The
STANDARD BEARER
A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SPECIAL ISSUE on SAVING FAITH

Saving faith is that work of God in the elect, regenerated, and called sinner whereby the latter is ingrafted into Christ and embraces and appropriates Christ and all His benefits, relying upon Him in time and eternity.

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MEDITATION

With The Heart . . . With The Mouth

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
Romans 10:11

There are three pairs of terms in this verse which complement one another in the text: "unto righteousness . . . unto salvation", "believeth . . . confession is made"; "with the heart . . . with the mouth." And the emphasis falls upon the last pair mentioned: "with the heart . . . with the mouth."

As is plain from the word "for," the apostle in some sense furnishes a reason, a further explanation, for what he has just written in verse 10 concerning the contents of the "word of faith, which we preach." There he had explained the contents of the word of faith as being: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Why and how is this true? The answer is, first of all, that "with the heart man believeth (or, more literally: "it is believed" or "one believes") unto righteousness," and, secondly, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

* * * * * * * * * *

With the heart man believeth . . . .

As is plain from the subsequent context as well as from the text itself, the apostle is speaking of the *act* of faith, the activity of believing. It is correct to make a distinction between faith as a faculty, as a spiritual power, in distinction from faith in its conscious activity. The former, faith as a power, or faculty, is wrought in the elect sinner's heart when he is regenerated by the Spirit of Christ. Just as in the natural sense of the word a baby is born with the faculty to think and to will, and, in fact, with all the talents and abilities which he later will exercise in his life, though he does not actually and consciously exercise those abilities of mind and will the moment he enters into the world, so it is spiritually. Just as an infant has the power of perception though he does not as yet actually perceive, and has the power to speak but does not yet speak, so also the elect, regenerated sinner, born of God, receives in and with his regeneration the power of faith, the spiritual power to believe. But the apostle is not speaking of his power of faith as such, a power wrought in the heart of the elect immediately, but of faith as it is wrought through the "word of faith" and through the power of the preaching.

With the *heart* one believes . . . .

Believing is not simply a matter of the will or of the emotions. It surely is not a superficial stirring of the emotions such as is characteristic so often of what is sometimes called "temporary faith," the kind of "faith" which is the product of much revival preaching and mass evangelism which is designed to create an emotional surge.

Believing is not merely a matter of intellectual assent, a kind of assent to the truth, or at least to some elements of the truth, which is altogether lacking in personal interest. It is the latter, the lack of a personal interest and personal participation, which characterizes a faith which is merely intellectual. Saving faith professes Jesus as Lord, because it trusts in Him as Lord. It lays hold upon the Christ and clings to Him. He who has saving faith, who believes, rejoices in the fact and confesses the fact that he is not his own, but belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ! Besides, a merely intellectual faith differs from saving faith because it is not characterized by the element of *confidence.* He who merely assents to the truth in a natural sense of the word does not rely on Christ and on God for righteousness and justification. But if a man believes in the saving sense of the word, then he relies for all his righteousness and salvation upon Him in Whom he believes. He wants nothing of any other ground of righteousness than the God Who raised Jesus from the dead. All other ground is sinking sand; on Christ the solid Rock he stands.

But there is one outstanding characteristic of saving faith which is mentioned in both verse 10 and in verse 9, the characteristic which is altogether lacking in a mere intellectual faith. Saving faith, faith of the heart, *confesses*! He who believes also confesses with the mouth the Lord Jesus.

The apostle is not speaking here of two different and separate items: believing and confessing. The idea is not one of faith plus something more. Mouth-confession and heart-believing are not two unrelated activities. If a man does not confess with the mouth, neither does he believe with the heart. And if he believes with the heart, he will surely confess with the mouth. And if he truly confesses with the mouth (and is not merely a "Lord, Lord" sayer), it is only because he believes with the heart. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

The content of his confession is not mentioned in verse 10, but verse 9 spells it out. He confesses that Jesus is Lord!

He confesses not merely that Jesus is Lord in the sense that He is King of kings and Lord of lords, in the sense that the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth is exalted at the right hand of God and that all power in heaven and on earth has been given unto Him, in the sense that all beings and all powers and all events are subject unto Him, in the sense that all must do His bidding and serve His purpose, either willingly or in spite of themselves.

But he confesses personally: Jesus is MY Lord! I belong to Him with body and soul, in life and in death, for time and eternity! He is responsible for me now and in the day of judgment; I am in His hand. He has the right to rule me and to demand that I do His will. I acknowledge this, so that the controlling question of my life is: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

With the *mouth* he confesses!

He does not hide behind the ruse that his actions

will speak louder than words and that it is not always necessary to say explicitly that Jesus is his Lord. True enough, a mouth confession which is empty, which is contradicted by one's actions and by his walk of life — such a mouth confession is false. It does not arise out of the heart and out of heart-believing.

But a heart-faith will surely find expression in mouth-confession! Believing and confessing belong together. The latter is the outward expression of the former.

With the heart . . . .

You see, the heart is the center of it all.

According to Scripture, the heart is the spiritual center of a man's entire life. Just as physically the heart is the fountain of our physical life, so that from it our lifeblood flows and courses through our entire bodily existence, so also in the spiritual sense. The heart is the center and fountain of our life spiritually. From the heart are the issues of life. Our thinking and willing, our longing and desires and inclinations and aspirations, and also our joy and our sorrow, our speech and our activities, our hopes and our fears — these all are determined as far as their spiritual, ethical worth is concerned by the heart. If the heart is good, its issues are good. If the heart is corrupt, so are all the issues of the heart. If our heart is wicked, then our thinking and willing and desiring and speaking and acting will all be carnal. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. But if by the grace of God our heart is good, is not carnal but spiritual, then all the issues of that heart will be good, will be directed toward the things which are spiritual. The tree is known by its fruit. A good tree brings forth good fruit.

And believing is in the deepest sense of the word a matter of the heart. Not merely of the mind or the will or the emotions; but of the heart!

If with the heart a man believes the gospel, then he knows it with a true, spiritual knowledge and he trusts in it implicitly, putting his confidence in it with childlike trust. And then that believing heart controls and directs our whole life, so that we believe with our whole life, with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. We believe with all our being. Old things are passed away; all things have become new. All the issues of our life are controlled and directed by that belief that God has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

* * * * * * * * * *

. . . unto righteousness!

. . . unto salvation!

It is of salvation in the final and full and future sense of the word that the apostle speaks here, our salvation as it shall be realized in the day of Christ. Yes, he who believes and confesses is saved already. He is redeemed and delivered from his guilt and from the power of sin and death. He is partaker of the life of Christ. He is a child of God by adoption and a child of God by rebirth. And he is heir of all the blessings of salvation. But the viewpoint here is the future. He who believes and confesses *shall be saved.* Snatched from the power of death and the grave, changed from the earthly to the heavenly, from the corruptible to the incorruptible, from the mortal to the immortal! Received into the tabernacle of God, where we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known!

With a view to that salvation righteousness is the prime requisite. Indeed, he who believes is the heir of many, many blessings of salvation. But righteousness is first! Without that blessing of justification, of being declared perfectly innocent, without the knowledge and the assurance that "God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin" — without it there can be no possibility of any of the other blessings of salvation. For God is the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, and He cannot deny His own perfect righteousness. Without righteousness, therefore, there is no salvation now or in the day of judgment. With it, both are infallibly certain!

That righteousness was sealed — and here is the connection with verse 9 — when God raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was raised on account of our justification!

Hence, if a man believes with the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, he believes unto righteousness. And if he believes unto righteousness, he confesses with the mouth the Lord Jesus. And if he confesses with the mouth the Lord Jesus, he *shall* be saved.

Faith from the heart — faith that is only and altogether the gift of grace — is the God-given power and the act that clings to the power of that God Who raised Jesus from the dead! -HCH

The Standard Bearer makes a thoughtful gift for the sick & shut-in.

Editor's Notes

This is the third and final special issue in the current volume-year. In it we continue our planned treatment of the various steps in the order of salvation. We welcome to this issue, two guest writers who are contributing to our magazine for the first time: Pastor Charles Terpstra, of Pella, Iowa, and Pastor Russell Dykstra, of Doon, Iowa.

You will not find a regular News of our Churches department in this issue. Our News Editor is taking a vacation for one issue. You will find a report, with pictures, of the institution of the new Protestant Reformed congregation of Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. Thanks to Rev. Thomas Miersma (of Edmonton) for this report!

Faith, A Union With Christ

Jason L. Kortering

What a privilege it is to exalt the Name of God, the God Who has given us faith. The Word of God leads us in making this confession, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God," Eph. 2:8. What a marvelous gift it is.

WHAT IS FAITH

In this article we are discussing faith as a step in the order of salvation, the way in which Christ applies to us the benefits of salvation He merited for us on the cross.

We must keep this in mind as we turn to the Word of God for guidance in answering the question: what is faith? It is interesting that both in the Hebrew and Greek the root idea of faith is to be sturdy, steadfast. In the Old Testament the noun faith is seldom used. Rather the word faithfulness, to be faithful, faithfully, and such words are used. Also other words closely related to faith are used, e.g. trusting and believing. In the New Testament the word faith is frequently used as well as faithful. Even then, we find two different usages of the word faith. The one is a reference to the content of what we believe. Our faith is what we believe: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained," I Timothy 4:6. The other usage of the word faith refers to our activity in response to the gospel: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 5:1. This faith comes to expression in such activity as repenting of sin, believing on Jesus, trusting God as the God of our salvation.

In summary, faith is viewed as our relationship with God both as to what we believe and how we live.

Our Reformed confessions draw from the Word of God a summary statement concerning faith. Our *Heidelberg Catechism* describes faith as being "ingrafted into Christ and receive all His benefits by a true faith," Lord's Day 7, Q. 20. Furthermore in that same Lord's Day we read, "True faith is not only a certain knowledge . . . . but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given me by God, merely by grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits." In the *Netherlands Confession of Faith,* Article 22 we read, "We believe that to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Ghost kindleth in

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our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him." The *Canons of Dordt* speak of faith in Head III and IV, Art. 14, "Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him . . . . because he who works in man both to will and to do and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also."

From these references, we conclude that faith is that work of God in the sinner whereby he is ingrafted into Christ and receives all the blessings of salvation from Him, relying upon Him for all things.

FAITH IS BEING INGRAFTED

Both Scripture and our confessions speak of faith as being "ingrafted into Christ". In the first part of John 15, Jesus speaks of Himself being the vine and the believers as the branches. From a different perspective, Paul in Romans 11 compares the gathering of the church throughout history as being ingrafted into the olive tree, which draws its life from Jesus Christ. The Heidelberg Catechism especially picks this up and defines faith as being ingrafted into Christ, A. 20.

Our understanding of faith as such an ingrafting is important for a correct understanding of faith. Let us enumerate a few points of comparison. First, there is the living vine (John 15). This vine draws its life out of the earth, it shoots forth leaves in the spring, blossoms, and eventually bears grapes. So Christ is the vine, He is alive in fellowship with the Father. All the spiritual virtues of God flow into Jesus Christ. Secondly, there are the branches to be ingrafted into the vine. In the earthly sense, they are taken from some other vine or compatible source. Strictly speaking they are not dead. They have life which is to be relocated in another source. Spiritually however, it is different. The child of God who is to be ingrafted into Christ is spiritually dead, he has not life in himself. If there is no union with Christ, the sinner abides under the spiritual power of death and he makes himself worthy of everlasting destruction. Thirdly, one must perform the act of ingrafting. The husbandman or farmer must work upon both the vine and branch, for the vine or branch cannot do it of itself. This directs us to our spiritual impotence. If we are to have faith, Almighty God must operate as the Divine Ingrafter to perform so great a task. This He does. Fourthly, the vine is prepared by cutting a careful notch in the proper place, and the branch is prepared by cutting the end of the branch in a tapering way so that it fits perfectly in the notch of the vine. Spiritually, if we are to be ingrafted into Christ, Christ is prepared by God to receive us by His death upon the cross for those elect whom the Father gave Him, and the subsequent resurrection and ascension in which He receives all the blessings of salvation from God Himself. The sinner is prepared by the work of regeneration and the call of the gospel as it is applied to His heart. In the fifth place, a proper ingrafting causes the sap of life to flow through the union of vine and branch so that the branch is energized by its life. Spiritually this takes place when we by faith are united to Christ and the life of Christ flows into us to make us alive in him. Finally, the result of this union causes the branch to become alive and produce fruits. So we are made spiritually alive by faith and produce good works, the fruits of faith.

If we view faith as such an ingrafting into Christ, we draw two important conclusions.

First, faith is worked in the *heart* of the elect sinner. This is important. It is not so that this ingrafting takes place in our minds, our wills, our emotions, or even our bodies. No, it takes place in our hearts. Listen: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Romans 10:10. Do you know why? The heart is the spiritual source of all things. Did not Solomon say, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," Prov. 4:23. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Matt. 6:21. He added, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things," Matt. 12:35. Even as our physical heart circulates the necessary life-giving blood throughout the body to sustain life, so our spiritual heart spouts forth the living energy of love and grace which we receive through our union with Christ. This in turn affects all our being, our minds, our wills, our emotions, even our bodies. All that we are and have is made subject to the power of faith as it works through our members.

Secondly, before that faith is worked in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, our hearts are made ready for that act of ingrafting. By the work of regeneration, our hearts are prepared for the preaching of the gospel which is the means by which faith is worked in the heart. If we see this, we can understand why the working of faith by the Holy Spirit, as He applies the gospel in our hearts, is called an opening of the heart: "Lydia . . . which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened," Acts 16:14. In addition to this, we can appreciate why the working of faith is not a pleading,

begging on the part of Christ for the sinner to let Christ into his heart. The sinner is prepared for Christ, and now by the gospel Christ joins that sinner with Himself. For this reason, faith is considered a gift, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast," Eph. 2:8, 9.

THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH

Through our union with Christ by faith, the love of God which is in Christ Jesus flows into our entire being. The dead sinner is made alive by the presence of this love of God.

This produces spiritual activity.

We do well to understand this clearly. Our spiritual activity does not bring us faith. This is the error of the Arminian. He views the unsaved man as capable of doing something that will get him faith. If he only accepts Christ as an act of his free will, he will receive all the grace of salvation. We must be careful as Reformed believers, that in rejecting this error, we do not go in the opposite direction and deny that there is activity in our faith. We are dead before we are regenerated. We are dead before we receive faith. But once we receive faith by the working of the Holy Spirit, we become spiritually alive.

This is true because faith unites us to Jesus Christ. Through that union, the love of God flows into our heart and our heart influences our mind, will, emotion, and body.

By such faith, we repent of our sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, hold for truth all the Word of God, trust in Him for all our salvation, and desire to serve Him out of thankfulness for so great salvation.

This activity of faith is not a matter of forced obligation. True, we realize we owe all that we are to the God of our salvation. Rather, it is a matter of the heart, a principle of love. By faith we love God in Jesus Christ. We love His Word, we love to serve Him.

Through faith God receives the glory due to His holy name.

The Elements of Faith

Russell J. Dykstra

Do I have faith? How can I know whether or not I have faith? At one time or another in his life, every child of God faces these questions. These are important questions, matters of eternal life or death. Regardless, therefore, of how each of us answers the first question above, with an emphatic "Yes!" or a hesitant, "I think so," or even an "I'm not sure," it is good for us to examine just what faith *is*. In another article, Rev. Kortering describes faith as the bond which unites the believer to Christ. That is certainly biblical. At the same time Scripture speaks of faith as we experience it, namely as including knowledge and confidence. Those are the "elements" or "parts" of faith which we will discuss.

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That knowledge and confidence are the elements of true faith is not universally accepted. Some writers emphasize the intellectual knowledge of faith to the exclusion of confidence. Others virtually ignore knowledge as an aspect of faith, stressing the assurance which is gained from a mysterious experience or sign. Still others speak of faith as an assent to the truth. The Westminster Larger Catechism, for example, maintains that by means of faith one "not only assenteth to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and His Righteousness . . ." (q. & a. 72). That is similar and yet obviously not identical to knowledge and confidence.

But for much of the Reformed Church world, and for this writer, the elements of faith are described best by the Heidelberg Catechism in

question and answer 21. Answering the question, "What is true faith?" the Catechism gives the following instruction:

> True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Spirit works by the gospel, in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.

Part of faith is, therefore, knowledge — a *certain* knowledge. That word "certain" means not a certain *kind* of knowledge or a particular set of facts, but it means "sure" or "beyond a doubt." This is what Peter said to Jesus on behalf of the disciples: "And we believe and are sure that thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). What the disciples believed, they believed with all their hearts. They were *sure* in their faith. But notice also that the disciples knew *something.* They knew that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is a statement of fact, a bit of knowledge that they had gained and stored in their minds. They had knowledge.

It should be obvious to all that faith must have knowledge. No one can believe what he does not know. The question is: what knowledge is required for true faith? Certainly the knowledge of God in Christ as revealed in the Scripture is necessary, especially the knowledge of salvation — the message of the gospel. But this knowledge must be understood as a spiritual knowledge, not merely a natural knowledge. A natural knowledge of Scripture is simply a knowledge of the *facts* contained in the Scriptures. One who acquired this knowledge would know how God created the earth in 6 days, and how the earth was destroyed by the flood. He would know the origin and development of the nation of Israel. He would have knowledge of the birth of Christ from the line of David, and of the death of Christ on the cross, and of the spread of the gospel. That is a natural knowledge.

That, however, cannot be the knowledge of faith for two reasons. First of all, anyone can gain some knowledge of the Scriptures and even believe parts of it to be historically accurate. That is even true of Satan, who in fact does know Scripture well. Wicked men likewise know the Bible. Their literature, their movies, and even their advertisements give abundant evidence of this. But they do not have faith. The second reason why mere natural knowledge is not an element of faith is that faith is a work of God's grace within the heart. It is therefore not merely a matter of the mind, of the intellect, but of the heart, And this is *God's* work, not a work that *we* or any other can accomplish by a study of the Bible.

A word of caution is in order here. We are not denying the importance of knowing the Scriptures. The abominable lack of knowledge today in the Church of Jesus Christ (including the Protestant Reformed Churches!) is cause for great alarm. We must be ever reading and studying, must know God's Word if our faith is to have any content at all. But the point is that this knowledge is not, in itself, the knowledge of faith which we are discussing.

No, this knowledge of faith is spiritual. It is the result of a spiritual change worked by God which causes a man to see, to understand, and to know everything in a different light. For God gives him true knowledge, that is, the knowledge of God. Without faith man does not *know* God, he only knows *about* God. What a tremendous difference this really is! Knowledge about God is memorized, studied, and theoretical. The knowledge of faith is the result of experience — a living knowledge. It encompasses and surpasses the knowledge *about* God.

The difference between these two kinds of knowledge is easily demonstrated from our experience. Think of the theoretical knowledge on marriage expounded by countless counsellors and authors. They can, and do, describe the difficulties and hardships as well as the joys of married life. By reading and studying, therefore, one is able to gain a rather accurate perception of life in the married state. A theoretical knowledge, that is. But how different is the knowledge of experience. The joys and the sorrows of the wedded couple are real for them. They know the love and fellowship that exist between a husband and a wife. It is far richer than any book can describe and they never doubt that this life is real, for they have experienced it and continue to enjoy this life together.

That is the sure knowledge of faith. The believer knows with certainty that what the Scriptures reveal about God is true — that God is a covenant God, that Christ has been sent to redeem those eternally given Him by the Father, and does take them into the covenant life of the Triune God. Asking him how he knows this to be true would be like asking a husband how he knows his wife is real, and truly loves him. He could only reply, "I know it because I have experienced it." The believer also finds it incredible that anyone could doubt the existence and love of God for him — he has experienced it! Nothing could be more certain or obvious than that God is, and that God loves him. He has the sure knowledge of faith.

Upon that sure knowledge of faith is based the second element, namely, a hearty confidence. Paul

writes of this in Ephesians 3:12: "In whom (Christ Jesus) we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." This is the assured confidence, according to the Heidelberg Catechism (q. & a. 21), that salvation and all its benefits belong "not only to others, but to me also." Clearly this is necessary for a true, saving faith. What good is the knowledge of all the mighty works of God if they are for others and not for me?

This is exactly where some go astray by cutting asunder the knowledge and the confidence of faith. They teach that one can have this certain knowledge and even believe all the truths of Scripture, but lack the assurance that it applies to *him.* That is simply impossible. If one has the knowledge of faith, the true spiritual knowledge of experience, then he *knows* God, the sovereign, electing, loving God of *his* salvation. Such an one has, at the same time, this assured confidence. These two elements — confidence and knowledge — are inseparable.

O, that is not to say that this assurance always beats firmly within a man's heart. No one is always on a mountain-top of faith. No believer is always brimming with this experiential knowledge of God's favor and the assurance of salvation. Every believer slides into the valley of despondency and doubt, lacking assurance. But the reason for this is sin and the corruption of the old nature. You see, each and every believer has within him both faith and unbelief. And the unbelief is ever seeking to dim the light of the knowledge of God and destroy the assurance of faith. Thus we have moments, periods, of doubt. But that is not the effect of faith. Faith is knowledge *and* confidence. By faith I know that this rich salvation is for *me.*

That assurance is indestructible, for it is God's work within us. And it is a power within that causes us to become bold. In this assurance we approach the throne of the living God, the Holy One, without fear or terror. With confidence we seek His fellowship and favor. Boldly we bring our requests to Him. How else could damn-worthy sinners approach the Just and Holy God, except He give them, through the power of His grace, this hearty confidence?

Those are the elements of faith — a sure knowledge and a hearty confidence. Do you have these? Then you have faith. O, yes, you and I have it now in earthen vessels, in the corruption and unbelief of our natures. We still cry out with the father of the demon-possessed child, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" But what a gift, a gracious blessing, to know God in Christ as the God of our sure salvation and to dare to come to Him with the confidence of adopted covenant children. That we have, by faith. Thanks be to God!

Faith And Salvation

Cornelius Hanko

The holy Scriptures teach us that salvation is by faith, and by faith alone. Of Abraham, the father of believers, it is said, "And he believed in the Lord: and he (the Lord) counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. 15:6. Jesus assured us, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36. Paul and Silas declare to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," Acts 16:31.

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It is almost universally proclaimed and accepted today, that salvation is from the Lord, but each individual must accept by his own free will the salvation that is offered to him in the gospel. Without a personal acceptance by his own free will he cannot be saved. God is willing, it is said, to have all men saved, but this is impossible without man's acceptance. One minister wrote, "In John 3:16, where it is said, 'For God so loved _____, that he gave his only begotten Son,' you can write your name there, regardless of who or what you are." Or as another preacher put it, "There are enough seats about the table of the wedding feast of the lamb for every man, women, and child that ever lived upon

the earth. If your place is empty, it is only because of you." Christ is standing at the door of your heart, so it is said, knocking, waiting, pleading to enter in, but the knob is on the inside, and only you can open the door. A mere sigh, some small expression of willingness is all that is necessary. But that is necessary on our part, without which God cannot save us.

It is hard to understand that those who love God can embrace such a God-dishonoring, Christ-degrading heresy. It is difficult to comprehend that anyone who knows his own sinful, rebellious heart, his stubborn nature, and his daily inclination to hate God and his neighbor, will assume that he of his own free will accepted Christ as his Savior. And it is equally hard to realize that those who profess from the heart that they love the Scriptures and the Reformed truth as expressed in the Five Points of Calvinism can adhere to a philosophy that God's love and desire can be frustrated by mere man, and that some of those for whom Christ died do resist the work of the Holy Spirit, or fail to persevere in the salvation merited for them.

The fact is that those who maintain that their salvation depends in part on their acceptance or upon their persevering unto the end, must always doubt, ever lacking the true assurance of faith. Either they may wonder whether they were really sincere when they accepted Christ as their Savior, or they must fear that the time might still come that they will fall away. The Canons state in V. 8, that if our perseverance in any way depended upon us, our backsliding would not only be likely, but would certainly happen. A Pelagian or an Arminian can never be assured of his salvation for the simple reason that a part of that salvation depends upon his faith. As is often said, a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. He may boast that he is saved by grace, but that boast can only rest in the hope that God will accept his "faith" as genuine and worthy of salvation. Paul, on the other hand, declares in no uncertain terms in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Let us take a closer look at this important passage of Scripture for a moment.

The 'for' refers back to the previous verse, where we are told that God wills to show the exceeding (the super-abundant) riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. God is the God of all grace. He Himself is the very essence of all that is beautiful, attractive, appealing. He is the God of infinite perfections, the ever blessed, adorable One. He reveals all His beauties and splendors in His favor to His people, His family, chosen unto Himself in Christ Jesus. He bestows the overflowing abundance of His grace in kindness upon such most unworthy and hopelessly lost wretches as we are. He changes children of Satan into sons and daughters, in His likeness to show forth His glory forever.

For *by grace* are ye saved! Our entire salvation is of God, through Him, and unto Him from eternity to eternity. "For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified," Rom. 8:29, 30. The past tense is used in each case, showing that with God all our salvation is complete in Christ, in no wise dependent upon us.

By grace are ye *saved.* In the first three verses of this chapter Paul reminds us of the horrible death that held us in bondage. "You who were dead in trespasses and sins." We were not like a lifeless corpse that does not stir, but we were dead in trespasses and sins. In all our desires, thoughts, words, and deeds we could only sin, ever increasing the measure of our sin and guilt. Our will was perverted, so that as enemies of God we despised all that was holy and took keen delight in transgressing God's commandments. We were like a child who is told not to do a certain thing, and therefore deliberately does it. Our minds were darkened, for we called good evil, and right wrong. All our words and deeds gave expression to the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life that controlled our whole life.

We were children of wrath, even as the world round about us. The curse that rested upon Adam and his posterity also rested on us. In that respect we were no better than those who perish in their sins. We were sold under sin, in ourselves hopelessly lost.

But God! There centers our only hope of salvation. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (notice the strong emphasis on God's love) even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:4-6. No, God did not love us as sinners. How can he love sinners, and yet visit them with His wrath and cast them into hell? But God did love us in Christ, even when we were still sinners, so that Christ died for us when we were in our sins. God regards us eternally in Christ, as members of His body. We belonged to Him even when He grovelled in Gethsemane, suffered and died on the cross. Our Communion Form states that we atoned for our sins in Christ, so completely

as if we had borne the guilt in our own flesh. Therefore when He arose, we arose in Him, and were exalted to heaven in Him. Again the emphasis falls on Christ's accomplished work that not only makes salvation possible, but actually saves!

Thus we are saved through faith. Faith is the living bond that unites us to Christ, whereby we become conscious partakers of Christ and of all His benefits. Faith is the power line through which the Holy Spirit bestows on us the blessings of salvation, and whereby we appropriate unto ourselves these spiritual blessings in intimate communion of life with our God. Scripture uses the figure of the vine and its branches, for the branches bear fruit only as drawing life from the vine, John 15:1-4. "Without me," Jesus says, "ye can do nothing."

But the objector raises the question: Does not man believe? Did Paul not say to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" Acts 16:31. And did not Jesus say to the father of the demoniac, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth," Mark 9:23.

To that the fathers answered in the Canons of Dordt, III, IV Head of Doctrine, article 14:

> Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him.

That is explicit language. Faith is conferred, breathed, and infused into us. This, therefore, takes place at the moment of regeneration. The Holy Spirit implants in us the life of the risen Christ, whereby we become new creatures, capable of knowing that which is spiritual, heavenly, and eternal.

The objection is also raised that God gives the power or ability to believe, but we must still perform the act of believing. The activity is ours, a condition, or requisite unto salvation. To that the fathers answer in the same article, continuing:

> Or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, *produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also.*

Returning now to the Philippian jailer — why, then, does Paul say: Believe and thou shalt be saved? The answer is that the Holy Spirit by the means of the Word arouses in him a conscious faith. He must have heard Paul preach, and that Word now becomes a power unto salvation by the operation of the Spirit in the jailer's heart. That was also the experience of the father of the demoniac, who burst forth in conscious assurance, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

The objection is raised, Does this not leave a person like a stock and a block? Does not this doctrine make one careless and profane, taking the attitude, "If God will save me, I will be saved, but I can do nothing about it?" Never may we lay the blame of our unbelief upon God or the holy Scriptures. Nor may we in any way minimize the power of God in completely controlling our lives and yet at the same time holding us responsible. "Who art thou, mere speck of dust, that repliest against God?" Rom. 9:20. The sovereign God is able to control our lives in their minutest detail, and yet cause us to remain responsible as rational, moral creatures.

Let us consider something of a different nature, yet which still implies God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Two young people are drawn to each other, are united in the bond of love, so that they vow to be faithful to each other as long as they live. This was their choice and desire. Yet God had eternally planned this union, even as God brings to every man his own wife, Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:6. God is able to carry out His eternal counsel through the thoughts and deeds of all mankind. God is sovereign, and we remain responsible.

In that same way God carries out His plan in condemning the reprobate, who dies in his sins, and in saving His elect through a conscious faith, which God works in us. Not faith is first, but regeneration. As new creatures in Christ we can say: I believe, and thereby also experience the joys of salvation in Christ Jesus.

That only increases the wonder: Saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of our sovereign God. To Him be the glory forever, world without end!



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The Object of Faith: Jesus Christ

Charles J. Terpstra

Saving faith is *personal.* Personal it is because saving faith is a spiritual grace worked in me personally as well as in every elect person. By this gracious gift God joins *me* to Jesus Christ, and applies to *me* the merits of Christ, so that by it *I* receive and make *my own* these riches of salvation. In other words, faith is personal because the *subject* of faith is a person, the individual child of God chosen in Christ. But faith is also personal because the *object* of faith is a Person. This Person is Jesus Christ. Saving faith has for its object Jesus Christ in all the fullness of His Person and work as the only Mediator and Saviour of men. This is what we want to examine together in this article.

Scripture certainly teaches that faith's object is Jesus Christ. If you look in a concordance under the headings "faith" or "believe", you will find repeatedly expressions such as "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21); "faith of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16); "faith in the Lord Jesus" (Eph. 1:15); "believeth on the Son of man" (Jn. 3:36); "believed in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16), and so on.

Also our Reformed Confessions make it plain that faith has for its object Jesus Christ. LD 11, Q&A 30 of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the fact that those who believe in Jesus with a true faith receive this Saviour, because they find in Him all things necessary to their salvation. Similarly, Article 22 of the Belgic Confession reads in part: ". . . The Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, appropriates him, and seeks nothing more besides him." The Westminster Confession, Chap. 14, paragraph 2, speaks of the "principal acts of saving faith", which are "accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace."

We might ask at this point however, Does not faith have *God* for its object? Do not the Scriptures speak of faith in God? And do we not confess with the Apostles' Creed that we believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Spirit? The answer to this is: Yes, the object of faith is the Triune God. Scripture certainly does speak of the believer's faith in God. We read this concerning Abraham, "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Of the Philippian jailor we read that he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." And there are other references (cf. eg., Tit. 3:8; I Pet. 1:21). Further, we do indeed make confession of our faith in the Triune God through the Apostles' Creed.

But at the same time we should understand that faith has its object in God *through* Jesus Christ. Christ is the revelation of the Triune God, the image of the invisible God, the only way to the inaccessible God. Just as no man can come unto the Father but by Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6), so no man can believe in God except through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Hence, faith has for its immediate and direct object Jesus Christ, and through Him faith focuses on the Triune God, our Father. This too is Scriptural. Jesus clearly implied this with His words in John 14:1, ". . . Ye believe in God, believe also in me." I Peter 1:21 teaches this more clearly where it says, "Who by him (ie., by Christ - CJT) do believe in God . . . ." So also does II Corinthians 3:4 where we read, "And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward."

But let us go on to examine this idea of faith's object more closely and specifically. And then we notice that no matter from what perspective we look at faith, it always and unmistakably has for its object Jesus Christ. If we consider faith as a *bond,* we see that faith joins us to none other than Jesus Christ in a personal union. By faith I am planted into *Him,* so that from *Him* I may draw out life and every spiritual nutrient my heart needs (cf. Jn. 15:1-5). Viewing faith from the idea of it being a spiritual *faculty* and *power,* we see that faith is the spiritual *eye* that causes us to focus on Christ, as Peter's eye fastened itself on Jesus, enabling him to walk on the water (Matt. 14:28, 29); that it is the spiritual *ear* that hears the voice and call of Christ in the preaching (Jn. 10:27; Matt. 13:16; Heb. 4:2); that it is the spiritual *mouth* that feeds upon and drinks Christ, the Bread and Water of life (Jn. 6:35; 7:37, 38); and that it is the spiritual *hand* by which

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we reach out to grasp and embrace Christ, just as the faith of the woman with the issue of blood caused her to reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment (Matt. 9:20-22).

Furthermore, if we take faith from the viewpoint of its *elements,* we understand that both the knowledge and the confidence of faith have for their sole object Jesus Christ. The believing child of God knows Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Cor. 2:2), counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and desires ever to know more of Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:8-10). Thus too he trusts, confides in, and relies upon Christ fully for all his salvation. Always the firm confession of the child of faith is: ". . . I know WHOM I have believed, and am persuaded that HE is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). In fact, we may say that the believer's personal assurance of his salvation is founded precisely on the truth that his faith rests on his Lord and on nothing else. If I trust myself, my own works, my own strength; if I rely upon any other creature for saving help, I will have no assurance that I am or will be delivered from sin. But when my faith rests solely on Jesus Christ, then I am steadfast in the conviction that nothing can or shall separate me from my Lord and His love.

Then finally we should ask, How does faith receive Christ? That is, How does the believer know that he must be united to Christ and His benefits to be saved, so that He also seeks union and fellowship with Him? How does the child of faith know Jesus Christ, so as to trust Him? How do I know that Jesus Christ is the One on Whom I should focus the eye of faith? How do I know His voice and recognize His call, so that with the ear of faith I may hear Him? How do I know that He is the spiritual food and drink my soul requires to live everlastingly? How do I know that He is the One Whom I should reach out to touch and cling to with the hand of faith? The answer is: through the *Scriptures.* The believer receives Christ as presented in the *Bible.*

There is an intrinsic and inseparable relation between faith in Christ and the Scriptures. In general that relation is this, that in the inspired and inerrant Word of God Christ is revealed. In and through His Word God makes known to every child of faith Jesus Christ in all His glory and power to save. Through the Scriptures God sets forth His Son as the sole Saviour of men. In that Word God reveals the plan of redemption accomplished through the incarnation, suffering and death, resurrection, ascension, and pouring out of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Christian believes this revelation and embraces the Christ of God set forth therein.

The Scriptures themselves emphasize this relation between faith in the Word of God and faith in the Christ set forth in them. Toward the end of his gospel account John writes, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:30, 31). God inspired John to write in order that we might believe His record and in that way believe in Jesus as the Christ to the obtaining of eternal life. The Bible also refers to specific examples of this. It was through believing the Scriptures that the disciples came to believe in the resurrected Christ (Jn. 2:22). And it was through faith in the specific Word of God in Isaiah 53 that the Ethiopian eunuch came to confess, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:26-37). Indeed it is true that the believer possesses a *biblical* faith.

But there is more to this relation. Specifically, faith in Christ through the Scriptures actually puts the child of God in fellowship with Christ. Receiving the revelation of God concerning His Son in the Bible, I am very really united to Christ to taste and enjoy living communion with Him. This is not something mechanical and artificial, but something very spiritual and real. It is due to the unique character of God's book on the one hand, and of faith on the other hand. This reality is dimly reflected in the experience of one who has read a human book and felt himself in contact with a certain character portrayed in that book. Perhaps we have read John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress,* and were able to identify with Christian as he made his trek from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. On a much deeper and higher plane this same experience is true of the child of God who by faith reads the Scriptures and partakes of the Christ portrayed therein. For the Bible is the revelation of God *in Christ,* and faith is always fundamentally the bond that unites us *to Christ.* Through the Scriptures, then, I am placed in living contact with Jesus Christ by faith.

Through the Scriptures, therefore, the believer always takes hold of Christ. Wherever he reads, he sees Christ — whether that be in the book of Genesis, or in the book of Psalms, whether in the gospels, or in the book of Revelation. From the Bible he receives the full portrait of his Saviour and over and over again he gazes into it to learn more of Him. Daily he searches the Word of God to know more of His Mediator and Redeemer, so that he might also seek and trust Him more fully. There he

sees Christ; there he hears the voice of Christ; there he discovers Christ as the Bread and Water of life; there he learns that Jesus possesses all power to heal his sin-sick soul and make him whole.

Consequently, faith also instinctively receives all the promises of God in Christ made in the Word of God. As our catechism states, the Christian believes "all things promised us in the gospel," (LD 7, Q&A 22). Whatever God has promised to grant unto and do for the child of God, that he believes and trusts. Has God promised to deliver him from all evil and bring him to glory in the day of his death? He believes this promise. Has God promised to bring the day of complete victory and salvation in the return of Christ? He receives this by faith and rests assured of this. And that he does because he also knows that in Christ all the promises of God are yea and amen (II Cor. 1:20). Because of Who Christ is and because of what He has accomplished, not one of the promises of God can fail or fall short.

Is our faith in the Christ of the Scriptures? Do we believe in Him Who is set forth therein? Then we may have steadfastness of confidence and sureness of hope that our salvation will be fully realized both now and to all eternity. For then we are "of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39).

Faith And The Means Of Grace

Robert D. Decker

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that faith: ". . . proceeds from the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." (q. 65) The sacraments are defined as:

> . . . holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross. (q. 66)

The catechism then asks:

> Are both word and sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation?
>
> A. Yes, indeed: for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross. (q. 67)

In this section the catechism carefully demonstrates from Holy Scripture that all of our salvation is in Jesus Christ. For us who are lost, dead sinners, Christ merited all righteousness by His atoning death on the cross. We receive that righteousness of Christ only through the gift of faith which is the bond uniting us to Christ. The question becomes: how do we receive faith? The answer is: we receive faith from the Holy Ghost who "works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments." Faith comes from God. The means by which God works and confirms faith in our hearts are: the preaching of the gospel and the use of the sacraments. Both the preaching of the word and the sacraments are: ". . . ordained and appointed for this end, (by God, R.D.D.) that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation." Thus the catechism introduces the doctrine of what is called in Reformed Theology, "the means of grace."

What is meant by this concept? The word "grace" has a variety of uses in Scripture. The word itself means: "pleasantness, attractiveness, beauty." It is most commonly used in the Bible in the sense of the power by which God saves His people in Christ. Grace is the power by which God makes the dead sinner beautiful and acceptable to Himself. It is in this sense that we speak of grace in the concept, the means of grace. "Means" may be

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defined as elements from our world of experience adapted to our human existence and nature. Food and drink, for example, are means which God uses to nourish and sustain our physical life. It should be understood that these means are effective because it pleases God to ordain and use them for this purpose. This is why we must use these means. Because God ordained and uses food and drink to sustain our bodies we must use these means or we will starve to death. Further, because God is pleased to use these means *always* to sustain us we are able to use them. If God used food one day to nourish us and the next day to poison us we could never depend on those means. Means, then, are elements from our world ordained and used by God always in the same way, for the same purpose.

The means of grace, those elements which the Holy Ghost ordained and always uses to "work and confirm faith in our hearts" are: the preaching of the gospel and the use of the sacraments; Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Of these two means the preaching of the gospel is the more important. It is that because preaching is indispensable. The Holy Ghost always uses the preaching of the gospel to *work* faith in our hearts. The Spirit uses the sacraments to *confirm* that faith in our hearts, (q. 65). The Holy Ghost: ". . . *teaches* us in the gospel, and *assures* by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon the one sacrifice of Christ . . ." (q. 67). The sacraments are signs and seals appointed by God: ". . . that by the use thereof, he may *more fully* declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel . . ." (q. 66). Preaching is, therefore, the chief and indispensable means of grace. Without the preaching of the gospel we can never come to the consciousness of faith.

The preaching of the gospel and the use of the sacraments are the means of grace because it pleases God to use these to work and confirm faith in our hearts. And, because God always uses these means for this purpose, the church must faithfully preach the gospel and administer the sacraments; and believers must use these means.

It is true that in a certain sense all things are means of grace for God's people. God can use personal Bible study to strengthen our faith. In the same way God can and does use the Bible study societies of the church to strengthen our faith. Indeed, all things, the Bible says, work together for our good. "Our good" is our salvation. But the truth remains: the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments are *the* means by which it pleases God, the Holy Spirit, to work and confirm faith in our hearts.

This is the clear teaching of Scripture. Romans 10:13-17 makes plain that whoever calls upon the Lord's name shall be saved. One cannot call upon the Lord's name without believing in Him. One cannot believe in Christ without hearing Christ and one cannot hear Christ without a preacher who is sent. Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me," (John 10:27). Or again, the Lord said: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life," (John 5:24). The inspired apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," (II Cor. 5:20). These Scriptures and more make clear that the word of mere man cannot work faith in our hearts. We need to hear the word of God Himself in and through Jesus Christ. Only God's Word in Christ can work faith in our hearts so that we know and are assured that God has forgiven our sins and granted us everlasting life because Jesus died for our sins and was raised on account of our justification. We hear the Word of God in Christ, the voice of Jesus, by means of the preaching of the gospel. In this way and for this purpose the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts.

The utterly serious implications of this truth are: 1) God in Christ through the Holy Spirit saves, not man. Christ is the officebearer, *the* preacher. Christ does the calling, the Holy Spirit works the faith in our hearts. Christ and His Spirit do this by means of a preacher. The preacher is one through whom it pleases Christ to speak His Word to His church. 2) The content of preaching must be the Word of God in Christ preserved for us in the inspired, infallible Bible. The preacher has nothing of his own to bring to the pulpit. He is strictly limited to the Word. He must preach Christ: nothing more and nothing less. And when he preaches Christ he will be preaching God, the sovereign God in all His glory! This is true, for: ". . . God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," (II Cor. 5:19). 3) The preacher must, therefore, expound the Word. He must, if you will, expose the text. His calling is to explain the concepts of the text, indicate the relationships among those concepts, and determine *the* message of the text as it applies to the lives of God's people. He does this by comparing Scripture with Scripture, for Scripture is its own interpreter. This takes a great deal of hard work and much fervent prayer. The preacher has many duties: he must visit the sick, counsel those with problems of one sort or another, bury the dead, and together with the elders he must rule the flock of God. In addition he has certain broader responsibilities: he must attend the classis and synod meetings, serve on various committees, give public lectures, write for the

church periodicals, etc. But, among these duties there is one which takes precedence, *viz.*, preaching the gospel. Nothing must interfere with this. God's people must understand that if they are to hear Christ on the Lord's Day, believe on his name and be saved, the preacher needs the time to prepare expository sermons in which the Word of God is clearly explained. The fact remains that this is the means which the Holy Spirit uses to work faith in our hearts.

The Spirit confirms this faith by means of the sacraments. The sacraments are visible signs and seals of the invisible grace of God. They are signs ordained by God to represent His grace: the water of baptism signifies the washing away of our sins by the blood of Christ and the bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of our Lord. The sacraments are also seals, and a seal is a guarantee that what is signified is true for us. Hence the sacraments signify and seal the righteousness of Christ which is by faith in the hearts of believers. Together with the preaching of the gospel the sacraments are the means which the Holy Ghost uses to direct the faith of believers to the sacrifice which Christ offered on the cross as to the only ground of their salvation.

Our calling with respect to the means of grace is plain: we must not neglect them, we must use them. If we neglect them, we shall surely starve spiritually. Using them we have the only comfort in life and in death because the Holy Ghost will work faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel and confirm it by the use of the sacraments. By these means the church will be gathered, preserved, and delivered up into glory.

The Prayer Of Faith

Gise J. Van Baren

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). There are those times when one could almost wish that the text meant, as some would insist, that such prayer could heal the sick or raise the dead. Just yesterday, we had the funeral service for a little seven-year-old boy. His brother and a friend remain hospitalized in critical condition — all this, after an automobile "accident". If only one could pray over those and restore to life and full health! Do not others claim this power? Does not Scripture speak of such power? Did not Jesus and His disciples so work? Is not the Spirit of Pentecost yet with us today?

But our prayers were not for that kind of miracle. In humble submission, we could only pray, "Thy will be done."

There is a relationship between living faith and lively prayer. He who has faith, prays. He who prays in truth, can do so only out of faith. Faith produces prayer, and prayer strengthens faith.

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There are many passages of Scripture which speak of the power of prayer. James, in the often-quoted chapter 5, states in verses 13-16, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Christ Himself declared in Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Does the believer's prayer have the power to remove literal mountains or heal sick people or raise the dead? Pentecostals teach this — though none of them, to the best of my knowledge, has ever claimed to have moved a mountain.

Scripture teaches the power of the prayer of

faith. The power is greater than the ability merely to move physical objects or heal the physically sick. Christ, of course, is not speaking of literal mountains — there would be no point in moving literal mountains. But the trials, the difficulties of life, the problems one faces, the "mountains" of life — these all have been dealt with through prayer. James likewise speaks, in connection with the prayer for healing, of sins: "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him", and, "confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." The primary emphasis is upon the removal of the offence. There is a spiritual sickness, more real than physical illness, which is healed in the way of earnest prayer and godly confession. The prayers of the saints truly avail much. Let none minimize the value and necessity of prayer.

Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness, according to our Heidelberg Catechism. By it, we give thanks to our God for our marvelous salvation; through it, we have our faith strengthened. The same catechism reminds us, "God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them." We are taught there also of the requisites of proper prayer, among which are, "that we be fully persuaded that he, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as he has promised us in his word" (L.D. 45).

Active faith, then, does not simply wait to see what God will send us. Rather, prayer is deeply connected with this faith. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

The prayer of faith requires first of all a thorough knowledge of Scripture. One can not simply come before God's throne — and ask for anything he pleases. This is the error of the Pentecostal. He would ask for anything and everything. One reads of those who pray the divine guidance of the Spirit to find a certain address within a city. Another may ask a special sign from heaven to indicate the answer to a certain question, as: should I take this particular job? God indicates in His Word that He has given to His people sanctified wisdom. He has set forth His law which must guide us. The Christian must be guided by these to make decisions which are pleasing to our God.

But in the Word, God has promised other things to us in the way of our asking. He has promised us those spiritual blessings of love, grace, mercy, truth, and wisdom through Jesus Christ. James states in 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

We are to ask for divine guidance and care in our daily lives. He has promised to be with us even to the end of the world. He has promised that no man can snatch us out of His hand. He has promised that all things work together for our good. For all of this we are to ask Him. In the way of our asking, we also receive all of this.

We are to pray to Him in times of trouble and adversity. Sickness comes. Death strikes. Persecution and imprisonment occur. We know not the outcome of all of these. Therefore, in the way of prayer, we ask that God will provide. We present to Him our own needs, believing that He will answer us in harmony with His will. Of course, in sickness and suffering, we pray for relief: healing, if it be His will; grace to face the last enemy, death, if He should so determine. He knows, and we tell Him, of our desire to remain here on the earth for a time. He knows whether it is more needful for us to remain here now — or whether it is the time to be taken to be with our Lord in glory.

The prayer of faith receives an answer. We pray, knowing that truth. We pray not in ignorance of the will of our God. We can not just pray for whatever enters our minds — with the pious claim that God will answer the prayer in His own way. But praying in harmony with His Word, we know we receive a proper answer. We look for that, believing that we shall receive.

Scripture also reminds us of the urgency of prayer. In Luke 18, Christ spoke the parable of the importunate widow in order to teach us that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." In I Thess. 5:17 we are taught, "Pray without ceasing." The man of faith is a man of prayer.

There are, however, times which prayer seems impossible. Not infrequently, I have heard the very ill state, "I can't pray". These even might feel guilty because of that fact. Their affliction is so grievous, their mind so clouded, that words of prayer can not cross their lips. But our gracious God has made provision for those situations also. In Romans 8:26 we read, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Then we are never without that wonderful gift of prayer: either we ourselves pray, or the Spirit Himself prays for us.

Prayer is the means whereby faith is strengthened. Without diligent prayer, faith becomes weak. There are those times when the Christian

becomes so involved in earthly affairs that he has little time for earnest prayer. He may utter a hasty prayer but has not a great deal of time to spend with his Lord. Such a one also shows, in all that he does, that he is not seeking those things which are heavenly. It is when the Spirit guides in greater faithfulness, when there is repentance of our sins of neglect, that one also enjoys that blessed, close relationship with our Father in heaven.

Never think that faith exists without prayer. The active faith revels in prayer to God. Faith grows and develops in the way of earnest prayer. Seek not what God has not promised; but ask for that which is ours through Jesus Christ — and you shall receive.

Faith And Creation

Herman C. Hanko

Evolutionism is not new in the church. Already in the forties, when I was going to grade school, evolutionism was not foreign to the Christian School system. I was, e.g., taught in grade school geography classes that the Appalachian Mountains in the East were much lower than the rugged Rockies in the West because the Rockies were newer mountains than the Appalachians; the latter had eroded for many more millions of years and had been worn down over this long period of time. When I was going to Calvin I had some of my science courses with Dr. John De Vries, the author of "Beyond The Atom," and the one, more than anyone else, responsible for introducing evolutionism in Calvin by means of his "Period Theory."

Since those days I have followed the creation-evolution debate with a keen interest and read as much of the material as possible. Especially the writings of the men from the Creation Research Society were attractive to me and their defense of creation in six 24-hour days cheered me.

But over the years it seemed to me that in one important respect the debate missed the point and the antagonists in the debate seemed either to be talking past each other or talking about less than fundamental questions. These questions really have to do with the subject of this article: "Faith and Creation."

In order to understand what I want to say, it might be wise to back up a bit. I am not concerned with the evolutionists themselves and with a refutation of their position. Nor am I concerned really with those evolutionists within Christian churches who have sold the truth of creation for a mess of evolutionistic pottage, and who have done this by relegating the whole of the creation account in Scripture to the trash heap of myth or saga or poetry, or whatever happens to be the latest fad. They have denied the Bible and have forfeited their right to be members of the Christian church.

What does concern me is the whole question of the relation between faith and creation. When I was taking a course in Physical Science with Dr. John De Vries in Calvin, he emphasized correctly the importance of faith as the starting point in the scientific work of the Christian. But when he got around to talking about faith, he would often remark that Christians ought not to be scorned by unbelievers for starting with faith, for unbelieving scientists did the same thing: they too started with faith. This struck me as being strange. But it soon became evident that faith was being defined something like this: "Faith is an acceptance of unproved (and unprovable) assumptions." The believer starts with a faith which accepts the Bible as the Word of God — something which he cannot prove, at least in a rational or logical way. But the unbeliever does the same thing. The basic assumptions on which he operates are equally unprovable. E.g., he cannot prove the eternity of matter or explain how matter, from which all things developed, came into existence. So we both start out with faith; only we both believe different things.

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

This same method often appeared in the writings of the men from the Creation Research Society. I do not want to leave the impression that I do not appreciate much of the work which they are doing. Nevertheless, I sense a basic flaw in their argumentation. They argue that the evidence in the world about us is just as strong, if not stronger, for creationism than it is for evolutionism; and their whole apologetic is based upon the assumption that creation can be proved from evidence in the natural world. They too will admit that there are unprovable assumptions in this approach, but they insist that, while these must be accepted by faith, so the evolutionists also rest their case on unprovable assumptions which must be accepted by faith. Again we have the same implied definition of faith: the acceptance of that which cannot be rationally demonstrated. When I corresponded some years ago with the men of this organization on this question, their response was that this approach to the problem was necessary because they were fighting a battle (still going on) to win recognition for creationism in the courts, particularly as an approach to the teaching of science in the public schools. This is understandable. If they want creationism to be taught along side of evolutionism in the public schools as the approach taken in the science courses, they have to prove that creation is good science and scientifically demonstrable.

But all this is nevertheless unsatisfactory. And it is unsatisfactory because the definition of faith which is implied in all this is far from the Scriptural definition of faith. Even this unScriptural definition of faith would not be so bad if it were not for the fact that Scripture itself expressly connects faith and the truth of creation. I refer to Hebrews 11:3. After defining faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Scripture goes on in this passage to say: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Certainly it ought to be clear to all that this passage has a lot to say about creation and faith.

One of the first things which the passage says is that creation took place by the Word of God. And the result of this Word of God was that, "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This is clearly the very opposite of what evolutionism says. Evolutionism teaches that things which are seen are made from things which do appear. Everything we see in the world about us is, according to evolutionism, a development from other visible things. The Scriptures say that this is not so. The things which we see were not made of things which do appear. This is a negative statement. And it would seem that the Holy Spirit put this negatively exactly to set forth the truth over against evolutionism. The positive truth is found in many other places: Rom. 4:17; Gen. 1, 2; Ps. 33:6; Ex. 20:11, etc.

The question is how God created the world. Did God call in a moment every creature into existence by the Word of His sovereign power? That is what Scripture teaches. Or did God create in some evolutionistic way so that higher forms of life developed from lower forms? That is a denial of Scripture, and all kinds of talk to the contrary can never change that.

Hebrews 11:3 goes on to say that this truth concerning creation can only be understood by faith. It is not quite put that way in the text. The text asserts, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God . . . ." But the obvious implication of this is that faith is the only way that creation can be understood. No other way will ever really lead to the truth of creation. I am absolutely convinced that the world about us gives evidence of creation and that it contains not one shred of evidence for evolutionism. But this is beside the point. All the evidence from every branch of the physical sciences will never lead one to faith in creation. One may carry on years of study in geology, astronomy, comparative anatomy, and all the rest, but such a study cannot and will not lead one to the truth of creation. Scripture says that one understands this by faith. If one has faith, whether he be a child of five, or a man of sixty who has never taken a course in any science, he understands creation better than the one who has three PhD's in biology. One can only arrive at the doctrine of creation by faith.

But faith is not a mere acceptance of unprovable assumptions. Hebrews itself tells us what faith is. It is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Without going into detail about the exegesis of this statement, the point Scripture is making is simply this: Faith is that power by which the believing child of God clings to the promise of God and accepts that promise as true — all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

Now that is a crucially important point. It means that faith is a gift of God, a part of God's work of salvation in the hearts of His people, a blessing merited on the cross of Jesus Christ, a gift which belongs only to those who are saved. Faith in creation is part of faith in Christ and can never be divorced from it.

This means all sorts of things, but two points need especially to be mentioned here.

In the first place, the work of creation is inseparably related to salvation. It has been said so often one wearies of hearing it that Scripture is not

a scientific textbook (I have never known, heard of nor read of anyone who ever said it was), and that whether we accept the first chapters of Genesis as literal or figurative, is unimportant, for faith rests in that part of Scripture which reveals to us salvation in Christ. This kind of talk is a red herring to divert the argument into other channels. It is a bit of stupid nonsense which destroys the unity of Scripture. It is unbelieving philosophy which makes man wiser than God, for it gives to man the final right to pick and choose what parts of Scripture he happens to want and what parts of Scripture he would just as soon get rid of. All Scripture is the infallibly inspired record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, all Scripture speaks of Christ. Every word of every verse is another brush stroke in this marvelous portrait of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior which God has been pleased to give us. This is also true of the creation story. We cannot discuss this in detail; but let the reader remember that this creation is the realm in which God chose from all eternity to enact that marvelous drama of sin and grace; that Paradise the first is a picture of the heavenly Paradise; that this earthly was created after the pattern of the heavenly; that God's providential control of all He has made is to direct every creature towards the goal of the new heavens and new earth in which Christ shall be Lord of all. And therefore it is only by this saving faith in Christ that we are able to understand the truth of creation.

The second point which needs saying is exactly that the battle between creationists and evolutionists is not a battle over evidence in the natural world. It is not a question of whether creation can or cannot be proved. It is not a question of who comes up with the best arguments in a creation-evolution debate. To reduce the battle to this level is to miss the real nature of the battle and ultimately to lose it. If we are going to try to defeat an enemy which attacks our country by fighting on a different battlefield than he is fighting on and with different weapons than he uses, we are lost before we start. So in this battle. If the battle is only a rationalistic battle between two camps each of whom are trying to show that he has the superior arguments, we are sunk. The battle is between faith and unbelief. It is between those who believe in Christ for their soul's salvation and those who hate Christ and seek to destroy Him. There is where the battle lines must be drawn, for there is where Scripture draws them. It is a spiritual battle, and to forget this is basically to forget our calling to represent the cause of God and His Christ in the world.

By faith we believe the Scriptures. By faith we believe the Christ of the Scriptures. By faith we believe in creation. And by this faith we are saved.

New Congregation Organized in Canada

Thomas C. Miersma

On May 12, 1987, the evening of a beautiful Alberta spring day, the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church of Lacombe, Alberta, Canada was organized. The new congregation was formed by eight families and one individual, a total of thirty-two souls. The service was held at St. Cyprian's Anglican Church where the new congregation will also meet regularly and was conducted by Rev. Thomas Miersma, Pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton and by Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pastor of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Isabel, South Dakota. Some eighty souls, ranging in age from one month to seventy plus years, gathered to attend the organizational service. In addition to the Lacombe families those present came primarily from the Edmonton congregation of which the Lacombe families have been members.

Lacombe is a Central Alberta community centered around grain and hog farming, and is about the size of Hudsonville, Michigan. It is located about halfway between Alberta's two major cities,



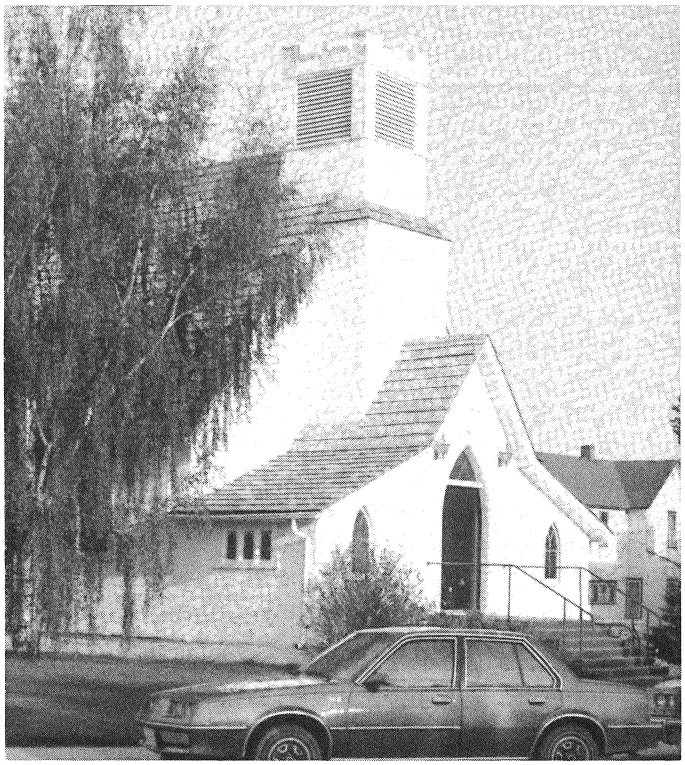
The new Lacombe congregation.

Edmonton to the north, and Calgary to the south, and is also located within a two to three hour drive of the great Canadian Rockies. Over half of the men in the new congregation are involved in some aspect of farming, with the remainder in the building trades. One of the young wives is a teacher in the Lacombe Christian School.

The organization of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church is a very special occasion in the history of our churches, not only because it adds another congregation to our denomination as a whole, but also because it is the second Protestant Reformed church to be organized in Canada (since the early 1950's, which churches later fell away). It is a special event also for our Edmonton congregation which, though losing a third of its members, will now have a nearby sister congregation. Nearby is of course a relative term, as they are separated by a distance of some ninety miles, but prior to this, Edmonton's nearest neighboring congregation was Lynden, Washington, approximately 750 miles distant.

It is also significant in that it is the second congregation to come into existence in Canada through the church extension work of a local congregation. Our Edmonton church itself was organized a little less than twelve years ago, as part of the church extension work of our Lynden congregation. The organization of Lacombe is the fruit of similar church extension work on the part of Edmonton and also of the commitment of the Lacombe families who have all been members of Edmonton for differing periods of time.

The history of Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church goes back over eight years to some contacts which were made by members of the Edmonton church with two families and some single individuals from Lacombe. These began attending services in Edmonton, and catechism classes and a Bible study class in Lacombe were begun and conducted by Rev. R. Moore, then pastor of Edmonton. While one of these families and some of the single individuals later left the group, the Lord has been pleased to add to the number in Lacombe in a variety of ways. When Rev. Miersma first came to Edmonton in 1982, the group consisted of two families, one newly established; and catechism classes and Bible Study were held every other week. During the year, another family joined the group, having moved from our Lynden congregation, and soon after a mother and two daughters joined, having moved from Kelowna, British Columbia. In time, the Lord brought one of these daughters and a young man from the Edmonton congregation together in marriage to form yet another family who eventually settled in Lacombe. The next year, the catechism classes and Bible Study were changed to a weekly schedule, and the Bible Study began meeting in a rented Lutheran church, rather than in the homes of members, as it had previously.



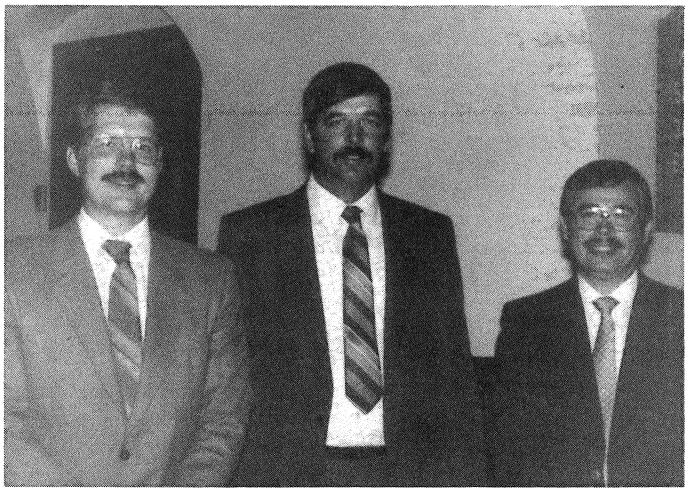
Meetingplace of the new Lacombe congregation.

Thomas C. Miersma is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

The group continued in this manner through 1985, when the consistory of Edmonton determined to start holding regular evening worship services in Lacombe on the second and fourth Sunday evenings of each month. This was, of course, in addition to the two regular services in Edmonton. Through all these years the families in Lacombe commuted the ninety miles to and from Edmonton each Lord's Day. This they continued to do even when the second evening service in Lacombe was added, driving to Edmonton for the morning service and returning to Lacombe for the evening service. These services, as well as the Bible Study were advertised in the local papers as well as by posters, and we began to have a few visitors from time to time. The Young People's Society of the Edmonton congregation, which meets in the homes of families of the congregations, as Edmonton does not have its own church building, also became involved and began holding its meetings periodically in Lacombe on Sundays when there were services in Lacombe. In the fall of 1986 the Lord brought another family into the group from the Lacombe area. This family had learned of our churches in part from relatives in Ontario who had had some contact through the mail with the church extension work of our South Holland congregation. This increased the number and size of the catechism classes in Lacombe and the Young People's Society not only grew but began to meet regularly once a month in Lacombe. It became increasingly clear that the Lord was blessing the labor in Lacombe and that it was time to move towards organization. The needs of the Lacombe families also had made organization increasingly necessary. Lacombe is a congregation of mainly young families with small growing children, and commuting ninety miles to and from Edmonton for church was becoming increasingly difficult. The addition of another family therefore prompted the Lacombe members to begin seeking approval for organization. The Lord indeed moves in ways beyond our expectations. As they were in the process of seeking organization yet another family from the Lacombe area joined them, and another young family moved from Edmonton to Lacombe because of employment.

Thus it was with the approval of Classis West that Lacombe was given permission to organize. It was with much joy that the families and friends gathered to hold the service on May 13 and the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church was organized.

Under the supervision of the Edmonton consistory appointed by Classis West for that purpose the service was conducted by Rev. Miersma who preached on Psalm 132:13-16, "The Chosen Habitation." At the first congregational meeting, following registration of members, election of officebearers was conducted. Mr. Wilbur Linker and Mr. John Wierenga were chosen as the new congregation's elders, and Mr. Irwin Tolsma as deacon. Rev. Kuiper read the Form for Installation. This was followed by the presentation of a set of communionware as a gift from the Edmonton congregation, and by a letter of welcome. Rev. Kuiper, on pulpit supply to the new congregation, closed the service and also preached for the newly organized congregation for their first Lord's Day together. He will be followed by many of the ministers of Classis West who will be preaching in Lacombe for two Lord's Days each.



(L to R) Messrs. Irwin Tolsma, John Wierenga, Wilbur Linker.

It is with deep gratitude to our Covenant God, Who alone builds His church that we record the organization of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church. The newly organized congregation also covets yours prayers on their behalf, that the Lord Who has brought them thus far, will also keep them in His care, faithful to His infallible Word, and to the truth we confess as Reformed believers. They now eagerly await the day when the Lord will provide them with the under-shepherd of His choosing, who may lead them on a regular basis in the green pastures of His Word.

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Book Reviews

THE CHURCH STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA, by John W. de Gruchy; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986; 290 pp., $10.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

This book was originally published in 1979 and is now being republished because of its enthusiastic reception. It deals at some length with the history of the church in South Africa and the history of race relations in the firm belief that the struggle with apartheid in that troubled country cannot be understood apart from its historical context.

If one wishes to know the perspective the book takes on the current struggle, it is sufficient to point out that Alan Paton wrote the foreword and that the book is recommended by Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak.

INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, 1536 EDITION, John Calvin (Translated and Annotated by Ford Lewis Battles); Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 396 pp., ISBN 0-8028-2319-X, Cloth, $25.00. (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema)

This is the earliest edition of Calvin's *Institutes,* written when he was just twenty-seven years old. It was published in Basel, Switzerland, in 1536. The definitive and authoritative edition is, of course, that of 1559, which was considerably revised and enlarged in comparison with this 1536 edition. If you are acquainted at all thoroughly with the 1559 edition, you will immediately sense the difference between it and this 1536 edition. Yet you will also be amazed at this 1536 edition and will be able to sense something of its significance and impact for the time when it was written, the early part of the Reformation period.

The value of this book is enhanced by: 1) The more than 100 pages of notes concerning the 1536 edition by Ford Lewis Battles. 2) The index which enables one to compare the 1536 and the 1559 editions. 3) The several interesting appendices on various subjects.

The publishing of this book is actually a joint venture of the Wm. B. Eerdmans Company and the H. Henry Meeter Center For Calvin Studies at Calvin College. A note informs the reader: "This translation of the 1536 edition of John Calvin's *Institutes* is the first volume in *Bibliotheca Calviniana,* a library of books by and about John Calvin to be co-published by the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. *Bibliotheca Calviniana* will include translations from French and Latin into English of the yet untranslated works of John Calvin, as well as English translations of major European studies of Calvin."

If this first volume is a sample of the quality of the entire projected series, it will be worthwhile to collect the whole series as it is published. Ministers and seminary students, though not they exclusively, should add this volume to their libraries.

CONFLICT AND CONTEXT, HERMENEUTICS IN THE AMERICAS; Edited by Mark Lau Branson and C. Rene Padilla; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986; 323 pp., $13.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Since this book is written by several different authors, we can best give the general idea of the book by quoting from the blurb.

> Organized to investigate the implications of the growing trend toward contextualization of the gospel, the "Context and Hermeneutics in the Americas Conference" was held in November, 1983.
>
> This book is a collection of papers, study group reports, and transcriptions of plenary discussions from that conference. It records the lively, candid, and occasionally fiery discussions that took place when a culturally and denominationally diverse group of Christians grappled with vital issues facing the church.
>
> Among the questions addressed at the conference were: How does a church's cultural context affect its interpretation of the Bible? What impact does this have on such basic theological concepts as Christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology? What dangers exist in contextual hermeneutics? What checks can be helpful?

The book gives ample evidence of the distorted hermeneutics which underlies liberation theology.

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD, OPPOSITION, TENSION, OR TRANSFORMATION? by Robert E. Webber. Zondervan Publishing House, 1986; 333 pp., $11.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The author is associate professor of theology at Wheaton College and has written this book primarily as a text for college and seminary courses

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dealing with church and society issues. Yet the broader and stated purpose is to provide pastors and laymen alike with some understanding of the role of the church in social and political issues which confront her.

The book is mainly historical — and this is its chief value — tracing the history of the church in relation to the state from the time of Pentecost to present-day conservative and liberal movements, including the Moral Majority and the Catholic bishops' statements on social issues. The book promotes a social activism and particularly from a general post-millennial position. It has a great deal of worthwhile historical material in it and has become a rather influential book in neo-evangelical circles.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their heartfelt sympathy to Jerry and Shirley Vander Kolk and family in the sudden death of their son, JARED, on June 24, 1987.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

Joel Zandstra, Pres.
Kathy Feenstra, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands expresses its deep sympathy to its fellow member, Elder Ed Gritters and family, in the sorrow experienced in the loss of their young grandson, JARED VANDER KOLK, who was killed in a severe automobile accident.

Jehovah is our comfort, He is the Rock in Whom we trust and Who gives grace that we may confess: — "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15)

Rev. K. Koole, President
Charles E. Van Meeteren, Vice Pres.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church extend its sincere Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Vander Kolk in the death of their son JARED LEE.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15)

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Henry Boer, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Pella, IA on Wednesday, September 2, 1987, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or of transportation from the Des Moines airport should notify the Clerk of the Pella Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 15, 1987, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. STUART J. BYLSMA, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them and would like to thank them for the years of love and covenant instruction they have given us. It is our constant prayer that God will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore." (Psalm 121:8)

Gary and Marilyn Bylsma
Rich and Marcia Flikkema
Jan and Carole tenHaaf
Tim and Sharon Rus
Phyllis Bylsma
and 17 grandchildren

SYMPATHY RESOLUTION

The Adult Bible Society of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church expresses Christian sympathy to the Bill Oomkes family in the death of a father and grandfather, JOE OOMKES on June 17, 1987.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; so that where I am ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3)

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 28, 1987 our parents, MR. AND MRS. DICK KOOIENGA, celebrated their 60th anniversary. We rejoice with them and give thanks to God for their love and the covenant training they have given us.

We pray that He will continue to bless them in the years He may give them.

"So we thy people and sheep of the pasture will give thee thanks forever; we will show forth thy praise to all generations." (Psalm 79:13)

Bob and Joan Miedema
Earl and Lois Dykstra
Rog and Lucille Kooienga
Arnold and Donna Dykstra
Don and Judie Sall
Don and Mary Kooienga
Stan and Bette Dykstra
34 grandchildren
56 great-grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sunday School teachers and students of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their sincere Christian sympathy to Jerry and Shirley Vander Kolk in the sudden death of their son, and to Brian, Brent, and Joel in the loss of their brother, JARED LEE VANDER KOLK on June 24, 1987.

"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)

John Mulder, Superintendent