainer of all that exists, and the ultimate end of all things (Rom. 11:36). God who is transcendent (Is. 40) and immanent (Ps. 139), is the absolute loving Sovereign over all (Dan. 4:31); men should seek to do His will as it is done in heaven.

Ophoff gave his analysis and critique of "Specific Principle b" in his series of articles "Dr. Bouma's New Platform" (*Standard Bearer*, Vol. 3, pp. 81-83, November 15, 1926).

Ophoff began his analysis of "Specific Principle b" with a critique of the statement, "God is Triune." He asserted that this statement, although not erroneous, is not specific enough to be a Specific Principle. He argued that it is inappropriate and wrong to substitute for the unmistakable and articulate language of the Belgic Confession concerning the doctrine of God, the simplistic statement "God is Triune." He saw this as a tragic mistake.

Ophoff believed that "Specific Principle b" would have been much better if it had quoted Article VII of the Belgic Confession and used the language and content of this article instead of the terminology of "Specific Principle b" concerning God. He did not want the Specific Principle concerning God to be so general that Jehovah's Witnesses and other Trinity-denying persons would be able to accept this principle. He stated that the following version was far better. "... We believe in one only God, who is the one single essence, in which are three persons, really, true and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost..."

Ophoff concluded his comments on this aspect of "Principle b" by saying that Article VII of the Belgic Confession says something. Because he was concerned that Dr. Bouma was making the set of principles for Christian schools so general that anyone could adopt it, he wanted to make certain that the language of each of the principles eliminated the possibility of everyone being satisfied with this kind of educational principle. Therefore he wrote: "No Russelite (i.e., Jehovah's Witness) would endorse it (i.e., Article VII) as expressive of

his view of God. This much cannot be said of the statement, 'God is Triune.'"

Ophoff also critiqued the statement, "God is the Creator of all that is." He asserted that the theistic evolutionist would agree with this. He referred again to the language of the Belgic Confession in his critique. He said the theistic evolutionist would not declare that "the Father by the Word, that is by the Son, hath created of nothing the heaven, the earth and all creatures, as it seemed good unto Him, giving every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator."

He also stated that the Belgic Confession and God's Word not only assert that God created all things but that God created all things after their kind. "This last phrase," said Ophoff, "the Union failed to incorporate into its principles and was satisfied with the mere statement that God is the creator of all things." He contended that the language adopted by the Union was so unspecific it wittingly or unwittingly opened the door to the theory of evolution.

Ophoff expressed concern about the section in the second principle that "God is the Sustainer of all things." He quoted question 27 of the Heidelberg Catechism and Article 13 of the Belgic Confession. These confessions teach the doctrine of divine providence. They maintain that God does not forsake His creation but that He rules and governs all things according to His holy will so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment.

Ophoff asserted that the statement "God is the Sustainer of all that exists" is not specific enough. He declared that it contained a loophole large enough for anyone that denies the miracle to crawl through. He affirmed that our Reformed confessions closed the door to those espousing these heresies.

Ophoff singled out seven most important statements from the Re-



formed confessions that he believed should be included.

a. God upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures.

b. All creatures are so in His hand that without His will they cannot move.

c. God rules and governs all things created, according to His holy will.

d. Nothing happens in this world without His divine appointment.

e. Nothing befalls us by chance but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father.

f. God keeps all creatures so under His power that not a hair of one's head or a sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father.

g. God so restrains the devil and all our enemies that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us.

I must agree that, because this list includes the language and doctrine of the confessions, it is a decided improvement over the easily misinterpreted first two sentences of Principle b.

Ophoff continued his critique by calling attention in his article to the clause that asserts that "God is the absolute loving sovereign over all" and that "God is transcendent and immanent." He noted the similarity of this declaration with the first article of the Belgic Confession.

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual being, which we call God, and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

Ophoff stated that it was inappropriate to set aside the confessions. He could not see that the language of "Specific Principle b" was an improvement upon the language of Article I of the Belgic Confession.

He believed that it was a matter worthy of note that the Union singled out "love," one of the ethical virtues of God, but failed to make room in its specific principles for a clause asserting that God is "just, holy, and righteous."

Ophoff declared that the desire for cooperation with non-orthodox groups was the cause for this omission. Ophoff stated as well that he believed the Union failed to incorporate into its platform the doctrine of a God who is just because that doctrine is out of place in the system of thought known as common grace. He wrote: "Dr. Bouma in particular and the members of the Union in general are aware of this. And they agreed to pass the doctrine by."

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Hoeksema gave his analysis and critique of "Specific Principle b" in his series of articles "The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure?" (*Standard Bearer*, Vol. 8, pp. 247-249, March 1, 1932).

Herman Hoeksema granted that "Specific Principle b" expresses many of the great dogmas of Christendom concerning God. He wrote that by doing so it eliminated many erroneous and unbiblical modern views of the Most High, such as Unitarianism, Pantheism, Deism, and to a certain extent at least, also Evolutionism. He became more severe in his analysis when he wrote:

The article would fit nicely in a general Christian confession of faith but as an element in a specific declaration of principles upon which our Christian schools are founded, it is too general and quite worthless. There is nothing "specific" in it, unless the Union means by specific the same as generally Christian.

Hoeksema wrote that Roman Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, Pre's, Post's, and A's will all be ready to subscribe to the language of Specific Principle b and that the only class of believers that

might have scruples against signing their name to this statement are those of the Reformed type.

According to Hoeksema, the Reformed person would ask several questions about this declaration concerning God. A Reformed person would inquire concerning the statement that God is the "loving Sovereign over all." He would particularly be concerned about the meaning of the word "all" in this connection. Does the word "all" mean "all men"? If the word means "all men," then no true Reformed believer will subscribe to it. Hoeksema says that "a Christian school that is based on such principles as these is dangerous to the maintenance of the Reformed faith."

Hoeksema also stated that the Reformed person would ask a question or two about the last statement: "... men should seek to do His will on earth as it is in heaven." He noted that the statement is rather general and vague.

Hoeksema noted that the statement should not be condemned if it merely intends to express that all men are responsible before God to live according to His will, to serve and glorify Him. Nevertheless, Hoeksema expressed his doubts about the intent of the statement. He asked the rhetorical question, "Does the statement not smack of the modernistic idea, that all men must simply unite to strive for the realization of God's will in this world? By doing so will we not establish the kingdom of God in the world; and that this is entirely possible because of man's inherent goodness?"

Hoeksema also indicated that the "truth of God's sovereign counsel" and the specific "truth of election and reprobation" were omitted from Principle b. These important truths Hoeksema declared to be more closely related to specific Christian education than statements about the transcendence and immanence of God. He believed the truths of election and reprobation

tion and the truth concerning God's sovereign counsel led more directly to a reason for the establishment and maintenance of separate Christian schools than any other truth declared in this second principle.

Hoeksema wrote:

Should not a platform of principles, of "specific" principles of Christian education show, at least, why it is the duty of Christian parents to maintain separate Christian schools? Surely, the doctrine of the Trinity, of the transcendence and immanence of God, of the loving sovereignty of God over all — these truths do not necessitate the maintenance of separate Christian schools. Why, then, while declaring truths about God, did not the Union also declare our faith in the eternal counsel of God? And why did it choose to cover up this truth in ambiguous and very general and vague statements, that may easily be interpreted as being contrary to our Reformed faith, such as the declaration that God is "the loving Sovereign over all" and that "men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven"?

Ophoff earlier and now Hoeksema indicated that there was a studied attempt to be as vague and general as possible. Hoeksema wrote:

It seems as if the Union proceeds from the notion that the existence of our Christian schools has nothing to do with the more specific truths of sin and grace, of election and reprobation, of the fact that God's people are a peculiar people in the world, and that, after all, the existence of separate Christian schools is entirely due to the fact that Christian parents cannot make a common cause with the world, especially in the sphere of education.

Hoeksema continued his concern by expressing dissatisfaction with an article written in *Christianity Today*, December 1931 by the general secretary of the Union.

... To give creation its God-implied interpretation and have it serve its God-intended purpose — this is the business of all true education. To educate a child implies that we lead the child to think God's thoughts after Him. Education is an attempt to make the God-glorifying purpose read through the life of the child.... In and through the life of the child God must become all in all.

Concerning this, Hoeksema wrote that Christian education that is based upon such principles is not Christian but is mere modernism. He said we must not imagine that it is possible for the Christian to think the thoughts of God after Him as revealed in creation or that an education that aims at this as its goal will thoroughly furnish the man of God unto all good works. He says, "This is mere philosophy."

Hoeksema continued as follows:

The apostle Paul does not write to Timothy that by thinking the thoughts of God in creation after Him the man of God will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, neither do you find this in Scripture at all.

What does the apostle write?

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:15-17).

Hoeksema noted that this is quite different from the language of the article by the secretary of the NUCS. To know the truth of God in Christ Jesus from the holy Scriptures and to receive grace to apply and live this truth of God, this is for the man of God to be thor-

oughly furnished unto all good works. True Christian education is to instruct the child in this wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord.

Hoeksema called his readers to flee an apologetic attitude with respect to the Christian schools. He said, and we say with him that our schools must be specifically Christian — they must be distinctively Reformed.

We should not make an attempt to present our Christian schools as generally acceptable to all religious groups or persons in this world. This will result in the destruction of our schools.

Hoeksema submits a revision of the "Principle b" as follows:

God, who created and sustains all things and governs them according to His sovereign counsel; who is triune, and, as such, lives an eternal covenant-life of friendship in infinite perfection; from eternity chose and in time forms a people unto Himself, to stand in covenant-relationship unto Him in Christ Jesus their Lord, that they might walk in all good works which He ordained for them, and in all their life in the world should be to the praise of His glory, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

This principle has become more than a final paragraph in an article written nearly 70 years ago. It is a fundamental principle that has become part of the constitutions and articles of incorporation of many of the Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Based on the truth of this principle, instruction is given to the covenant children and young people who attend our schools.

Our prayer is that God will give Protestant Reformed teachers the grace to be faithful to this fundamental principle.

... to be continued □

# The Covenant and the Law

*And he (Moses) took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.*

*And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

Exodus 24:7, 8

In the thinking of Dr. Klaas Schilder the covenant of grace was viewed as forensic or legal in nature, a proclamation of law. If there was one thing he emphasized, it was that the promises of God never come without demands, warnings, and even threats attached — and that these are related in a conditional way. To be in the covenant of grace is to receive the promises of God, but always in conjunction with His demand that His law must be met. As it was Israel's privilege to be set apart as a peculiar nation unto the Lord and so receive His glorious promises, that privilege entailed for them the peculiar and fearful responsibility to do what He commanded them, lest they fall under His special punishments and wrath, and be counted covenant-breakers in His sight. And so it continues to be, Schilder maintained, for every baptized child to this day. To be born and raised under the promises of the covenant is their special privi-

lege, being taken as they are into the body of the church of God and counted as His children personally and individually, but it always comes in inextricable union with the responsibility that God's laws must be met. And that, in the view held by Dr. Schilder, is the essence of the covenant.

Now, as we have noted in the past, there are elements in this that must be taken very seriously. The covenant of God cannot be simply divorced from God's law as though there were no connection between the two. The connection comes out in the fact that almost immediately after the law was given at Sinai, Moses wrote what God had said in a book, of which we read, "he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex 24:7, 8). In so many words the law was simply called "the book of the covenant." This cannot be ignored. But still the question remains whether that designation meant that the law is to be identified as the essence and central element in the covenant, or whether it is rather a supportive element to it. This is a basic question, and one that we must necessarily pursue further.

Historically it was a fact, of course, that God at Sinai gave His law in a very special way to Israel — the covenant seed of Abraham — and continued to reiterate it be-

fore them all through the old dispensation. This should not, however, be taken to mean that this marked the origin of the law; for clearly all the major tenets of the law had been there from the very beginning. We can see this, for example, with Cain, who after slaying his brother Abel made no plea of ignorance that what he had done was wrong, but rather claimed ignorance of what had happened, even though he had himself buried Abel's body in the ground (Gen. 4:10). And so it was with those who followed him. Enoch undoubtedly presumed that the people before the flood knew what he was speaking of when he said, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14, 15), their ignorance of God being "willingly" chosen (II Pet. 3:5). Without question the men of Sodom were fully aware of the wickedness of what they did when the angels of Jehovah came to pour out God's wrath upon them (Gen. 19:7). Laban presumed the theft of his possessions to be wrong (Gen. 31:30) — even while ignoring the evil of the idolatry he practiced. Joseph understood the evil of adultery, and refused to practice it (Gen. 39:9). And it is striking that the Israelites were presumed to understand the importance of Sabbath observance also prior to its being stated at Sinai (Ex. 16:26). And so it is that Paul as-

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sure us that people who have never heard the law of Moses as such, nevertheless have its works so written in their hearts that, when they act contrary to them, their own consciences condemn them for what they do (Rom. 2:14).

The whole content of the law was there from the beginning. It held for all people, implicit no doubt in that very first commandment, "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat" (Gen. 2:17), symbolizing the fact that man must be subject to God's commands if he is to live. The content of the law was given at Sinai, but was simply made to overshadow the life of Israel in a special way, and so keep before their consciousness those basic principles which Jesus brought to the fore, from Moses, when He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). Or, if we would be even more succinct, in the words of Paul, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). For this was what all the law was about, it brought forth the fact that in every aspect of life, what one does must come from a believing heart that loves God, or it will sin.

The privilege to which Israel was subject, however, was in the fact that they were set before this principle always, and in countless different ways, as Paul was quick to point out when he spoke of his fellow Israelites as those "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:4, 5). All of these were the great wonders of God's revelation to man, under

which Israel had lived all through its history, with clear application by the prophets of God to every aspect of life. But in the end one thing was evident, it did not make them a better people, at least not as a whole, so that when Jesus came to dwell among them He denounced them repeatedly as even more sinful than Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15), or than Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 11:21). And so the question must very really arise, was this what the covenant was about?

Actually it was with this very question that Paul dealt, most perceptively, in writing to the Galatians. There he put it this way, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24), and then farther on, "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:1-5). The figure is not only descriptive, but particularly insightful if we understand what it is setting forth.

To begin with, we may note that the "schoolmaster" spoken of here was not the teacher of a school, as we might think, but a "pedagogue." In those ancient days, when a rich noble had a son who was to be his heir, he would take one of his most trusted and most capable servants, or slaves, and make him to be a "pedagogue" to his son. The task of the pedagogue, under the authority and direction of the father of course, was to oversee the growth and development of this child with the purpose that, when the son would come of age, he would be suffi-

ciently mature to be a fit heir alongside his father in ruling his father's estate. It meant that as this child grew he would have to learn the kind of knowledge his father possessed and considered important, as well as the values his father had, and the commitments his father pursued. By every measure the pedagogue's position was an honored one, and such as a father would give only to a thoroughly competent and trusted servant, who understood his ways in every dimension of life.

It presumed also, however, that the pedagogue would be given a very complete authority — in the name of the father — to rule over that child's life completely, all through his formative years, so that, Paul wrote, such a child "as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant." It was within the right of the pedagogue's position to determine exactly what the child was to do at every stage of life. He determined what this child ate, what he would wear as his clothing, and whatever things he was to do. He decided with whom the child might play, and who might be his companions, and in what activities they would engage. It was the pedagogue's duty to escort the child to school, choose the "tutors and governors" under which he was to study, and see to it that the child gave full attention to his teachers and learned the lessons he was given. And, through this all, should the child rebel or disobey, it was within his right to discipline and punish him for whatever he did wrong, as well as to reward him for that which was right. The pedagogue was the child's master in every aspect of life — but always and only with a view to that ultimate goal, that this should be brought to full maturity of life, that, when he came of age, he would be able to take his place by the father's side as heir of all he possessed.

And at that point, at that time when the child came of age, we

should note, the relationship between that son, now come to maturity, and the pedagogue, who to that point had ruled his life so completely, would be completely reversed. Whereas all through his childhood this son had been subject to the pedagogue's complete control and discipline, now upon entering his inheritance the son ruled over the pedagogue, who became his possession, his servant and slave, with whom he could do as he wished. Should he be angry and carry resentments for the way the pedagogue had dealt with him, he would be able to exact upon him any revenge he might choose. But if the pedagogue's work had been done well, so that this young man had attained to true maturity of life, there would not be resentment. Rather, this young but mature master would have come to the point where he would understand and appreciate the fact that all of the severity of discipline, as painful as it might have been at the time, was actually done only for his good, and would provide for him a discernment that would last through the rest of his days. He would recognize that the pedagogue's actions had been carefully and wisely designed to teach him to distinguish

between right and wrong, and the importance of following the right and rejecting the wrong no matter what the immediate cost might be. His old pedagogue would have become for him by that time, rather than a simple servant, a trusted friend to be honored as long as he lived, and one who, in all likelihood, would be called in and consulted as a trusted friend in time of need.

So, Paul was saying, was the law to Israel. It was Israel's pedagogue, appointed by God to bring the seed of Abraham to spiritual maturity of life — that is, to prepare it for the day when its Messiah would appear to establish the kingdom of God among men. Israel in the old dispensation was a child, but Jehovah's son — as He said to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). And He placed him under a pedagogue to bring him to spiritual maturity with a view to that day when he might take part in the kingdom of his father. That pedagogue was his law — which, as a moral code and standard of judgment obtains for every man in every age; but for Israel it served in a very special way. Its principles were set forth in a way that had to be learned, and

applied in a very direct way to every aspect of Israel's life, ceremonially, civilly, socially, personally, and, above all, spiritually. These were God's people, and they differed "nothing from a servant," being subjected to the law's instruction and discipline in everything that was done — and all with a view to one thing, "that we might be justified by faith" and "receive the adoption of sons."

That brings us to our final, basic question: of what does the covenant consist? Is it the relationship between the son and the pedagogue, or that between the son and the father who engaged the pedagogue to bring him to maturity of life, and continues with him once that point has come? Or, to put it differently, is the covenant to be found in the instruction of the law with its promises and warnings, or is it that experience of justification that comes when faith is consciously realized in life? Is it life as a slave under the law, or is it coming to the "adoption of sons" in the presence of the Father, making this son the heir with Him forevermore? It is this question that underlay the Schilder/Hoeksema controversy, and made it so critical for all concerned. □

**Day of Shadows**

**Homer Hoeksema**

## **The Prediluvian Period (7)**

### **Chapter V**

# **Enoch, Who Walked With God (1)**

#### **Introductory Remarks**

**T**he Word of God does not furnish us with any kind of detailed account of the history of the line of Seth, the line of the people of God. In the rather re-

markable fifth chapter of Genesis we find, apart from the biblical account of the beginning of the covenant line and the account of the consummation of the history of that line (chapters 4, 6, 7), the record of that line. But there is very little

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detail furnished us. We learn that there was, indeed, a *line*. We learn that this line of Seth represents the generations of Adam: *the* race is represented not by the mighty and rich and famous line of Cain-Lamech, the ungodly, but by the line of Seth. We learn, too, that already before the Flood God gathered His church in the line of generations — the successive sons in the generations of Adam representing the seed of the woman in that age — although also then it was true that not all were true “Sethites” who were of the line of Seth according to the flesh. But as far as details are concerned, we are not told as much about the generations of Seth as we are about the generations of Cain-Lamech.

There are only two individuals in those generations of Seth who are singled out for special mention. One is, of course, Noah, around whom the history of the consummation of the prediluvian age revolves. The other is Enoch, whose history is very briefly described in the Scriptures. The latter was apparently the outstanding representative of the descendants of Seth. He was not fundamentally different from his predecessors or his descendants; but he was more eminent than all until Noah. In the biblical picture of Enoch, therefore, we are given, as it were, a snapshot, or even a representative moving picture, of the generations of the sons of God.

The Bible does not tell us much about the details of Enoch’s history, though what it does tell us is telling. In Genesis 5:21-24 we find this record: “And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

In addition to this, we find the data of the New Testament. In He-

brews 11:5, 6 Enoch is enrolled among the so-called heroes of faith: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” And in Jude 14, 15, we find this: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

From this rather scant data we learn that Enoch was *famous*. But he was famous in an altogether different sense than the renowned family of Lamech, his contemporary. He was famous for the fact that he “walked with God,” famous for his faith, famous for the fact that God translated him. He was famous as an example of the power of God’s grace and the power of the promise. In other words, God revealed through Enoch that He was indeed realizing His promise of putting enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent and His promise of giving the victory to the seed of the woman. In this sense, we may also consider Enoch and his history to be representative, to be a sampling, of the history of the generations of Seth.

### **Enoch’s Walk with God**

While the book of Hebrews describes Enoch as having the testimony that he pleased God, Genesis specifies this by describing Enoch as a man who “walked with God.” This is noteworthy. Of the other representatives of Seth’s line we are merely told that they

“lived” a certain number of years; of Enoch we are told specifically that he “walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years.” This is emphasized by its repetition in verse 24: “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” This, therefore, was the outstanding trait of Enoch. What does it mean?

In general, this refers to the covenant relation. There are different expressions in the Scriptures to indicate the intimate relation of the covenant between God and His people. The Bible describes God as dwelling with His people (the idea of communion, fellowship). It speaks of God as speaking with His people, as friend with friend. So here, walking with God expresses the covenant relation from a certain point of view. This point of view is that of Enoch’s life in the midst of the world, as the term “walk” indicates.

The covenant implies, in the first place, that God is our God and gives us all the blessings of His grace. Enoch’s inner life was filled with God. His heart was a sanctuary of God: God dwelled there. His thoughts were of God. To know God, to know His name, His precepts, His salvation — that was the important thing for Enoch; and God revealed Himself to Enoch. His desires were toward God. To be near God, to obey Him, to trust Him, to love Him, to experience His favor and goodness — that was the all-important aspect of Enoch’s whole existence; and God made Enoch to taste His communion.

In the second place, that covenant relation implies that through these blessings of His grace we are in principle enabled to love God and to be His people in the world, manifesting this in our lives in the keeping of His commandments, the doing of His will. This latter idea has the emphasis in the expression “walking with God.” To walk, in the Scriptures, denotes one’s life and the direction of that life from a spiritual point of view. To walk

with God is to have our life controlled by the principle of God's grace. It is to have the direction of our life in harmony with God's will. It is to be God's party in the world.

In God's covenant communion, Enoch's walking with God must not be construed as some kind of mystical contemplation of God and of the delights of God's fellowship. No, our walk refers to our entire life's manifestation. That Enoch "walked" implies that he lived the full-orbed life of this present earthly existence. But that Enoch walked *with* God means that Enoch was *with* God in all his life, in all his speech and activity in the midst of the world. The knowledge and love of God filled his inner life; from within, that knowledge and love of God controlled all his outward life.

In the third place, Enoch's walk with God was a walk in the midst of a wicked world, and thus a walk *against* the world. Enoch walked with God *antithetically*. This may be learned, first of all, from a study of Enoch's place in history. He was the seventh from Adam. He lived in the second half of the

prediluvian period, when the world was fast becoming more wicked and when the children of God, through a process of amalgamation and through persecution, were becoming fewer in number and more despised. As we have seen, by a comparison of the genealogies of Cain and of Seth, it appears that Enoch was a contemporary of Lamech the Terrible and his sons. This may also be learned from Jude 14, 15, quoted earlier. From this it is clear that the world in the midst of which Enoch lived was a thoroughly wicked world. This is emphatically expressed in the verses from Jude, which speak of the ungodly, of their ungodly deeds which they ungodly committed, and of their hard speeches against God. It was a world which rebelled openly against God and against His people. It is not easy to walk with God in such a world.

In that world Enoch walked in such a way that he condemned the world. This implies, of course, that Enoch was not an isolationist in the physical, local sense of the word. He did not physically retreat from the world, but he came into contact with that world. When he did

so, he testified against it, condemned it. Moreover, this testimony of Enoch was not only a testimony of his own walk in godliness. It was also a spoken testimony. Enoch prophesied! The message of his prophecy is recorded for us in Jude. It is a sharply condemnatory prophecy. This tells us volumes about Enoch's walk. When he walked with God, he at the same time condemned the world which walked without God and against God. He did so in no uncertain terms. Enoch was manifestly of the party of the living God in the midst of the world.

Thus Enoch pleased God, and he had the testimony that he did so. This implies also that it was his desire and striving to please God. The love of God was in him, so that the one desire of his heart and the goal of his existence was to be pleasing in God's sight. This implies, too, that Enoch manifested this in his life by himself keeping God's precepts and by witnessing of God against an ungodly world. And of this he had divine testimony, something which most likely means that God spoke to and with Enoch by direct revelation. □

## Report of Classis West

March 1-3, 2000  
at Bethel PRC, Roselle, Illinois

The March meeting of Classis West was held at Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois from March 1 through March 3.

Rev. Allen Brummel chaired the meeting of Classis.

Classis West had a full and weighty agenda, most of which was treated in closed session. The classis gave careful consideration to discipline matters and a protest against a previous decision of classis in a discipline matter. In

all cases, previous decisions were upheld. There were also other appeals treated, all dealing with confidential matters.

Classis can report that it joyfully accepted for our Churches the confession made to Loveland PRC's consistory from Rev. Jon Smith for sins committed several years ago when he left his charge in Trinity PRC, Houston, a congregation since disbanded. "Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). It will be understood, and is the declaration of classis, that this joyful acceptance of Rev. Smith's confession of sin does not speak to any rein-

statement into the ministry of our churches. That is an issue that would have to be treated separately by the classis and synod, if the occasion should present itself.

Among other business conducted, classis approved subsidy requests from four congregations and forwarded them to Synod. Classical appointments were granted to Hull PRC as follows: Pastors Eriks (April 9 and 16), Joostens (May 7 and 14), Kleyn (June 4 and 11), De Vries (July 9 and 16), Bekkering (August 13 and 20), and R. Miersma (September 3 and 10).

Annual elections were also held. Elected as delegates to synod



1999 were **Ministers:** *Primi:* A. Brummel, A. den Hartog, C. Haak, S. Key, R. Smit; *Secundi:* W. Bekkering, M. De Vries, S. Houck, D. Kleyn, R. Miersma. **Elders:** *Primi:* Jim Andringa (Hull), Robert Brands (Loveland), Garry Eriks (Peace), Jack Regnerus (Randolph), Bert Worries (South Holland); *Secundi:* Al Brummel (Edgerton), Gary Buteyn (Randolph), Gys Van

Baren (South Holland), and Richard Poortinga (Peace).

Among other elections: Rev. S. Houck was re-elected to a three-year term as a Synodical Deputy from Classis West. Classis also elected four ministers to serve as church visitors, and to divide the work among themselves. Revs. Bekkering, den Hartog, Haak, and

R. Miersma were elected as church visitors, with Revs. De Vries and Key as alternates.

Classis West accepted the invitation of Randolph PRC to host the next meeting of classis on September 6, 2000. The March 2001 meeting is scheduled to be hosted by Doon PRC.

Rev. Steven Key,  
Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

From a recent bulletin of the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN, we learn that their congregation is busy with a couple of different evangelism opportunities. First, Rev. Nathan Brummel and his wife, Paula, invited any adults and or children to visit with them at the Dyer Nursing Home. Apparently these visits over the next several months will include not only a time to meet the residents of the Home, but also a 45-minute Bible study as well. On that same bulletin it was asked if there were any men of the congregation who were interested in helping lead a Bible study in a nearby prison.

On February 10, 17, and 24, the Evangelism Society of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored a conference for their community on the important subject of "Strengthening Your Marriage." Topics for the three nights were "The Idea of Marriages' Unity," "Communicating Unity: Marriage Fellowship in Soul and Body," and "Working Through Differences and Conflicts." The speakers were Rev. Ron Van Overloop, Georgetown's pastor, and Rev. Barry Gritters, pastor of

their neighboring Hudsonville, MI PRC. Each subject was treated in a classroom-like setting with opportunity given at the end of the discussion for questions from the audience. Fortunately for those of us unable to attend this worthwhile conference, tapes and a video are available. If you are interested, one set of tapes will cost you just \$4.00, and videos are \$5.00. Make your check payable to the Georgetown PRC Evangelism Society and mail your request to Mr. Randy Kamminga, at 8541 40th Ave, Jenison, MI 49428, or if you have questions, give him a call at 616-669-0204. These tapes and video would be a nice addition to any church library and for pastors to give to young couples looking forward to marriage.

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC recently informed their congregation of a unique request they had received from the Reformed Churches in Romania. These churches desire to have copies of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge* (a 3-volume set of books), an excellent exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, for their seminary students. The goal is to make these books the principal resource for the students' catechism sermons. The seminary in Koleszvar/Cluj, Romania has 250 students. Kelemen Attala, Professor of Practical Theology and Homiletics in the Reformed Theological College, has read

Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge* and is working on his doctorate in the Netherlands. His thesis is that when Reformed churches neglect the Heidelberg Catechism in their preaching, the spiritual life declines. He believes this book would help the students in preparing their catechism sermons.

In addition to sending copies of the *Triple Knowledge*, South Holland is also interested in sending Hoeksema's *Behold He Cometh*. And they would like to send some good grade school and high school English books. Many of the secondary students want to improve their English by reading English books.

South Holland's Evangelism Committee, rather than giving assistance directly from their funds, which were donated primarily for pamphlets and advertising, asked their congregation to respond to this call for help for the ministry of the gospel in the same manner as the Macedonian churches in the time of the apostle Paul also assisted the church in Jerusalem with their gifts in the love of Christ. South Holland believes that they have an excellent opportunity here to minister not only to a specific current need, but also one that will have an enduring effect in Europe upon the generations following, as these churches are taught by their leaders and ministers the sound Reformed faith according to the Word of God.

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

### School Activities

From a January bulletin of our sister church, the First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, we found that their session has appointed a committee of five members to make some initial investigation into the possibility of starting a Christian kindergarten sponsored by parents through an organized school society.

The PR School Society of Edmonton, Alberta, CN sponsored a lecture in their church on February 23. Rev. Ron Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, spoke on the topic,

"The Aim of Christian Education."

### Congregational Activities

The Men's and Ladies' Societies of the First PRC in Holland, MI invited all the members of their congregation to sit in on a special presentation by Rev. B. Woudenberg, one of our churches' emeriti ministers, on February 29. He gave a talk on the controversy over the doctrine of the covenant that came to a head in 1953 in our churches.

We are also happy to report that the Doon, IA PRC was able to begin worshipping in their newly re-

modeled church auditorium on February 27 after nearly a two-month absence.

### Minister Activities

Rev. Charles Terpstra declined the call he had received to serve as the next pastor of the Hull, IA PRC.

### *Food For Thought*

"Many things in the Bible I cannot understand; many things in the Bible I only think I understand; but there are many things in the Bible I cannot misunderstand."

— Anonymous □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 10, D.V., our beloved parents and grandparents,

**GERRIT and GERTRUDE LUBBERS,** will celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We thank God for the many years He has given them to one another and to us and for the godly instruction and example they have been. We pray that God will bless them in the remainder of their time here upon earth.

"Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways" (Psalm 128:1).

- \* Bernie and Ruth Lubbers
- \* Jay and Donna Lubbers
- \* Carolyn Schipper
- \* Glenn Lubbers
- \* Ted and Gloria Miedema
- \* Dave and Marcia Doezeema
- 26 grand children
- 67 great grandchildren
- 2 great, great grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 13, our parents,  
**MR. and MRS. GIL SCHIMMEL,** will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We thank God for the many years He has given them to us and to each other, and for the years of covenant instruction, love, and care they have given us. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

- \* Jim and Carol Schimmel
- \* Dan and Judy Schimmel
- \* Hank and Deb VanderWaal
- \* Ruth Schimmel
- \* Dave and Shelly Schimmel
- \* Tim and Yvonne Schimmel
- \* Tom and Beth Schimmel
- 29 grandchildren
- 2 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 2000 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 10, 2000.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

### TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School is seeking applications for the position of choir director for the 2000-01 school year. Qualifications to be considered are teaching degree, ability, and interest in the program. Interested parties should contact Mr. Rick Noorman at (616) 453-5048 or Mr. Ed Ophoff at (616) 247-8382.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PRC expresses its sympathy to Mae Koerner in the loss of her husband,

### MARVIN KOERNER,

who died on March 2, 2000. We testify with Paul in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

May the God of all comfort strengthen the hearts of you and your family at this time of mourning.

Marvin Kamps, President  
Natalie Jefferson, Secretary