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Mary's Firstborn Son

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

Luke 2:7

A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

This taxation brought Joseph to the little town of Bethlehem. It was the custom among the Jews for taxes to be paid in the city from which one's family originated. And Joseph was from the house of David. So to Bethlehem he went to perform his civic duty.

Mary accompanied him. Mary was the espoused wife of Joseph. According to the word of the angel, she had conceived as a virgin. The Old Testament prophets had spoken of this, and one of the prophets had gone so far as to indicate that her babe would be born in Bethlehem. And, because of the

decree of Caesar Augustus, Jesus was. Mary, being Joseph's espoused wife, accompanied him to Bethlehem.

While in Bethlehem Mary brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.

We know what all this means. Jesus was Mary's firstborn son. When He was born, she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger.

But what is the significance of these things? Why are these facts mentioned? Obviously they are important or God would not have led the holy writer to make mention of them.

To understand the import of these facts is to grasp the purpose of Jesus' birth and the gospel of salvation.



A miraculous birth!

On the one hand, there was something very natural about Jesus' birth. Mary brought forth Jesus as her own son. With great pain and travail she gave birth to Him in Bethlehem's stable. Physically He was her flesh and blood,

as is any child the flesh and blood of his parents. Jesus also was Mary's image. The resemblance between Jesus and His mother Mary was probably very striking.

On the other hand, there was something unique and miraculous about Jesus' birth. We are reminded of this by mention of Jesus' being Mary's firstborn son.

Some think that Jesus is called Mary's firstborn to emphasize that other siblings would follow. Contrary to the claim of some, Mary did have more children. We know that Jesus' siblings did not believe on Him until after His exaltation. Two of them, James and Jude, were even inspired to write Holy Scripture. However, this is not the significance of mentioning Jesus as Mary's firstborn. The firstborn can be an only child. Besides this, there is no significance for this passage in the fact that Jesus had brothers and sister.

That Jesus was Mary's firstborn is mentioned here to emphasize the special character of Jesus' birth. Mary was a virgin. The angel Gabriel, when he appeared to Mary, was very emphatic. She would conceive this child miraculously, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and thus

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would give birth to her child as a virgin. As a reminder of this the Scriptures here point out that Jesus was Mary's firstborn son. Were Jesus not Mary's firstborn, she would not have brought Him forth as a virgin. For Mary to be the virgin in whom the Holy Spirit had performed this unique miracle, Jesus must be her firstborn son.

And through the miracle of the virgin birth a greater miracle took place, namely, the incarnation.

Jesus is not a human person. He is divine. He is the eternal Son of God, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit possesses equally and eternally the one divine nature. Through the virgin birth the Son of God took upon Himself our flesh, the flesh and blood of Mary, so that He is truly the Son of God, but truly also the son of Mary. Jesus is God come in the flesh, Immanuel.

What an astounding miracle!

Of all this we are reminded by the mention of Jesus' being Mary's firstborn son.



A glorious position!

Of significance is the fact that Jesus is not only Mary's firstborn but also God's firstborn. Hebrews 1:6 identifies Jesus as God's first begotten. Scripture uses similar terms elsewhere. Jesus is the firstborn of every creature (Col. 1:15); He is the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). The church of Jesus Christ is even called the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23).

That Jesus is the firstborn of God does not mean that He is the first one born in history, for Cain was. Nor does this mean that Jesus is the first one born again. Jesus never was born again, for He was sinless from His mother's womb.

Jesus is the firstborn of God in that He occupies the position of one who is firstborn.

In Bible times the firstborn son held a very special position. He was destined to be the ruler over his brothers and would receive a

double portion of his father's inheritance. This was a special blessing by reason of birth, the birth-right blessing. Think of how important this was in the history of Jacob and Esau.

In similar manner, Jesus occupies the position of the firstborn.

As the firstborn, Jesus is the firstborn of the whole creation (Col. 1:15). This means that God the Father gives to Jesus the whole creation as an inheritance. The whole creation belongs to God, who is its Creator and Sustainer. This vast creation with all its power and splendor is God's inheritance to Jesus Christ. Over that creation God gives Jesus the right of rule. Indeed, Jesus occupies the position of the firstborn of God.

Jesus is also the firstborn of the church. God has eternally chosen to Himself a church, which He has determined to save from sin and glorify in heaven. This church is an innumerable multitude — men, women, and children from every race and walk of life. God has given to Jesus the rule over this church. Better yet, God rules His church through Jesus Christ, whom He has exalted to His own right hand. But God will also bless His beloved church. He will shower her with blessings of salvation and life. He will exalt her with honor and glory. He will satisfy her with every good thing. But all these blessings come to the church only through Jesus. They are given first to Jesus Christ as an inheritance. And He shares them with the church. Jesus is the firstborn of the church, the firstborn among many brethren.

Jesus can occupy this position of the firstborn of God only because He is the firstborn son of Mary.

To receive the privilege and honor of God's firstborn required that Jesus make atonement for sin. As we have already seen, God will save a church, chosen out of all nations, chosen to eternal life. This salvation requires the payment for

sin. The sins of the church must be covered by one who will bear away all of God's punishment for her sin. The church must be presented perfectly righteous to God. God has given this responsibility to Jesus Christ, placing before Him the reward of occupying the position of firstborn.

Jesus can accomplish all this, however, only if He is Mary's firstborn son.

Jesus must have several qualifications, if He will render atonement for sin. He must be human. Only then can He bear the punishment of God's people. God will not punish another creature for man's sin. Jesus must also be perfectly righteous. Atonement requires Jesus is to walk in perfect obedience for all of God's people. This He can do only if he is Himself sinless from birth. Finally, Jesus must be divine. The work of atonement requires that Jesus bear away God's entire wrath against the sin of the church. It requires that He walk in perfect obedience for many, for as many as are ordained to eternal life. No mere creature can do this, only one who is divine.

To be all this — human, perfectly righteous, fully divine — Jesus must be conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin. Human conception could only produce another human, born in sin. Only the virgin birth can produce one who is qualified to make atonement for sin and attain the position of the firstborn of God.

Only Mary's firstborn can be God's firstborn!



A necessary humiliation!

God's firstborn Son was born in very humble circumstances. There was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. Consequently, Jesus was born in a cattle stall. A manger or feeding bunk was His bed. This was not the cozy, warm setting pictured on many Christmas cards. This was a foul, dirty

cave outside Bethlehem, used to house animals.

How fitting this was. As the firstborn of God Jesus must take upon Himself the poverty of our sin. He must carry the burden of our guilt and He must carry it all the way to the cross. All along the


way, but especially at the cross, He must bear the terrible punishment of our sin. What shame! What humiliation! Nothing is more humiliating than to bear the fury of hell for sin. Of this greater poverty into which Jesus came, the poverty and humility of Bethlehem was but a

faint picture.

Let us bow before the babe of Bethlehem.

Let us see His humiliation and shame.

He is the firstborn of God.

In Him we also become the sons of God. 

Editorial

The Coming of the Christ for War

It is common to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as the coming of the Son of God to make peace. Surely, such celebration is right. His angelic heralds went before Him announcing peace on earth (Luke 2:14). One of the earliest prophecies of His coming called Him Shiloh, the Peaceful One, who gives rest (Gen. 49:10). On taking leave of His disciples in the crucifixion and ascension, Jesus Himself left with them as His parting gift, peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

The peace of Jesus is the tranquility of soul of the guilty sinner who has been reconciled with God by the forgiveness of his sins. The peace of Jesus is the harmonious life of the church in the oneness of the faith of God by the unifying power of the Spirit. The peace of Jesus is enjoyed by a godly husband and wife in a marriage without strife and by a covenant family in a home without uproar. The peace of Jesus moves Christians to make peace among themselves and to live peaceably as much as possible with all.

One day—the Day of Christ—the peace of Jesus will reign in all the renewed creation. Nations will learn war no more; swords will be beaten into plowshares. The wolf and the lamb will feed together.

Creation will not convulse in quake and storm. In Christ Jesus, Prince of Peace, the new, elect humanity will be perfectly at peace with the God of peace. The entire, vast creation will be the peaceable kingdom of Psalm 72. Christ came for peace.

What is not so common is that we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ as His coming for war. This is strange, inexcusable, really, in light of Scripture's painting the birth of Christ in hue of bloody red.

The first promise of Christ's coming had the Seed of the woman coming to crush the head of the serpent and the serpent's seed (Gen. 3:15). This would be the bloody climax of the age-old hatred and war between the serpent and his brood, on the one hand, and the woman and her children, on the other hand. Christ would be born to kill and destroy. He would kill and destroy Satan, personal arch-enemy of God and His chosen people, and Satan's offspring, reprobate wicked men and women.

Christ came for war.

When He came, war raged. It raged because of His coming. His enemies furiously opposed Him. The notion

that everyone has a soft spot in his heart for the baby Jesus is gross heresy and arrant nonsense. The heathen raged; the people imagined a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves; the rulers took counsel together, against the Anointed of Jehovah (Psalm 2). He united everyone, to be sure—against Himself. He made peace among all peoples, all right—the peace of a common hatred of Himself.

Before He was two, the army of the world-power marched on Bethlehem to assassinate Him, with the connivance of the false church.

And although His foes are foolish to oppose Him, because the opposition is futile, they are shrewd in their recognition of Him as their one great enemy.

Christ came for war.

As the Christ of war, He was announced at His birth, and not only as the Christ of peace. Through Simeon, the Holy Spirit told Mary that her child would be "spoken against" (Luke 2:34, 35). The contradiction would be widespread and violent. Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the

people of Israel would say "no" to Him by mockery, official condem-

The notion that everyone has a soft spot in his heart for the baby Jesus is gross heresy and arrant nonsense.

nation by church and state, and nailing Him to a cross. On His part, the child is appointed by God, not only for the rising but also for the fall of many in Israel. They will stumble over Him as the great stumbling-stone in human history. Their fall is their spiritual and everlasting perdition.

Christ came for war.

By His cross, He won the war. Giving Himself over completely to the power of His enemies, to kill Him and apparently defeat Him utterly, in fact He spoiled the principalities and powers. He made a spectacle of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross (Col. 2:15). For, giving Himself over to His enemies, He gave Himself up to the righteous God, satisfying God's justice regarding His church and His creation. Christ stripped the old serpent of all right to the seed of the woman and the world, their home. Christ now has the right to elect humanity and the universe.

Christ came for the cross.

At the present time, Jesus Christ is carrying on the great war of the holy God in history. By the gospel and the sacraments, Christ defends His kingdom and its citizens against the murderous assaults and fiery darts of Satan and his hosts. Christ is also pulling down the strongholds of the kingdom of darkness; hardening and blinding reprobate sinners in their unbelief and disobedience; and rendering the world of the ungodly ripe for the final judgment.

The warfare of Christ can come, O, so painfully close to us. We confess that Christ did not come to send peace on earth, but a sword, with broken hearts and copious tears. For He wields His sharp sword within our closest family-circle, cutting through the precious ties of flesh and blood. His doctrine and life set son against father, daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. A man's foes are those of his

own household. Those who are Christ's are called to endure hatred from their nearest and dearest and to hate their own loved ones for Christ's sake (Matt. 10:34-37; Luke 14:26).

Christ came for war.

All war has an end. If the warring parties know what they are doing, if they know the fundamental law of warfare, the end is the subjugation or destruction of one of them. Christ's war, too, has an end. The end has been decreed in the counsels of Almighty God before the war began. It is assured by Christ's atoning death and bodily resurrection. The end of the war will be the total and lasting victory of Christ.

But the end of the war will be bloody. The last, decisive battle in the war will begin with the all-out attack upon Christ, as He is present on earth in those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," by the world-kingdom of Satan under the Antichrist. For the first time in the history of the present age, the instituted church will be broken worldwide. The blood of martyrs will flow in rivers. The name of blasphemy will be exalted in all the world. Christ's name will be obliterated for a short while, save in the hearts and on the lips of the few, harried saints who survive.

The last, decisive battle will conclude with the all-out and triumphant attack upon Satan and his minions by the returning Christ. In righteousness will He judge and make war. Treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, He will kill and damn

all His and His church's enemies. Their blood will be sprinkled on His garments and will stain all His raiment (Rev. 19:11-21; Is. 63:1-6).

Christ will come for war.

If in our celebration of the birth of Christ we ignore all this biblical testimony to the coming of Christ

for war, our understanding of the incarnation and virgin birth is seriously deficient, and our celebration is superficial.

If, sadly or even angrily, we react against the biblical testimony to the Christ of war as an unpleasant disturbance of our merry celebration of a sweet, tender, loving baby Jesus, whose intentions are only the best for everybody, we show that we

know neither Jesus Christ nor the peace that He brought.

The Christ of Scripture brought peace to earth on behalf of God, not regardless of God. There is peace only for those sinners who are reconciled to God by the cross, Word, and Spirit of Jesus Christ. For impenitent rebels, Christ has only the rod of iron.

The peace of Jesus Christ kisses righteousness, acknowledges the triune God as sovereign, and is established in the world only in the way of Christ's war with ungodliness and the ungodly.

He came fighting for peace.

— DJE 

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Wrapped and Laid in Poverty

"... and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger...."
Luke 2:7b

Jesus was born this way because God governed the circumstances of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. By doing so, God declares clearly that He alone saves us from our sin. Even in Jesus' birth, this message of the gospel is declared unambiguously. God meticulously, in sovereign might and wisdom, governed all the details surrounding the birth of His only begotten Son, so that no glory might be to man, but rather, as the angels declared, "Glory to God in the highest!"

As a result, when the virgin Mary and Joseph arrived, there was no room for them in the inn. By that, God made very clear that the coming of His Son into our flesh was an unmerited and undeserved wonder for our salvation. Jesus came not by the will of man, not by the desire of man, nor by the power of man. He came into our flesh by way of the wonder of sovereign grace.

In harmony with that and by God's deliberate control, the virgin Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. This, too, is an important part of God's sign in Bethlehem. In this we learn that Jesus was

wrapped and laid in poverty for us in order that we might be made rich.



That Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, or feedbox, teaches us that He was born into a lifelong poverty. His own earthly mother and Joseph were poor. They owned no mansion in Nazareth. They had no monetary power by which to buy a place to stay in the crowded Bethlehem or to have at their disposal the best nurses, doctors, or midwives of the day.

Besides that, the place in which Christ was born spoke of poverty. He was born in the unsterilized environment of a cattle stall. He was wrapped, not in a luxurious, pre-heated receiving blanket, but in strips of cloth. He was not laid in a nice, warm, comfortable, soft bed, but in the cattle's feedbox.

Further, this poverty into which he was born was evident forty days later in His life. When the virgin Mary and Joseph came with Jesus to the temple, the virgin Mary fulfilled the law of Moses. According to the law, she not only dedicated her firstborn son unto Jehovah, but also, for her purification according to Leviticus 12, made a sacrifice. Being poor, Joseph and Mary could not offer up a lamb and a pigeon. In accordance with the law's provision for the poor, they offered up two pigeons instead.

Yes, Mary had brought a lamb with her to the temple. She had in her arms the Lamb of God! How-

ever, it was not yet His hour to be offered unto the Lord as the atoning sacrifice. Instead, the pigeon took Jesus' place because He must continue in His poverty until God's time for His sacrifice.



That event already showed that Jesus' lifelong earthly poverty was a sign of the spiritual poverty into which He was wrapped and laid. Christ was wrapped and laid into the poverty of His humiliation. His incarnation and lowly birth in Bethlehem were His entrance into that state of humiliation.

This truth does not mean that receiving early life through His incarnation and birth was evil in itself. Rather, Jesus' birth was humiliation for Him because of the spiritual poverty into which He came. God wrapped Christ up in the obligations of the law of Moses, which from the very moment of His birth pronounced Him accursed. God wrapped and laid Christ in the poverty of experiencing completely the curse of God in body and soul. From His birth already, Jesus was destined to experience fully the extreme poverty of being separated from the riches of fellowship with God.

According to the flesh Jesus was born poor. In the flesh He emptied Himself of His riches. He wore His whole life rags of humiliation which covered His divine glory. From all outward appearances, Jesus, whether in the manger, or even in His later earthly life, did not appear to be the mighty God. His glory was mostly hid-

den. He became poor, clothed with those inescapable rags of the curse.

Here we behold the Wonder: the righteous Son of God, who didn't even know sin, became sin in our flesh. The ever-blessed Son of God in the flesh became accursed. The Living One must die. He enjoyed the weight of the eternal riches of God in heaven. However, in the way from the swaddling rags in a feedbox unto the chains of the curse on the cross, He must in our human nature bear the weight of God's eternal wrath.



That Jesus did for you!

Understand, He was not wrapped in poverty because of Himself. He did not deserve that poverty because of Himself. There was abundant testimony of His perfect righteousness throughout His earthly life. He was the righteous Son of man. Christ was born under the curse not because of Himself or because of anything He did.

He endured such horrible poverty because of our sins. He took upon Himself the responsibility of all our sin. With our sin upon Him, He was accursed under the law of God. In our place, Christ was wrapped with those swaddling clothes and laid in the feedbox of the curse. He did that because we could never establish peace and everlasting life with God. We who by nature wear those clothes of absolute poverty and are in the wrappings and feedbox of the curse cannot restore fellowship and peace with God.

What we could never do, Christ did for us. Willingly wearing those clothes for us, He went from the cradle to the cross, from the grotto to Golgotha, from the feedbox to the furnace of the crucifixion. This truth ought to cause us not only to weep over our sin because of which Christ had to wear those rags, but also to rejoice in our Savior who was wrapped and laid in our poverty to reconcile us unto our God.

Weep in joy for the wonder that God sent His only begotten Son into that poverty for us!!



Why all of that for *us*?

The only answer is His sovereign goodness and love.

He was wrapped in that poverty not because of you and me. He was motivated to come into those clothes and that feedbox not because of us. The reason and the cause will never be found in us, unworthy, impoverished, wretched sinners. In fact, if it were ever possible for us to influence the Son of God to come to redeem us, Christ would never have come into the swaddling clothes and the manger for us.

Only because of His sovereign love, mercy, and grace was Christ willingly wrapped and laid in poverty. That love for us is fundamentally and foremost His love for His Father. It is His unconditional and unswerving love of fellowship with His heavenly Father. Christ showed His unswerving love by always doing exactly what the Father sent Him to do.

As the Father determined, so Christ went obediently through that deep, dark, and deathly way into the flames of God's wrath. Even in the hottest moments of that death, Christ's love remained unconditional and unswerving unto the Father. Even in those inexpressible agonies, Christ loved us, whom the Father chose and gave to Him from eternity. Even in those inexpressible pains of hell as a result of the choking bands of the curse, Christ loved the Father and also loved His chosen though absolutely unworthy sinners.

Can you understand that love? We can measure neither the length, the depth, the breadth, nor the height of that unconditional, sovereign, and particular love of Christ. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us.



Our humble praise is stirred up to a greater intensity when we also consider that Christ became poor in order to make us rich towards God.

Indeed, we were the ones wretchedly poor. We have not our own riches towards God. We have only an enormous, infinite debt against the Most High Majesty of God. For that debt, we deserve the eternal debtors' prison, there to be bound in the inescapable chains of death forever. In that sign of the Savior's lowly birth, the Lord teaches us that our righteousnesses are like the rags that wrapped around the body of Jesus and like the cattle smells that hung thick around the stall that dark night. Our righteousnesses are only worthless fool's gold and filthy, putrid rags.

The evidence of that spiritual poverty cleaves to us daily like those swaddling clothes which wrapped tightly around the body of the infant Jesus. We cannot remove our old nature and its spiritual death. We cannot remove our guilt and corruption. We are absolutely poor and totally dead. We are so worthless of ourselves, we deserve to be disposed of eternally.

But Christ came into our poverty of sin and death. He became poor in the absolute poverty of the accursed cross. There God stripped Christ of all that He had. God made Christ so poor that God took from Christ even His most priceless possession: fellowship with God. Christ became so poor that He was forsaken of God in His wrath for us.



By that atoning death, Christ redeemed us from bondage to those tightly wrapped rags of sin and death. Christ broke those chains of the curse. Christ blotted out our sins and fully earned our righteousness in the sight of God. His and our poverty was finished! Thus, those clothes of His humiliation could no longer hold Him.


In His resurrection, Christ gives us the solid proof that those bands of poverty were broken. He was clothed upon in the robes of righteousness, immortality, and highest majesty!

By His work, Christ has freed us from the straightjacket of our inescapable poverty unto the liberty of His everlasting riches and immortality. Because of Christ alone, you are immeasurably rich towards

God and precious in His sight!

Unto the goal of possessing that glorious inheritance in full, the Lord leads us upon our pathway through life from the cradle to the glorious crown. Between the cradle and the crown is an often steep, dark, and lonely way. In that way we must even bear a cross. In that way, we are yet tightly wrapped in the rags of our old man of sin. Nevertheless, in that difficult way, the Lord teaches

us not only that we are by nature poor, but that Christ was wrapped and laid in poverty so that one day we will be clothed in the robes of everlasting righteousness and life, given a crown of glory, and exalted to our rightful place in the everlasting peace of our Father's mansion.

Be assured of that; and give, as the angels did, all glory to our God alone in the highest! 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Our New Testament Sacrifice

The life of the child of God can be summarized in one word, thankfulness. That is what the Christian life is all about. It is not about seeking earthly pleasures and joys. It is not about being successful and prosperous on earth. It is not about striving to keep self and others happy. It is about being thankful to God. And, yes, that means being thankful also when life is difficult. Thankful always and thankful in all things.

As believers in Christ, we certainly have much for which to be thankful. I am sure each of us, by giving some serious thought to it, could easily produce a lengthy list of such things. And really the list should be endless. But the fact is, we are not always very conscious of the many reasons we have for thankfulness. That happens especially on account of the struggles of life. We allow sorrows and dis-

appointments to hide from view the countless reasons we have for true spiritual thankfulness and joy. We would surely do well to heed the admonition to "think on these things," the things that are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8).

It is not our purpose, however, to produce such a list in this article. Instead we consider the calling itself to show our gratitude, and specifically to show this by thankful living. We take a look at this from the perspective of Romans 12:1, which states: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This is intriguing language. The apostle Paul uses the language that belongs to the Old Testament temple and the worship of God there. He mentions sacrificing. He states that we are to present to God a living and holy sacrifice. And he points out that this is the sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

Through use of such language,

the apostle places us in the middle of the Old Testament temple. He puts before our minds all the objects and activities of that temple: the priests, the altar, the offerings, and the shedding of blood. More specifically, we are reminded of the people bringing their bullocks, lambs, doves, and other offerings as sacrifices to God.

The New Testament believer, Paul says, is to do likewise. He, too, must bring a sacrifice to God.

But why is it necessary for us to bring a sacrifice? We know that Christ has fulfilled all sacrifices and all shedding of blood. Atonement for sin has been fully accomplished. So why, then, a New Testament sacrifice?

A New Testament sacrifice is necessary, not as that which points to Christ's sacrifice, but as the expression of thanks for that sacrifice of Christ. This is the kind of sacrifice Paul has in mind. Thank offerings were made in the Old Testament. They are to be made also in the New Testament.

One crucial thing, however, has changed between the Old and New Testament thank offerings. Where-

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as those brought in the Old Testament were often bloody, that is no longer and must no longer be so. The blood for the sins of God's people has been shed once and for all by Christ. The sacrifice we bring, therefore, is a "living sacrifice."

The living sacrifice of the New Testament believer is his own body. This is the thank offering that we must continually present to God.

In speaking of this sacrifice, the apostle Paul has in mind that the bodies we sacrifice are literally our physical bodies. The idea is that thankful children of God sacrifice to Him every part of their physical bodies. The sacrifice is to consist of eyes, feet, hands, mouth, tongue, fingers, and ears. A strange sacrifice? It may seem so. But this is God's requirement.

How is this admonition to be understood?

One must realize, first of all, that it is through our bodies that we function in this world. We use our bodies to go places, to see and observe things, to hear sounds, to run and to walk, to talk and to discuss. Through our bodies, and by means of every physical part of them, we interact with the world in which we live. Our bodies are the means by which we live and move and express ourselves in this world.

As we do this, we are tempted to use our bodies for sin. We are tempted to sin with our hands through the things we touch, the gestures we make, or the buttons we press on the remote control. We are tempted to sin with our eyes through adulterous looks at other women or men, through what we watch on television, or through taking a quick glance at certain graphic evils on the internet (just to find out, we say, what they are all about). We are tempted to sin with our ears through the music we listen to, or the slander, lies, and filthy jokes we are willing to hear. We are tempted to sin with our

tongues in the way we speak about or to others, or in use of foul language. We are tempted to sin with our feet by going places we should not go.

The admonition, however, points us to the fact that each and every member of the body should be sacrificed to God. Our bodies are to be used only for that which is right and pleasing to Him. Feet should be used to go only where God would want us to go and to be. Hands should be used to do only the things God wants us to do with them. Tongues should be used to say only what God allows. Eyes should be used to see only those things which are proper and good. Ears should be used to listen only to what is pleasing to the ears of God Himself. We are to flee the temptations to abuse our bodies. We are always to use our members in the consciousness of and for God.

God requires this of us because He, in the work of salvation, saves also our bodies. Christ died to save, not just our souls, but also our bodies. For that reason our bodies are precious to God. This is evident from the high view that the Scriptures take of our physical bodies. God considers them very important. He Himself takes care of them, providing us daily the physical food and drink we need in order to continue to live. He even watches over our bodies after they die and are lying in the grave. And one day He will raise our bodies to glory, reunite them with our souls, and make them like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

Our attitude toward our bodies must reflect God's. We may not despise or abuse them. We may not think it does not matter what we do with them. God takes a high view of them. So ought we.

The Scriptures also teach us that God, in saving us, makes our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives within the physical bodies of those He has regenerated. "What? Know ye not

that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19, 20).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, our bodies are made holy. They are to be presented, therefore, as a holy sacrifice to God. Every part and member is to be separated from sin and consecrated to God. Eyes, ears, hands, feet, and mouth are to be devoted to our Maker and Savior.

All of this is to be done in thanks to God for His grace in saving us. Out of thanks, we live a new, godly life. That kind of life is, in terms of the Old Testament sacrifices, a sacrifice that is a sweet-smelling savor to God. It alone is pleasing and acceptable to Him. In all our eating and drinking, working and playing, speaking and doing, we are to live in thanks to God. Then we are living, as we should, to God's glory.

This is referred to in Romans 12:1 as our "reasonable service." It might seem at first that this means that a life of thanks makes "good sense" in light of all that God has done for us and given to us. It is only "reasonable," we would say, for God to expect this of us, and for us to do this.

However, this is not the idea of the text. "Reasonable service" refers to the fact that the sacrifice of our bodies is to be more than just an outward sacrifice, more than simply external acts of thanksgiving. By itself, the admonition to present our bodies as sacrifices places emphasis on an external and visible activity. But God is not satisfied with mere externalism. This was true of the Old Testament sacrifices. God abhorred them when they were just outward. The same is true of this New Testament sacrifice. The word "reasonable" means that our reason, our minds, our will must be involved. Our outward acts of thanks must arise

from gratitude in our hearts for His gracious salvation of our souls and our bodies.

This is difficult. But God is merciful.

God's mercy makes it possible for us to present our bodies as a sacrifice to God. God's mercy is His pity and compassion toward us. But, more than that, God in His mercy also rescues us from our misery and from our inability to want to do and actually to do His will. He gives us a new mind. He

makes us new creatures. He puts within us a new life. And He uses the admonitions of Scripture, as applied to us by His Spirit, to stir up that new life into action. We hear His demand and we respond, by His grace, "Lord, I desire and will strive to do just this, to present my body as a living sacrifice of thanksgiving that is pleasing to Thee!"

God's mercy is also an incentive. The text speaks not of "mercy" (singular), but of "mer-

cies" (plural). God's mercy is great — great in giving Christ to be our Savior, great in delivering us from sin, great in forgiving our evils, great in giving us every good and perfect gift. Thinking on that mercy of God, we cannot but be thankful. It becomes our earnest and willing desire to show our thanks by sacrificing our bodies to Him.

Let us daily bring to God our New Testament sacrifice of thanks.



Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

The Qualifications of Deacons (6) Their Family Situation

It is not enough that the deacon be a Spirit-filled believer who manifests God's grace in how he lives (being grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, I Timothy 3:8). These requirements are important, of course. If a man does not measure up to this standard, he may not be a deacon in God's church. But the standard requires still more.

Also his *wife* must be godly!

This requirement is set forth in I Timothy 3:11-12: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."

Three questions arise as we study these verses which speak to the deacons' family situation. First, *must* deacons be married and have children? Second, what kind of

wives must they have? Third, what is required of them regarding how they rule in their homes?



What is the real point of the requirement that deacons "be the husbands of one wife"? May unmarried men serve in this office? May a deacon remarry, should his wife die?

The emphasis of this requirement falls on the word "one." That is the point which the Spirit is impressing upon the church: "Let the deacons be the husbands of *one* wife." That this word receives the emphasis is clear from the word order of the sentence in the Greek original: "Let the deacons be of one wife the husband." "One" comes first. The emphasis is not primarily on whether or not the deacon is married, but on the number of wives he has. If the emphasis were on whether or not he was married, the word "one" would not be necessary. "Let the deacons be the husbands of a wife," or more simply, "Let the deacons be married,"

would be sufficient. But the Holy Spirit added the word "one," and put it in an emphatic place in the sentence.

Why is this requirement necessary?

Historically, it is very possible that this requirement was necessary because of polygamy in the early church. And we must remember that polygamy is not a thing of the past in that which calls itself the church of Jesus Christ! The remarriage of divorced people while their ex-spouse, and only lawful spouse in God's sight, is alive is a modern form of polygamy. No divorced, remarried man whose spouse still lives may serve in the office of deacon. In fact, he ought not be a member of the church at all.

Furthermore, this qualification is necessary because it underscores a positive principle about Christian marriages in general, and the marriage of a deacon in particular: our marriages must be characterized by stability and fidelity. In requiring the deacons to be the husbands

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of one wife, God does not merely require the obvious, that there be a legal relationship of marriage between a deacon and his wife. Rather, God emphasizes that the deacon, the husband, must be a one woman man, faithful to his wife in every way. He must be a godly husband, loving his wife with the unselfish and steadfast love Christ has for His church.

Others who have studied this passage have come to the same conclusion, that the emphasis falls on the love and devotion of a deacon to his wife. James Barnett writes: "... the best understanding of this passage is that the requirement is one of fidelity to one's wife.... The bishop or deacon is to have a stable and harmonious marriage, which will give assurance that he will perform the pastoral service of this office with dignity and efficiency."¹ And Rev. George Lübbers, explaining the same phrase as applied to elders (I Tim. 3:2), writes: "The emphasis falls on the *quality* of the man and not so much on the *number* of wives he has. He must be strictly a man loyal to one wife; he must be no philanderer. In this respect he must be of unquestionable integrity. It is not sufficient that he *has* but one wife; he must be such that no evil mention is made of him, and men must not whisper about him."²

Understanding the proper emphasis of the text, we can make several related observations.

First, the Holy Spirit does not mean to forbid an unmarried man from holding the office. The point of the text is not to require him to be married, but to require him to be a certain kind of man when he is married. Perhaps it is *preferable* that deacons be married; surely it is preferable that *most* of the deacons in a congregation be married. Marriage gives a man specific opportunities to grow in patience, compassion, and understanding of human nature (especially one's own; I have learned some things in the past four years!). It is very

possible that the married deacon who must visit a family requesting benevolence would have a better understanding of what a family needs to live on, and would better be able to see what financial sacrifices this particular family in need is already making, than the unmarried deacon. However, the Spirit does not require *every* deacon to be married. Compassion, patience, and insight are gifts God gives also to some single men in His church.

Second, what has just been said applies also to those deacons who are married, but to whom God has not given children. The text does refer to the children of the deacons: "ruling their children and their own houses well." But once more, this does not mean that a man who has no children is not qualified for the office. Rather, it means that if a man has children, and does not rule them well, he is not qualified for the office. Just as the emphasis of the phrase "husbands of one wife" falls on the *quality* of his marriage, so the emphasis here falls on the *quality* of his relationship to his children, not on whether or not he has children. To this we will return presently.

Thirdly, the text does not forbid a deacon whose wife has died to remarry. One could cry when he hears that not only have churches placed this restriction on deacons, but even Bible versions so translate the text. The New Revised Standard Version, for example, wrongly translates the text: "married only once." Scripture nowhere forbids the remarriage of any person in the church whose spouse has died. In fact, it explicitly gives freedom to do so: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39).

And finally, though we have noticed that the text does not require a deacon to be married, it is also sad that some churches have forbidden deacons to be married

even once, or to marry once they were in office. Rome, we know, makes such restrictions. And these restrictions have their root in the decisions of councils of the early church. The Council of Elvira (about 305, near Granada, Spain) ordered: "Bishops, presbyters and deacons — indeed, all clerics who have their place in the ministry [of the altar] — shall abstain from their wives and shall not beget children — this is a total prohibition: whoever does so, let him forfeit his rank among the clergy."³ Even though I Timothy 3:11-12, properly understood, does not *require* deacons to be married, it surely *permits* them to be, and even *assumes* they will be. To prohibit officebearers from being married is to lay upon them a burden which Christ would not do. Such rules of prohibition are rules of men, not of God, and indicate that such churches do not make the Word of God their authority for church government.



The wives of married deacons must be of a certain kind.⁴

Verse 11 tells us what kind. First, she must be grave. This word is also used with reference to the deacon in verse 8, so we explained it in our last article. She must be serious minded and dignified; her conduct and attitudes must bring upon her the respect of others.

1. Barnett, James Monroe. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995. Page 39.

2. *The Standard Bearer*, vol. 38, page 132.

3. Quoted by Jeannine E. Olson, *One Ministry, Many Roles: Deacons and Diaconesses Through the Centuries* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), page 67.

4. In a previous article we have already defended the fact that the word "wives" in I Timothy 3:11 means exactly that — wives. This is not a qualification for women deacons, but for the wives of deacons.

Second, she must not be a slanderer. The word is literally, "diabolical" — a word often used to refer to Satan and his deceptive methods. It refers to all sins of the tongue, all sins against the ninth commandment. Let not the wives of deacons be ones who speak evil of others, accuse falsely, rashly, or unheard, gossip, bare tales, and spread rumors. Positively, let them speak the truth always in love, and with a view to edification. If they cannot speak the truth in love, let them be silent.

Thirdly, she must be sober, that is, temperate. With regard to wine not only, but all earthly goods and pleasures, she must be self-controlled, not given to excess. Spiritual pleasures and desires must fill her soul, and spiritual activities must take up her time.

Finally, she must be faithful in all things. She must be a trustworthy person, a responsible person, one who is herself devoted to the cause of God's kingdom and to His service.

Why does God make these requirements of a deacon's wife? Why, in light of the fact that she holds no office in the church? And why does the chapter give no such requirements of the elder's wife?

Elders' wives ought also to be godly women. For an elder, deacon, or pastor to have such a wife will be one evidence of his own godliness. He looked for the right kind of wife! His concern was to marry in the Lord! The godliness of his wife is also evidence that her husband works to build up fellow believers in faith and godliness, beginning in his own home with his own wife.

But there is a more fundamental reason why deacons' wives must be such women, and why no such requirement is explicitly made of elders' wives. The deacons' work and authority extends further than the gathering and distributing of alms; it also includes the practical manifestation of mercy toward the sick, elderly, and others

in special need. Some of the needy could be elderly or invalid women who need help with their personal care. The work of caring for such women is properly the work of the deacons, for it is the work of mercy. But it would be most inappropriate for a man to be helping an invalid woman. In such a case, the deacons' wives may properly help the deacons. So the deacons' wives must meet certain requirements.

The case is different with elders, whose work is to teach and rule. No elder's wife may help him do this work. God forbids women to teach or rule in the church. And no elder may ask his wife to make a discipline call for him — even if it is to a woman! So these requirements are not given of the wives of elders.

Perhaps the deacons will enlist the help of others in the congregation to attend to the bodily needs of the sick and shut-ins — whether that be arranging transportation to the doctor's office, getting groceries, etc. Then the principle of verse 11 applies to these helpers as well — let them be exemplary in their godliness!

Some day, the Lord willing, after we have dealt with other aspects of the office and work of the deacons, we will return to examine in more detail this idea of deacons' helpers, or "deaconesses" in a proper sense.



Lastly, the deacons must rule their children and their own houses well.

The reason for this qualification is given already in verse 5, with reference to elders: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" By how he rules his house, the congregation will have evidence that the man is *able* to work in the church. Even though the deacon does not hold a ruling office, the fact is that he holds a position of authority. How does he use and handle authority?

His own family life will give an answer to the question.

What constitutes ruling well?

The answer fundamentally is that he instructs, chastises, and governs his home as its head. Furthermore, he does so with gravity (v. 4), that is, with dignity, in a self-controlled manner, and in such a way as to earn respect of his children and others.

Notice that the requirement in verse 12 is made of deacons: "Let the deacons be...." In verse 11, requirements were made of the deacons' wives. Now, although verse 12 refers to the children of the deacons, it does not make requirements of those children, but of the deacon himself. On him falls all the emphasis of the text!

This point is noteworthy, especially when a man being considered for the office has an unruly, stubborn child. Does such a child render the man unfit for office? Perhaps, but not necessarily. The line of election and reprobation cuts through the line of the covenant, and also through the families of officebearers in the church. The fact that a man has a child who lives a wicked life does not render him unfit for office. But a question must be asked: does the father bear some blame for how his child acts? Can it be demonstrated that this father has not instructed and disciplined his child? If so, the man is unfit for office. But if the child rebels in spite of instruction and chastisement from the father, the man may yet be fit for office.

Under this qualification of ruling well falls not only the matter of teaching and disciplining one's children, but also that of a man's overall relationship to his children. Is he truly a father? Do his children know his love? Do they know who their father is, or is he gone from the home so often that they think of him only as the man who boards with them? Is his rule of them, which we have noticed must be just, also loving — or is he over-

bearing in administering justice? And does he do it only when frustrated because the kids are clamoring for his attention and he is too busy doing his own thing to pay them the attention that they not only want, but need, and have a right to as his children? How one treats his children is a good indicator of how he will treat the people of the church of God.


Now we see the benefits of having married deacons. By how they rule their home, we can see how they will use authority in the

church. What if a deacon is not married, or has no children? We have argued already that this does not disqualify him for office. But how will we know that he can use authority well, and rule well in the church? In such an instance, we must look to the man's rule over his own body and spirit. Does he have himself under control? Does he handle well the responsibilities and authority which he has in other areas of life? The man who has all the other qualifications for the office, and whose godliness brings him to the attention of the council

when it nominates, will likely be able to work well in the church, even though he has no wife and/or children. Such a man will have to work closely with and be ready to hear the advice of fellow deacons.



Deacons, are you qualified? Do you pray for these graces?

People of the congregation, ever hold your deacons before God in prayer, that they might be such men! 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ What about the KJV?

The Protestant Reformed people make use of the King James Version of the Bible. It is used not only in the church services, but also in societies, in catechism classes, and also in Protestant Reformed Christian schools. The obvious value of this is that all learn and memorize from one single translation. But we have other reasons for using this version too.

Although some Protestant Reformed members have one or more of the other translations available within their homes, and compare those translations with the KJV, the prevailing view is that the KJV is the translation of choice. Though the KJV is not a perfect translation, it has been recognized in our churches as that which is the most accurate, though perhaps somewhat dated, translation. Several pamphlets produced by Protestant Reformed ministers accurately summarize the position for the use of the KJV. (Write for free copies of these pamphlets.)

Some within our churches and most churches of other Reformed

denominations prefer the NIV (New International Version). It seems as though most Protestant Reformed people are a bit behind the times. They seem unconcerned that archaic words and ancient figures and stories of the KJV are apparently unintelligible to the average individual who reads.

It was, therefore, with great interest that I read an article in *Christianity Today*, October 22, 2001, titled: "We really do need another Bible translation," written by Raymond C. VanLeeuwen, professor of New Testament at Eastern College in St. Davids, PA. It is an article worth reading in its entirety. And it has some good things to say about the KJV—as well as some criticism of the modern English translations.

The editor of *Christianity Today*, David Neff, makes these interesting comments about the KJV by way of introducing VanLeeuwen's article: "If you look at who cherishes the King James Version (which is Anglo-Saxon at heart), I suspect you will find proportionally more bus drivers (socioeconomically speaking) than professors. They think the Bible is worth the work of careful reading, and they lack the educated elite's pen-

chant for fastidious vocabulary. The ESV (English Standard Version, a revision of the RSV and recently published—GVB), with its straightforward, businesslike English, should find a wide readership, from the seminary-trained to Joe Lunchbox."

VanLeeuwen presents first the problems associated with recent translations, and with translations in general:

But translation is also a problem. Every translation imperfectly represents the original, because languages and cultures differ in ways that translation by itself cannot overcome. Translations interpose a fallible human interpretation between us and the infallible Word. These basic problems affect all translations. But the increase in Bible translations during the last 60 years has created new problems for the church.

Newer translations—NLT, New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised English Bible (REB, a revision of the New English Bible), and Today's English Version (TEV, also called The Good News Bible), among others—are all influenced by a theory called dynamic or "functional equivalence" (FE) translation. Such translations serve their intended purposes and

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audiences well. More important, they have led many to Christ. But I and a growing number of linguist-translators believe FE theory is inadequate as the only model for translation. (Translations themselves are often better and sometimes worse than their theories.) Linguists argue that the church needs not one but several *types* of translation, each with its own use. That's why I'm advocating another modern translation, one that works from a different theory than FE.

...FE theory is closely identified with an evangelical who, over the last half century, has done more to foster Bible translation around the world than anyone else. His name is Eugene Nida, and every translator today has been affected by his work. Even secular translators pay homage to Nida. His theory and practice of translation was first called "dynamic equivalence" translation and, later, "functional equivalence" translation. If you read a Bible translated in the last half-century, you probably read a Bible influenced by Nida.

In the 1940s, Nida and others of the American Bible Society developed practical guidelines for missionary translators working among peoples who often did not have a written language, let alone a Bible, to read. Bible translators learned that they had to make translations understandable to people with little access to preachers and teachers, and whose culture was different from the world of King David or of Jesus and the apostles. They made translations that often supplied the information needed by isolated tribal peoples. In doing so, they often changed what the original said, somewhat like an explanatory paraphrase.

What are some of the problems of these modern translations? Why ought we to have the most literal translation possible? The author points out the following:

FE translations (again, most Bibles today) often change the language, images, and metaphors of

Scripture to make understanding easier. But for serious study, readers need a translation that is more transparent to the "otherness" of Scripture. We need a translation that allows the Bible to say what it says, even if that seems strange and odd to readers at first glance. If God is "other" than we are, we should be willing to work at the "otherness" of the Bible, in order to understand what the Lord is saying through his Word. The purpose of the Bible is not to make Jesus like us, but to make us like Christ. The Bible is designed to change us, to make us different, heirs of Abraham according to the promise fulfilled in Christ (Acts 2).

We need translations for people who are eager and willing to make the effort to overcome the difficulty of reading a book that is in fact foreign to us. Indeed, when we come to serious Bible study, whether in a church group, Sunday school, or college class-room, this type of translation becomes necessary, for we are trying to get as close as possible within the limits of our own language. When the martyr and translator William Tyndale did this, he shaped the English language in ways that were biblical. The KJV translators who inherited Tyndale's work gave the English-speaking world a Bible that shaped its language, life, and faith for hundreds of years. The danger of FE translations is that they shape the Bible too much to fit our world and our expectations. There is a danger that the Bible gets silenced because we have tamed and domesticated it.

The writer continues by pointing out various examples of the above. I quote only a few of these:

Biblical metaphors drop into our hearts like a seed in soil and make us think, precisely because they are not obvious at first. The translator who removes biblical metaphors to make the text "easier" for readers may defeat the purpose of the Holy Spirit, who chose a metaphor in the first place. Metaphors grab us and work on us and in

us. They have the spiritual power to transform our minds. The abandonment of basic biblical metaphors in many translations follows naturally from FE theory, because the target languages may not use such expressions. But it is the foreignness of metaphors that is their virtue. Metaphors make us stop and think, *Now what does that mean?*

It is not clear to me that replacing metaphors with abstractions makes it easier for readers. "God is my rock" is just as easy to understand as "God is my firm support" but means far more. "Walk in love" is simple, as is FE's "live a life of love" (Eph. 5:2, NIV). But "walk in love" resonates with the rich system of biblical metaphor rooted in Old Testament wisdom, where life is journey on a good or bad way, and in Acts, where Christianity became known as "the Way" (Acts 9:2). Metaphors are multifaceted and function to invoke active thought on the part of the receiver. Receivers must think and feel their way through a metaphor, and it is this very process that gives the metaphor its power to take hold of receivers as they take hold of it.

VanLeeuwen points out also that figures used may not be understandable in certain cultures—nevertheless, to change them into that which is "understandable" can in fact spoil the intent of the infallible text. One example is:

Again, most Americans have never seen a sheep slaughtered. To many, animal sacrifice seems like cruelty to animals. Other peoples have no sheep at all and no word for them; they may sacrifice pigs instead. Translators rightly assume that the biblical picture of God as a shepherd will be difficult to understand for people without sheep. What to do?

To translate Psalm 23 as "The Lord is my pig-herd" will not work! But even pastors (a word that means "shepherd") often do not realize that "The Lord is my shepherd" is a metaphorical way of referring to Yahweh as King:

The Lord is my *king*; he cares for me as a shepherd cares for his flock.

One translator for a pig-eating tribe apparently rendered John the Baptizer's cry of "Behold the Lamb of God!" as something like "Behold God's little pig!" This clearly will not do. For one thing, it is not what John said. What's more, throughout the Old and New Testaments, pigs are considered unclean, the polar opposite of holiness and a holy God. That is why Jesus casts the "unclean spirits" into the pigs (Mark 5:1-13). NIV often translates this as "evil spirits," which misses the point. Sheep are acceptable sacrifices to Yahweh, but pigs are ritually and symbolically abhorrent. One cannot simply translate words into functional equivalents in the target language. Even if sheep are sacrificed in your culture, you still need to learn what *shepherd*, *sheep*, and *sacrifice* are in the biblical world to get the meaning.

The job is even more difficult for Americans. Some of us may love lamb chops, but we don't offer sheep to God. If we do not come to understand these Old Testament issues, we will never fully understand Jesus as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Nor will we really know

the meaning of "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1).

Some of the author's concluding statements make a strong case for our current King James Version—at least until another, better, and more literal translation is made.

My concern has been that the dominance of FE translations has made it more difficult for English readers to know what the Bible actually said. We need an up-to-date translation that is more transparent to the original languages. If the translator's task is to negotiate the difficult balance between faithfulness to the original text and offering immediate sense in the target language, a direct translation will lean toward the original text.


As a member of Christ's body and a Bible teacher, I am pleading for a type of translation that is more consistently transparent, so that the original shines through it to the extent permitted by the target language.

A direct translator will in a learned and aesthetically appropriate way use the resources of the target language to richly capture

the details of the original, even though readers may be challenged by some of the Bible's foreignness. The Bible creates a vast context of meaning through cross references and allusions, phrases and metaphors, echoes and types. For readers to discover this type of biblical meaning in their translations, translators of the Bible must be constantly aware of parallel passages, expressions, and images. Where this does not happen, much of the text's actual meaning may be lost, often to be replaced by modern meanings.

A direct translation will try to preserve meaningful metaphors wherever possible and not turn them into abstractions....

The above, it appears to me, presents a powerful case for the use of the KJV until some better and more literal translation appears. Some of the comments made about the NIV and other FE-type translations should remind us of the dangers of using these translations.

And, incidentally, the editor of *Christianity Today* presents in this same issue a brief and interesting article concerning the KJV. He writes about "A Translation Fit for a King." It is worth reading. 

Grace Life

Rev. Mitchell Dick

"On Kicking Dating Goodbye"

A Dream

If it were possible, I would want one more date. Just one more. And that would be the end of it. It would be a one-night fling. And after THIS date, there would be no regrets.

I'll tell you whom I would like to date. Her name: S.K. Dating-sma. Call her "Dating" for short.

Yes, I would really like to date this my sweet Dating. I'll even tell you my motive. I'd like to do away with her....

Now, I know, this all sounds terrible. It is. I, a happily married man. I, by the grace of God a holy, God-loving, people-loving man. Wanting to date? And to kill this Date? But maybe not so terrible. In fact, maybe that's one thing we should learn in Grace Life—there are some strange things we do as

Christians. And some bloody things as well. All for the sake of Christ's blood, and for a life along the (very) (narrow) Way....

So this, very peculiar, my dream. This, very immodest, my modest proposal. And dripping with blood. But since you are with me this far, I know you will enjoy the details.

I'd call her up, this Dating of my dream, and if she would only consent (not for a minute suspect-

Rev. Dick is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

ing my motives, and what charm I would flash!), then I would cruise up to her front door in my Lamborghini. It would be some Friday night. Eightish. We would drive off into the night.

To a cliff. Yup. And having stopped the car, I would then roll my date (she being rollable, of course) out to the edge of that cliff, raise my old high school left wing foot, and kick poor Dating off.

I can just see it now. The cliff where I would take Dating would be a high one. Conveniently located at the bottom would be a sea—a deep one. And Dating would be wearing my new gift—cement shoes. Tight ones. Having been kicked, old Dating would tumble over the edge, and then over and over, sailing as ungraciously as she ever was, now through the air. Bounce off one rock. Bounce off another. Then...*plop!* There Dating would go beneath the waves, never to resurface again.

Yes! I would have kicked Dating goodbye!

The Interpretation Thereof

You ask: what has gotten into this man, to become this Dating hater?

Well, let me tell you like it is. I hate sin. I hate anything that tends to compromise holiness. I hate anything that tends to fake love, to promote lust, and to trivialize marriage. I hate anything that hurts and scars by the score. That is why I would kick Dating goodbye. For Dating tends to all of the above.

Dating—you know her! She is no one person, of course (yours truly would never venture to be silly and satirical about the execution of a person!). But she is this: *a veritable institution!*

Dating. By Dating I do not mean the casual friendships between male and female, boys and girls, and young adults and older adults. Nor do I refer necessarily to all closer friendships between those of the op-

posite sex as they pursue together the holy state of marriage. But it is this. Dating which is a “pairing off” of a boy and girl not at all ready for, or interested in marriage. Dating of those who confess Fun, but who have not yet confessed Faith. Dating which is unsupervised trysts in the night. Dating which is good times had without a prayer made. Dating which is a trial and error “playing of the field.” Dating without commitment, without purpose, without honor worthy of God’s children....

For all such I have a nice pair of shoes. A deep blue sea. Yon cliff. And a strong foot.

For her attendants too. For those friends of Dating which encourage unbecoming and compromising relationships. Valentine’s Day (really?) cards passed from boy to girl (and from girl to boy); Twerp days at high schools where girls ask out guys; pairing off and the encouragement of pairing off at Young People’s Conventions....

Yes, for Dating and all her friends I have strong passions, a sea, and some equipment, a cliff, and a foot. That is why I really would like to ask Dating out. Just once. But maybe that will not be possible. Maybe instead I could kill her in a letter. But the something inside would have to be, I know, more deadly than any anthrax. It would have to destroy not only her body, but her spirit. How about fighting with deadly words? What about the Word of God published...in the *Standard Bearer*?

Won’t You Come to the Cliff?

As you can see, I am out for blood. There is a great and pressing need that we stop, we *Christians* stop, we *Reformed* and *always ought to be reforming Christians* stop, we *called out of the darkness into the marvelous light of God Christians* stop, we *lovers of Love Christians* stop, we *lovers of godly young people Christians* stop, we *lovers of lasting, vibrant marriage Christians* stop... **Dating!**

We must stop flirting with Dating. We must stop kissing Dating. We must unlearn the heathen way we have about us of cajoling Dating, flattering Dating, trying to dress Dating up or down. Dating is ugly. Dating is wild. Dating is mean. Dating is an evolutionist. Dating is a dog. Dating is knocking our fair towers down.

So come with me, won’t you, to the cliff! You take Dating. I’ll take Dating. And we’ll kick together. I know, other ministers, and parents, I am absolutely sure, have and have had good words of caution about Dating for the Young People, and for their own sons and daughters. They have even written before in the *Standard Bearer*. They even sound these warnings as they bid farewell to their little ones and their dates driving off for the evening in a cloud of dust and Estee Lauder. But I say it is time for killing words, and killing this thing, this institution, this life-style and mindset, and all its friends which we have, over the generations, adopted without question, invited into our homes, and welcomed at our schools and church functions.

So I want to write about this Dating. I have spoken about this to the young people at our Grand Valley University discussions. I have preached about this at Grace. And the discussions since then with many people young and old have been rather invigorating and exciting and encouraging. I am educating my own children to think as I think with regard to Dating. And I would also like to address now you young people and young adults—Dating and Dateless or Dated. And parents—especially those of young children and teens who are not ready for marriage, or who are just beginning to date. And whoever else might be able to learn and influence others for the good concerning the truth about Dating.

Understanding, of course, your sinful prejudice and mine, I want

to conclude by trying to anticipate some objections you might have to my attempt to kill off Dating and reform, along theological lines, the way single members of the opposite sex, and all of those watching, are to behave themselves toward each other.

First, you say, *we think our present dating is going well. Why fix what is not broken?* Answer: Prove the first assertion, and I will pack my bags, and maybe try to write articles for the Press.

Second: *we who are presently married dated the way you would kill, and Look—we are happily married.* Answer: You may be happily married not because of your dating, but in spite of it. Isn't God longsuffering?

Third: *what you are presenting, Rev. Dick, is this "courtship" Thing—*

the thing we hear the Baptists, the Puritans, and the communists or whatever are promoting. Answer: I do not care who is promoting the Dating I would have take the place of our present Dating! If the "new" Dating is good and biblical we ought to be righteous to do it, and humble enough to do it—even though we didn't see it first!

Fourth: *Rev.—you are a parent of young children. Your view of Dating is sheer idealism, bordering on legalism, and definitely fanaticism. We'll listen to you, only when you grow up, and when your kids do, and when you see that the way it has always been is just fine.* Answer: If there is any idealism and whateverism which is unbiblical, rebuke me. The Word of God must answer. And we must seek to be

in entire conformity to it. My thesis is that in this area of dating we are not.

Fifth: *Dick, You insensitive lout! Here I am reading this, and thinking I might be helped out in my Christian walk, and I am in love and have been dating for six years (I'm now 18) and what you are saying is not fair. It's cruel!* Answer: Poor soul! Get a life, will you? Apologize to the one whose life you've stunted for the last six years. Stop Dating. Cold. Get the theology of covenant Dating I propose. Then do it.

Folks. Let us reason together.

In our efforts to be pure and unspotted we have justly junked drama. And we refuse to dance with the dancers. Now another "D" must die....

So, if you want to stick around: we'll see you at the cliff! ☸

The Types of Scripture (2)

In our previous article on this subject we dealt with the typological views of the fathers of the early church. We saw that the Greek fathers were wont to allegorize the historical events of Scripture. We warned against this mode of interpretation. The Latin church, so we saw, cannot be charged with going into the extremes of their contemporaries in the east. Their expositions were more sober. They were given to typical rather than allegorical explanations of the Word.

George Ophoff was Professor of Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Seminary in its early days. Reprinted here, in edited form, are articles which Ophoff wrote at that time for the Standard Bearer.

For several centuries, the theologians of the church continued to deal with Scripture as did the early fathers, though they avoided their extravagance. No attempt was yet made to discover the guiding principles of this department of theological science. For that, we pass on to the divines of the Reformation.

The Reformation and Typology

In this remarkable era a new method of interpretation was inaugurated. The sacred text as such began to be made an object of careful study. Expositors began to honor the natural and obvious meaning of words and phrases of Scripture. The allegorical interpretations of the fathers were denounced by Luther as "trifling and foolish fables, into which the Scrip-

tures were rent unto so many and diverse senses, that silly poor conscience could conceive no certain doctrine of anything." And Calvin maintained that "the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning, by which we ought resolutely to abide." Calvin's attitude toward the fabrications and the inventions of the fathers is evident from the following passage.

But as the apostle declares that these things are allegorized, Origen and many others along with him, have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense. They concluded that the literal sense is too mean and poor; and that under the outer bark of the letter, there lurk deeper mysteries, which cannot be

The TIMES We Are to Understand

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command."

I Chronicles 12:32

History is dead! Imagine that if you can! Imagine that history does not exist. If that is impossible, try to imagine that you can know nothing of history apart from your own personal experience. This would mean that you could not know that George Washington, or George Bush for that matter, was a real person because you had not met him personally. Or, if even that is beyond comprehension, imagine a twenty-five year old person who has been kept from any contact with the outside world for his entire life. This individual has not been exposed to anything that has taken place in the world in which he lives. He has been taught to read using materials which gave no hint of what has happened or is happening in the world around him. Our "sugar-free," "caffeine-free," "smoke-free" society might call him "history-free."

Now imagine that for this "history-free" person, today is a spe-

cial day. Today is the day we take him out of seclusion. Upon being exposed to his environment, the first thing he sees is the latest issue of *Newsweek*. Having been taught to read with the phonics method, he is able to sound out the words (at least the ones that are phonetic), but how much will he understand? Will he understand anything? Will he even understand the pictures? We would likely agree that this "history-free" person will read the words airplane, Trade Center, New York, fire fighter, Osama bin Laden, Taliban, Kabul, Afghanistan, United States, anthrax without comprehension. For him to understand what he sees in *Newsweek*, it will be necessary to know something about the past.

What is true for this "history-free" individual is no less true for us as present-day children of Issachar: for us to understand the times in which we live we must know the past. It is safe to say we may not be "history-free"! To understand the times is to know history. Only by knowing the past can we make intelligent, God-honoring decisions for the present and be prepared for making them in the future.

The TIMES in the Light of Scripture

That knowledge of history is a requirement for the child of God is biblical. Without belaboring the obvious, let me present a few ex-

amples from Scripture which support it. In the first place, the fact that the infallible Scriptures record history suggests its importance for the child of God of every age. Secondly, consider a passage like Psalm 78, which reads in part, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Ps. 78: 2-4, 6). The passage speaks for itself: believers *must* teach history to their children in order that they may know God and walk in His ways. Thirdly, Paul points the Corinthian church and us to learn from Old Testament Israel's experiences when he writes, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11). Here again we are told of the importance of the past to guide us in the present and future. Many more examples from Scripture could be cited (Heb. 11, Matt. 24, etc.), but let the above suffice to establish the point: his-

Mr. Kalsbeek is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

tory is a required course for children of Issachar!

How the World Tries to Hide the TIMES

For the child of God the importance of growing in an understanding of the past is magnified by what the world is currently doing to history. One cannot help but be reminded of George Orwell's book 1984. Orwell portrays a ruling establishment which is busy disposing of the undesirable events of the past by throwing the record of them down the "memory hole." To be understanding of the times, children of Issachar should be aware of current activity of the academic elite in filling up Orwell's "memory hole."

One such attempt is being done by those called "revisionists." As the term implies, the revisionist attempts to revise history. He does this by rewriting history to fit the revisionist's philosophy of history. John Leo writes in an article under the title "The Junking of History":

The culture is now seriously plagued with deeply felt assertions that aren't true but are slowly sliding toward respectability anyway. Think back over the assertions that have won a measure of acceptance in the past year or two: the denial of the Holocaust; Oliver Stone's notion that the mafia and many government officials conspired to kill President Kennedy; the idea, depicted in a TV documentary, that a black U.S. Army regiment liberated Dachau and Buchenwald (tough-minded, honest veterans of the regiment stood up and said it wasn't true), and the supposedly strong influence of Iroquois thought on the U.S. Constitution, now taught in many schools.

Another attempt to dispose of history is called "deconstruction." About this Leo writes:

Deconstruction and its allied movements say that knowledge is constructed, texts are biased. Val-

ues and truth are nothing more than arbitrary products of a particular group. History is not true, merely a story imposed by the powerful on the weak. (Time Warner managed to pick up this theme in a Warner Bros. Records ad celebrating Black History Month. "History is written by the winners," the ad said....) At the extreme, some of these theories say there is no external reality at all, merely consciousness, and some say that personal experience or stories are the only source of truth.¹

A good example of how the deconstruction of history works is found in Gene Veith Jr.'s book *Postmodern Times*:

Consider, for example, the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It could be deconstructed along these lines: Although the text speaks of equality, its language excludes women ("all men are created equal"). Although it speaks of liberty, its author, Thomas Jefferson, owned slaves. The surface meaning of equality and freedom is completely contradicted by the subtext, which denies equality and freedom to women and minorities. The passage enshrines the rights of the wealthy white males who signed the document, grounding their privileged status in God Himself. The Declaration of Independence can thus be deconstructed into just another power play, implying the opposite of its surface meaning.²

In addition to dumping the history they don't want down the "memory hole," there is also the educational philosophy of our day which would *limit* what goes into a different "memory hole," namely, the brain. This is done by the educational "experts" of our day when they emphasize the "how to" at the

expense of the "what is." In other words, in our day there is a preoccupation with process over content. The reasoning goes something like this: since there is so much information out there, and since it is impossible to know it all anyway, we should focus the instruction in the schools on *how to find* information rather than on the content (facts) itself. Neil Postman bemoans this in his book *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, when he writes that in a technopoly, with the emphasis on utilitarianism (what works), "people make no moral decisions, only practical ones."³ This is of critical importance to the church. If one is to understand the times and live as God's friend-servant, it is necessary to know more than the "how to"; he must also know "what is."

What the Children of Issachar Should Be Doing about It

Much could be written about how the child of God should respond to the world's lack of emphasis on the content of history and their junking of it. Following are a few suggestions:

When the believer considers that history is the unfolding of God's eternal plan, it becomes all the more important to him, not only not to lose it, but also to get it right. That's a challenge all by itself: how can we be sure that even the old history books are accurate? The fact of the matter is that we are largely dependent on what ungodly historians have written. We can, however, put to use a variety of sources when key issues come into question. This is also important when trying to ascertain the

1. Leo, John. "The Junking of History." *U.S. News and World Report* 28 Feb., 1994:17.

2. Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *Postmodern Times*. Wheaton, Ill: Good News Publishers, 1994.

3. Postman, Neil. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

truth with respect to current events. For the believer to limit himself to the *New York Times* or the television networks as his only source of news would be worse than to ignore the news altogether. Rather, the use of a variety of sources across the political spectrum will increase the possibility of determining the truth.


Also, simply being aware of how it is that history is being rewritten and distorted should result in a healthy skepticism for what is being produced today under the name history and/or the news. Knowing what we do about the movements to revise and deconstruct history, it would be foolish to place a lot of confidence in the accuracy of what we might see on

The History Channel and on those television documentaries, so called. We must consider that the producers of these programs often have an agenda to promote. Remember, too, television programming places the viewer at a severe disadvantage by providing visual and auditory information so rapidly that there is little, if any, opportunity to evaluate critically the content, whereas the written record makes careful reflection on the part of the reader possible.

Further, understanding the doctrines of total depravity and the antithesis as we do would almost lead the believer to consider what the world seeks to discard as worth keeping, and what the world seeks to promote as possible material for the "memory hole." Considering

also how history is being de-emphasized by the world, the believer would do well to consider the possibility that today, more than ever before, an understanding of history is of critical importance for the members of the church.

Modern-day children of Issachar realize from Revelation 12 that the dragon (Satan) seeks the destruction of the church. What better way could there be to advance this purpose than to divorce the church from her history? Remember our "history-free" character from the opening paragraphs? Now consider the possibility of a "history-free" church! Could a "history-free" church exist?

Children of Issachar, understand the *times* and live! 

Book Reviews



Guilt, Grace and Gratitude: Lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism, by George W. Bethune. Banner of Truth Trust, Publishers, 2001. Two Volumes, pp. 495 & 509. \$49.99 (hard cover). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

It is not easy to find English commentaries on the Heidelberg Catechism, and it is still more difficult to find, among the few which can be obtained here and there, a good solid exposition which will be of help to the beleaguered minister who must preach on this wonderful book of instruction nearly every Lord's Day. This reprint of George Bethune's work will fill a gap.

George Bethune was a minister in the Reformed Church of America in the middle of the nineteenth century. This was at a time when the RCA was still blessed with strong Calvinistic preachers. These sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism reflect a solid Calvinism commitment. (Although the subtitle calls these expositions "lec-

tures," they were actually sermons, most of which even have three points.)

Some choice and fresh insights into the Catechism can be found in Bethune's treatment of such doctrines as are dear to the heart of one who cherishes the treasures of the Reformed faith. Bethune emphasizes that comfort is necessary in our life in the world because, although we know that afflictions are for our good, this is not evident to us and afflictions are very troublesome. The long neglected and frequently denied doctrine of original sin (including guilt and pollution) is given solid treatment. The section on faith was particularly intriguing. After emphasizing that faith is a gift of God, Bethune develops the idea of faith as being 1) faith in God Himself; 2) faith in God's witness of Himself; and, 3) faith in the application of that witness to our lives. Although his treatment of the doctrine of election is scant, he holds to the truth that the death of Christ atoned for the sins of the elect only.

This is, however, qualified by his belief that the cross of Christ earned certain outward blessings for all men — a view widely held in his time among otherwise strong Calvinists. Bethune also argues forcibly for sprinkling as the preferable mode of baptism, although the mode is a matter indifferent.

In dealing with the question of the relation between faith in Scripture and science in the doctrine of creation (a question which was already a century and a half ago vexing the church), Bethune writes:

The present theories of geologists and others have introduced large discussions on this point (when God performed the work of creation, HH); and Christian inquirers have sometimes ventured dangerously far through anxiety to reconcile the inspired account with scientific opinion. There can be no doubt that, if our knowledge of facts were sufficient, revelation and science would be, in every respect, agreed; but, as firm believers in the Divine testimony, we should never consent to try the

truth of Moses by the deductions of philosophers.... We shall, therefore, adhere to the Word of God, let other men argue as they please.

In keeping with this emphasis, the author argues for a literal interpretation of the word "day" in Genesis 1, for already many were suggesting what is now called "the period theory."


Nevertheless, Bethune leaves open a crack in the door when he suggests that the creation of a world "without form and void" may not necessarily belong to the work of the first day.

It is possible that this modification of the doctrine of creation was partly influenced by his decision to study in Princeton Theological Seminary where the strongest professors were willing to make concessions to the doctrine of evolutionism. This influence of the presbyterian tradition is also evident in the tendency of the book to emphasize the "reasonableness" of our faith; that is, to show that what we believe is, while indeed an object of faith, still demonstrable by reason.

The work by Bethune is also a solid example of what Heidelberg Catechism preaching ought to be,

namely exposition of the Catechism itself, though demonstrating how the Catechism teaches the truth of Scripture. Bethune is excellent in this respect.

I must include one caveat. The sermons lack somewhat the experiential approach of the Heidelberg Catechism and are not, in this respect, of as much value as Veldkamp's *Zondagskinderen*.

It is somewhat sad that this treatment of the Catechism was never finished by Bethune. The book goes through Lord's Day 38, the Catechism's treatment of the fourth commandment. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

Rev. A. Spriensma, as part of his consideration of the call to serve our churches as missionary to the Philippines, traveled to the Philippines with Mr. Al Brummel, an elder in the Edgerton, MN PRC and a member of our churches' Foreign Mission Committee. They left on November 7 and planned to return home, the Lord willing, on November 20. Plans called for them to spend their first weekend in Manila, which would be the base of future mission activity for our churches when we do have a full-time missionary there. Rev. Spriensma preached that first Sunday in the Berean Church of God, a Reformed church in Manila. Their plans for the second week included a mid-week visit to a group in Bacolod, and later a visit with contacts of the Body of Christ Churches in the cities of Daet, Capalonga, Jose Panganiban, Labo, and Nabua. We certainly pray that the Lord will use this brief visit by the men to show Rev. Spriensma

what the Lord wills for him with regard to the call he considers.

Soon after Rev. Bekkering accepted the call to serve as our churches' second missionary to Ghana, application was made with the Ministry of Interior and the Headquarters of Immigration to have Rev. Bekkering included under our churches' quota for missionaries to Ghana. It now appears that this request has been approved, so that the way will be open for him and his family to go to Ghana as soon as they are able. May God continue to bless this minister of the Word, his wife, and their family as they make final preparations to go to Ghana. Part of that final preparation by the Bekkerings included an open house on Saturday, November 3, at the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. This was intended to give family and friends an opportunity to bid them farewell before they leave for Ghana.

Denomination Activities

The ladies of our two churches in Iowa, the Doon and Hull PRCs, along with the ladies of the Edgerton, MN PRC, were invited to join together in their annual Fall

Ladies League Meeting, this year at Edgerton. Rev. D. Kleyn, Edgerton's pastor, spoke on "The Prayer of Jabez."

Living here in West Michigan, I often do not appreciate the miles pastors in Classis West travel to attend various church-related meetings, or to fill classical appointments. In mid-November, Rev. R. Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, flew from his home to Chicago, where he joined Rev. C. Haak in conducting church visitation in four of our churches in that area. He then flew to Redlands, CA and the Hope PRC, where he filled a classical appointment on November 18 and 25 and Thanksgiving Day on the 22nd, before flying home to his own church in late November.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC continues to be busy with plans for a Spring Conference in early 2002. The dates for this conference have been set for the evening of Friday, April 26, and the morning of April 27. The general theme of this conference will be "The Perfect Law

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

THE STANDARD BEARER

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of Liberty." Kalamazoo has also secured Prof. Engelsma and Rev. Haak to give lectures along with their pastor, Rev. Bruinsma. The conference will be held at the Comfort Inn in Plainwell, MI. Kalamazoo is hoping not only for a large turnout from our denomination, but also that people on their mailing list, as well as interested people in the Plainwell and surrounding areas, will attend. The accommodations are beautiful and very conducive to Kalamazoo's purposes. Kalamazoo hopes that people who come from other areas of our country will stay for the en-

tire weekend and enjoy with them the fellowship of the Lord's day as well.

Congregation Activities

With great joy and thanks to God, the council of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, on Friday and Saturday, October 12 & 13, heard the confession of faith of 19 of their young people. What a blessing for a council and a congregation to see that Christian witness from its young people. We continue to pray that our children be included in the gracious provisions of the covenant our Lord has established with us (Gen. 17:7).

Minister Activities

Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call he considered to serve as the first pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI. The Lynden, WA PRC, has extended a call to Rev. A. Brummel, pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC to serve as their next pastor.

Food For Thought

"The God who took a motherless woman out of the side of a man took a fatherless man out of a body of a woman."

— Matthew Henry 

Announcements

NOTICE

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools is seeking applicants for the position of Executive Director of the Federation of PRC Schools. In general, the Executive Director has the responsibility to maintain a strong network of communication between the Federation Board of the PRC Schools, its committees, the boards of member schools, our teachers, and to implement the work and projects of the Federation. To receive further information concerning this part-time position please contact Gary Nienhuis at (616) 453-0817 or by mail at 1406 Su-Lew, Grand Rapids, MI 49544.

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 9, 2002, at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

TEACHER(S) NEEDED:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its first year of operation, teaching freshmen and sophomores. As we plan for the addition of a junior class for 2002-2003, we see our greatest faculty needs in the areas of math, science, business, and technology, and foreign language courses. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema at (708) 339-1733 [rmedema@earthlink.net] or Education Committee Chairman, Bill DeJong at (708) 946-6126 [bill@dejongequipment.com].

NOTICE

With thankfulness to God, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary inform the churches that they have licensed Seminarians Paul Goh and William Langerak to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship. The scheduling of their speaking in the worship services will be done by the Seminary.

For the faculty,
Russell J. Dykstra
Rector

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Hudsonville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Elder Dick Venema and his family, in the loss of his father,

MR. MAYNARD VENEMA.

May Dick and his family find comfort from the words in Psalm 91:2: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

Pastor Barry Gritters, Pres.
Ralph Vander Veen, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of the First PRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the death of a faithful member who recently passed into glory,

MISS JEAN DYKSTRA.

We extend our sincere sympathy to her family. Our comfort is found in God's Word: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Prof. David Engelsma, leader