

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...It is impossible, but it would be interesting, if it were possible, to determine how much of our energy and how many of our desires, during the course of one day, are directed towards the things of God and His Word—even when we are in Church on Sunday or when we are busy with prayer and Scripture reading. It is safe to say that whole days go by when not one desire is found in us for anything other than the things of this present world.

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice" —page 271

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MEDITATION

Wholly Carefree

Rev. H. Veldman

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." I Peter 5:7.

God's elect strangers (I Pet. 1:1-2) are exhorted in this Scripture to cast all their care upon the Lord. It is obvious that verses 6 and 7 are inseparably connected. Fact is, they really constitute one admonition. In verse 6 we are admonished, negatively, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, never to rebel against Him. And in this Scripture we

are exhorted, positively, to cast all our care or cares upon the Lord, inasmuch as He cares for us.

Prayer Day — shall we pray? However, on the one hand, does not almost everyone pray? Is not prayer, especially in our land, very common? And, on the other hand, we certainly have many cares,

do we not? How many are our needs, nationally and internationally, economically, etc. Indeed, we need not ask: shall we pray? More difficult is the question: what shall we pray? Shall we merely pray for the satisfying of our carnal and material desires? But, we need not the Spirit to pray such prayers. And the disciples, in Luke 11:1, ask the Lord to teach them to pray. This means that our prayers, also on Prayer Day, and throughout all our days, must be Spirit-led, spiritual. What shall we pray? How fitting is the request of the disciples: Lord, teach us to pray. O, let us pray that the Lord may give us His grace to cast all our cares upon Him.

Cares — what are they?

Cares must never be confused with that which occasions them. There are things, or circumstances, of course, which occasion our cares, our worries. These circumstances, however, are never the cause of our cares or worries. Circumstances may and do occasion them. But they never cause them. After all, the child of God never really has a reason to be anxious or afraid. Do not all things work together for His good? Is not the child of God always perfectly and completely safe and secure in the midst of the world? If God be for us, can anything be against us? If the Lord be my light, whom shall I fear and of whom shall I be afraid?

Cares, anxieties, fears are always caused by ourselves. They are the products of our own soul. Cares, then, are fearful and anxious questions which rise up out of our own soul in connection with circumstances in which we are personally involved. They rise up within us in connection with problems which we cannot solve.

The question, however, is important: which cares must and may we cast upon the Lord? First, we should not confuse these cares of this text with purely earthly anxieties which arise out of a carnally-minded soul. These anxieties occur. The standard, then, of our "good" is worldly prosperity. We are anxious because we lack the things for which we care and which we desire. We may have incurred great debts in acquiring these carnal luxuries and now we cannot pay for them. And now we are filled with fear and anxiety. We must not cast these cares upon the Lord. He is surely not interested in them. We must rid ourselves of these anxieties before we ever have the impudent boldness to take them to God. And, secondly, to cast our cares upon the Lord does not mean that we become careless, that we cast upon the Lord that which we must do. We must surely be careful. We must indeed do what our hands find to do. Carelessness and indifference are not characteristics of a Christian. The laboring man must surely look for work;

the farmer must indeed sow his seed and cultivate his soil, and, spiritually, we must use the means of grace at our disposal, must surely be active in our use of them.

What are these cares in this Scripture? It must be obvious that Peter does not refer to spiritual cares, anxieties in connection with our personal salvation. Indeed, these anxieties may and do occur. The apostle, however, does not refer to them. The word "care" here must be understood in connection with earthly things and circumstances. The word itself has that meaning. It is thus used in Matthew 6 where the Lord admonishes us to take no thought for the morrow. And it is also used in this sense in Philippians 4:6-7 where we read that we must be careful for nothing.

The cares of this Scripture refer to those anxieties which rise up in our soul in connection with that over which we have no control, which things lie exclusively in the hands of our God. God alone works all things. But we can and often do become anxious. We would, as it were, lift ourselves up above the clouds and behold with our own eyes the work of God which is His work alone. O, as long as it is smooth sailing we have no worries. If only we have our bread every morning and evening. If only we have a job and are not bothered by unions. If only the farmer sows his seed and the rains descend in due time. If only we can "see our way through it all." But things can become different. Sorrow may become our lot. The laborer may lose his job and be unable to find work. The farmer may experience drought and see his crops burn up before his eyes. We so often would tear away the veil which hides the future and we would understand what only God knows. The way, then, becomes dark and there is nothing we can do about it. Cares and anxieties multiply; we become very fearful. How often we experience these cares!

Indeed, we must cast our *cares* upon God.

Negatively, this means that we must not pray that God remove the circumstances which may occasion our cares and anxieties. O, this does not mean that we may assume an attitude of indifference over against them. How could this be possible? We must not be stoics. However, this is not taught in this text. We read that we must cast our *cares* upon the Lord. Besides, this is not comforting to the Christian and never constitutes the essence of prayer. Presuppose that these circumstances are not removed. Besides, prayer must always be the effort of my soul to learn to know and to do God's will. Does not Christ Himself teach us this in the Lord's Prayer? Indeed, we do not cast "these things" upon God. It is not so that our will

must become His, but His will must become ours. Yes, we must cast our *cares* upon Him. Presuppose that these adverse circumstances continue, become worse. Yet, we must cast our cares upon God. Let us watch and be sober, look for His coming and prepare ourselves for it.

This implies, of course, first of all, that in our consciousness God must be One Who can and will bear our cares. On the one hand, He is my Father. To Him I may turn with all my anxieties, with all my troubles and sorrows. To Him I can direct my plaintive cry, make known to him all my earthly needs. To Him I may also direct all my fears. Besides, on the other hand, He is my Father Who can bear all my anxieties. He is everlasting and unchangeable love, in Himself, and in His relation to His own. His love is always first. Moreover, He is the Almighty — not the mightiest but the only Mighty One. He is surely able to care for me. And, He is also the Omniscient and All-Wise One, Who uses the best means unto the best end, causes all things to work together for my good. As this God of my salvation He has revealed Himself in His infallible Word and testimony.

Upon Him, now, we must cast all our cares. If and when our fears multiply, sorrows and grief are our lot, and our position as in the field of labor becomes acute; if the church's future becomes dark and it seems as though the cause of the Son of God and of His truth cannot possibly survive; if we become anxious and fearful and can see no way out, let God then bear our load, let Him give us the answer to all our anxious questions and fears. This means that we must seek to learn God's will and do it. Let the light of God's truth fall upon our path and may we believe in His word: My grace is sufficient for thee. May we then treasure His fellowship, taste His grace, walk in His way and experience the blessed assurance that it alone is the safe way, the way which surely leads to everlasting life and glory.

Only, to do this, we must walk in His way. We must not tempt the Lord our God, choose the way of evil and then implore His grace and favour. We, I repeat, must walk in His way. Walk as children of the Most High. Take all your questions to Him, but be satisfied with His answer. Trust in the Lord, for only then can you cast your cares upon Him. I must know that He is my Father, but then I must walk as His child. And we must trust in Him alone. He will indeed relieve us, but surely in His own good time. And in the meantime He will cause all these things to work together for our good. He is my God, now and forever.

This admonition is well grounded. We read: *for*

He careth for you. We have here the figure of a child who approaches his father with all his troubles. And this he does because he knows that his father takes a fatherly interest in him. How true this is in the spiritual sense of the word!

What a wonderful care we have here! Literally we read: He careth over you. He is ever covering you with His almighty and protective wings. Besides, we read: He careth over *you*. Indeed, in a certain sense the Lord provides for all. Of Him are the sunshine and the rain, and the ungodly as well as the godly partake of them. He feeds the unrighteous as well as the righteous, bestows a harvest upon the evil as well as the good. Yet, we read here: He careth for *you*. This care here is the divine care of love. Of this care only the people of God are the objects. Besides, we read literally here: He careth for you all alone. Thus it was upon the cross of Calvary. Alone He cared for us. Alone He suffered and died for us. Rejected of all, also of His own, He loved them even unto and into death, the fearful death of the cross and of hell. And the same is true also now. Alone He cares for us and over us. Intensely interested in our everlasting welfare is He. And even this is not all. We read: He careth for you; that is, He is caring for you. We do not read that He will care for you, sometime in the future. But He is caring for you, even now! Even now, at this very moment, He is caring for you, now when all things appear hopeless, when there is seemingly no way of escape. He is also now caring for you, causing also this affliction, this impossible situation to work for your salvation. Indeed, what a wonderful care!

So, what shall we say? Cast all your cares upon God, the God of your salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Why should we care, be anxious and afraid? Why should we carry these burdens, try to find a way out? Why should we attempt to effect our escape? Cast all your cares upon Him. Let the God of your salvation carry your load. If He be our light and our salvation, whom shall we fear and of whom shall we be afraid?

He can carry it.

He will carry it.

He is carrying it, for He is caring for you.

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.*

Editor's Notes

Singaporean Guest Article

In this issue you will find a very interesting account of the history of the G.L.T.S. by a member of the Executive Committee of that organization, Francis Quek. (His full name is Francis Quek Kok How. By the way, the Francis is a Christian name, such as many of the young people add to their Chinese names. But do not be misled by the "Kok". That has no connection with the Dutch name *Kok*.) The article was originally intended for our Mission Issue. Lack of space and the length of the article prevented its publication in that issue; and we did not want to spoil it by publishing it in two installments. Hence, read and enjoy it in this issue.

Publication Note

Some weeks ago we promised that all our RFPA publications would soon be back in print. To our dismay, however, we recently learned that 1,000 unbound copies of Prof. H. Hanko's *Mysteries Of The Kingdom* were inadvertently destroyed by our bindery. There will be a considerable delay, therefore, before this book will again be available. When we reprint, we want to make some necessary corrections and also add a textual index. Sorry for the delay! And please, especially those of you who have already ordered the book, have patience. The delay will be several months.

EDITORIAL

The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (2)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Before turning to a discussion of the Report itself, I must relate a significant exchange of letters between the official Information Service of the GKN and *Waarheid en Eenheid*, the paper which, as I reported earlier, published the entire Report on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture. This exchange of letters was published on the front page of the January 30 issue of *W & E*. It must be remembered that originally this same Information Service had sent the report to broadcasters and press with only the restriction that it not be published before the end of October. Later, after the Synod of the GKN adopted the report, it mandated its deputies (Information Service and Church and Theology) to prepare a reworked edition of the report "which can function in the local churches." Evidently *W & E*'s publishing of the report infuriated the deputies of Information Service. They accused *Waarheid & Eenheid* of violating the state's laws concerning authors' rights, accused them of having hindered the leadership of the churches, and accused them of causing still-to-be-estimated damage. But the deputies declared themselves willing to consider the incident closed if *W & E* would give written

notice, if necessary by telegram, promising to stop distribution of the Report immediately.

Talk about hierarchy! And this is not even hierarchy by a synod and synodical decision, but by mere deputies of the synod!

But *Waarheid en Eenheid* was not about to be bullied. They sent a very sharp letter of reproof to Information Service in which they pointed out the corruption and hypocrisy of the latter's position. The letter is too long to quote here, but I do want to say to *Waarheid en Eenheid*, "congratulations! Don't back down."

Meanwhile, the fact that the publishing of the original report/decision so riles the powers that be in the GKN makes one wonder if there is some kind of synodical skulduggery afoot with the edited version to be distributed in the churches. By a report "which can function in the local churches" do they perhaps mean a report that is more palatable and less overtly Scripture-denying? Time will tell.

Turning now to the Report/Decision itself, let me

first furnish a general outline. The Report begins with a brief introduction which traces the history of the Committee and its work and which also informs us that the various chapters of the Report were written by individual members of the committee, on the basis of discussions within the commission. It adds that while there is difference of views concerning the sub-sections, there is no difference of opinion among the deputies concerning the main lines.

Chapter 1 is entitled "Changes in the Concept Truth" and includes pages 3-12. Its author, I learned from another source, is Dr. C. A. van Peursen, a philosopher from the University of Leiden. Chapter 2 is entitled "Historical-Critical Investigation of the Bible" and includes pages 13-19. Chapter 3 covers pages 24-32 and deals with "The Developments of Views of Scripture in the History of the Gereformeerde Kerken." All of these chapters are really preparatory. In Chapter 4 the main subject is finally reached: "The Nature of the Authority of Scripture." This is by far the longest chapter, as might be expected, and runs from page 33 to 75. A concluding chapter, which is not less important for its being practical, is entitled "Together Farther" and includes pages 76 to 84.

Some of the material in these chapters is very abstruse and difficult to follow. This is particularly true, as might be expected, of the first chapter. But I will do my best to furnish the gist of each chapter and to furnish criticism. It stands to reason that the meat of the report is in Chapter 4. When we reach chapter 4, there will be little difficulty in making plain how the Report makes a complete shambles of the authority of Scripture and departs completely from the Reformed position. But it is also important to understand how the Report reaches that position. So the reader will have to exercise a little patience, as well as occasionally put on this thinking-cap, especially when the Report becomes somewhat abstruse, as in Chapter 1.

To the task, then!

The burden of Chapter 1 is that truth is what is called "relational." We must not have an objective conception of truth, nor a subjective conception; but we must conceive of truth as relational. To my mind, this is nothing but a refined brand of pure subjectivism; but about that later. First we shall have to try to understand these terms. For this chapter really determines the whole position of the GKN concerning the nature of the authority of Scripture. This relational conception of the truth is also applied to Holy Scripture and its explanation and understanding, with devastating results. In the main, the result is that anyone can make Scripture say whatever he wants it to say. I cannot refrain from pointing ahead to this, though I do not intend

to explain it immediately. But I want the reader to understand where Chapter 1 is going to take us. Eventually this Report is going to say that the Bible is no more trustworthy historically than are other sources. Eventually it will teach that when the Bible reports a great victory and a great slaughter of the enemy, that might, in fact, have been a defeat. Eventually it will say that the report of the incest of Lot's daughters (with the resultant birth of Ammon and Moab) is not factual at all, but merely a piece of folk-humor according to which they meant to say that all Ammonites and Moabites are bastards. All of this is possible because of the position taken in Chapter 1, that truth is "relational."

However, before we enter into the *contents* of this first chapter of the Report, let us take a look at its *methods* and *approach*.

In Reformed circles we have become quite accustomed to approaching any question posed in the churches and any study commissioned by a synod from the point of view of Scripture and the Confessions. This is especially true of any *major* study. Who among us would dream of conducting a study of the subject of the nature of the authority of Scripture without taking his starting point in Scripture and the Confessions? There we begin. There we find our basis. From these we derive our fundamental givens. And if it is necessary to shed light on some new error that may have arisen or on some contemporary problem or question or method which is not, let us say, directly touched upon in the confessions and on which the churches find it necessary to express themselves, we proceed on the basis of those fundamental givens of Scripture and the Confessions. This is the tried and true method which has been followed for centuries in Reformed churches.

The GKN in this Report have completely abandoned that method.

This is the first thing that strikes one who reads Chapter 1. The Report, so to speak, approaches the subject "from left field." Why begin a report on the important subject of the Authority of Scripture by discussing "changes in the conception of truth"? And if this were only meant to be introductory! But the thrust of this chapter and of the Report is that a changed conception of truth, i.e., the relational view, is correct, is to be accepted, and is to be determinative with respect to one's understanding of the nature of Scripture-authority. The chapter does not merely furnish some background information concerning today's thinking, information concerning the background of thought against which we must view the matter of the authority of Scripture and must maintain a Scriptural-confessional position concerning that authority. No, it purposes that a changed conception of what truth is also changes

our understanding of the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

This is bad enough in itself.

But then the Report proceeds to follow a completely philosophical approach and method in developing this entire subject of this changed conception of truth and in evaluating it and its implications with respect to the subject of Scripture and its authority. This is very striking. Even before I had read the information in one of the Dutch papers, I had come to the conclusion that the chief author of this part of the report had to be a philosopher, not a theologian; and, knowing that Dr. van Peursen was a philosopher, I had made an educated guess that he must be the author. And later information confirmed the correctness of my guess. That will give the reader some indication of how thoroughly philosophical this section of the Report is. It is possible, of course, to arrive at a Scripturally grounded

and confessional oriented answer to the question: how must we conceive of *truth*? But the Report spurns this approach. In fact, it really makes no attempt to prove that this contemporary, "relational" conception is correct. It simply assumes its correctness, and then proceeds on that assumption. In other words, granting for a moment that the basic approach of the Report (that is, from the viewpoint of the truth-concept) is correct, the Report then also begs the question. It assumes what it ought to prove.

And this implies from the outset that the whole Report really comes crashing down of its own weight. For it is this unproved relational conception of truth that forms the basis of the entire Report.

Nevertheless, we shall have to consider this so-called relational conception of truth in order to understand the rest of the Report. But this will have to wait until next time.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

March 15, 1981

Dear Timothy,

The emotions of man have always been hard to understand. This is not because we are not familiar with them for we experience our own emotions every moment of our life. But (and this is true of all those things which are most familiar to us), although we know them so well from personal experience, when we try to describe what they are and understand them somewhat, then we run into all kinds of trouble.

We tried to understand some of these emotions last time and discussed, among other things, our desires. I want to say a bit more about these desires because they constitute such an important part of our life.

From a purely formal point of view, all our desires must and can be controlled by our wills. This is not only true of the child of God; it is true of every man. And it is precisely this need for a man to control his desires by an act of his will which creates in man a conflict and a struggle. This must not be confused with the struggle which Scripture describes between the "old man of sin" and the "new man in Christ." This is a struggle which every man experiences.

In fact, this struggle is especially to be found in wicked men because their desires always far exceed their actual possessions. They "want" many more things than they actually have. In fact, as a general rule, they always want more than they have no matter how much they possess. Though they become extremely wealthy, rarely are they content with their accumulated wealth; they still want more. And if they have every thing which money can buy, then their desires turn to lust, or power, or pleasure, or fame. The point is that it is not usually to be found in the world that a man desires nothing. It is exactly this that creates the struggle. The simple fact of the matter is that he has got to control his desires in some measure; or, not controlling his desires but letting them run wild, he has got to control himself so that he does not, outside the law, seek to gain for himself what he does not possess.

It is not, of course, wrong merely to desire. But those desires can be and are wrong when one or more of three things are true. They are wrong, first of all, when they are directed towards things which God has forbidden in His law. When a man desires something which belongs to his neighbor, he sins.

When a man desires gluttony or drunkenness, he sins. When a man desires to desecrate the Sabbath he sins. The object of his desire is wrong. In the second place, desire is wrong when certain things are desired in the wrong order or in the wrong measure. It is not wrong to desire our daily bread. But we desire our daily bread wrongly and in the wrong measure when we want butter on our bread too. We desire things in the wrong measure when we desire more than God has been pleased to give us. And we desire things wrongly when we desire them in the wrong order. This is very common. We are not wrong in desiring the forgiveness of sin; and we are not wrong in desiring the shelter and clothing we need for our pilgrimage for the next day. But when we put these things in the wrong order, then our desires become wrong. When our desire for our daily bread is greater than our desire for the forgiveness of sins, then we do wrong. And finally, our desires are wrong when we desire to obtain something in a way God has forbidden. The desire itself is not so much wrong; but our desire is so strong that we attempt to acquire what we desire in a way God disapproves of.

Now the desires of the wicked are always wrong because one or more of the three things above characterizes their desires always. But the Christian faces also this same struggle. A wicked man curbs his desires and holds them in check oftentimes. If he badly wants his neighbor's car, he is not likely to walk over to his neighbor's house and drive it away. Every time he comes home from work he may see his neighbor's car in the driveway and sense a mighty longing to have that automobile. He may even gnash his teeth in frustration that he cannot have it and that it is not his. But he will probably not go over and take it. He will curb his desire by an act of his will and refrain from satisfying his desire. It doesn't take grace to do that—not even common grace. All it takes is a certain fear that he will be discovered and not only wind up in jail for all his troubles, but lose the car besides. There is no grace involved. So it is in the life of the wicked man in everything which he does. He has countless desires of one sort or another. Basically and fundamentally every single one of them is wrong because he does not desire God and he divorces every one of his desires from God. But these desires are also wrong for the reasons mentioned above. Yet he restrains himself oftentimes — most of the time — because he knows that the consequences would often be worse than doing without what he desires. But if he sees any hope at all, in one way or another, to gain the object of his desire, he will, of course, do it.

Now the believer faces a deeper struggle than this. He too is a creature with desires. Apart from

grace and the work of regeneration he is no different from the ungodly person. But the work of regeneration and salvation by grace does make him different. It makes him different in this respect: he has been given a new heart and the power of sanctification so that also all his desires are put under the influence and direction of grace. Yet the difficulty is that this is true of him only in principle so that he still carries about with him a nature which is wicked in its desires.

Centrally and basically his one desire is God. This is the fruit of regeneration. His heart pants for God like a hart panting for water brooks. His soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord. He desires God's honor and glory above all else. He desires God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven. He desires God's kingdom and the final victory of Jesus Christ. And he desires all this for God's sake. His desire is directed so completely towards God that what happens to him is secondary. He submerges himself in his desires for God and the glory of His name. All his personal desires are subordinate and secondary to these. Whatever he desires for himself is ultimately also for God's sake. He desires his soul's salvation; but he desires this even because in the way of salvation God is glorified. He desires his daily bread; but this too he wants because it is by means of receiving his daily bread that he can continue his pilgrimage in the world so that God's purpose in his life is realized to God's glory.

But you readily understand that this is true only in very small principle. He also has a very wicked flesh which he still carries with him wherever he goes and in whatever he does. And that nature is as wicked as that of anybody in the world. Thus his struggle is much deeper and more profound than the struggle of the wicked. The wicked struggles on a natural level and his struggle is always within the context of sin. Although it is better that he does not steal his neighbor's car (if he does, he will have a deeper place in hell), ultimately whether he does steal it or does not steal it affects in no way his salvation or his standing with God. In both respects he sins. But the believer has a deep struggle. His desires must be directed by his will too; but his desires must be under the control of a will which is, in turn, under the control of grace. And for that to happen he must wage relentless warfare against all the wicked desires of his flesh. It may be that he too covets his neighbor's automobile. But should he restrain himself from going over there to steal it, he has not, by that restraint, started on the path of sanctification. The wicked do those too, and he can take no satisfaction from resisting that urge. Much, much more is required of him. It is required of him that he get down on his knees and confess his sin of

covetousness. It is required of him that he get his priorities in line with Scripture. For he would not covet his neighbor's car if he did not set earthly things above the spiritual treasures of heaven. His treasures are on earth because the Lord says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." And his heart is upon earthly things. He will have to learn the meaning of contentment—a great lesson concerning which even the great apostle Paul writes that he had to *learn* to be content. And he finally learned it in a cold, damp, dank, dark prison cell in Rome where he stood in imminent peril of having his head chopped off (Phil. 4:11). And then, having learned all this, he will have to learn to desire God. He will have to learn to desire what is holy and right and good. And he will have to learn also (and this may be the hardest lesson of all) that he cannot do all this of himself, but that he must learn to rely on Christ, receive all things out of Christ, and walk in the strength which Christ alone can provide. But this will take all his life long, and indeed, when he stands at the end of the journey and waits only for the door of his home to open that he may enter there, he will still say: "I have but a small beginning of the new obedience."

It is important that we learn these things. Many of our troubles which we have in life arise out of our inability to keep our priorities straight. Especially in this day of great affluence and huge material possessions, our lives are centered in and directed towards the things of this world. Our desires are focused upon these things. It is impossible, but it would be interesting, if it were possible, to determine how much of our energy and how many of our desires, during the course of one day, are directed towards the things of God and of His Word—even when we are in Church on Sunday or when we are busy with prayer and Scripture reading. It is safe to say that whole days go by when not one desire is found in us for anything other than the things of this present world.

If we are the people of God this is bound to lead to great trouble. For God will not let us alone. And the conflict becomes very bitter and fierce within our own flesh. Out of this arise many of our troubles. The healing comes through the power of the cross and grace.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Current Events

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

For centuries the Church of Christ has heeded the admonition of the apostle Peter in I Peter 4:7: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." No doubt many an Old Year's sermon has been preached on this passage. We today also hear its warning and prepare ourselves for the return of our Lord. We consider the events which take place in the world about us and quickly arrange them in their proper perspective. We perceive with our Spirit-enlightened minds just exactly how these actually *work* toward Christ's return. All of them are ordered by His hand in order to bring about His return. Certainly, as we interpret the current events which take place in the world about us we are able to organize them according to the perspective of Scripture. They agree with the Scriptural givens which delineate the signs of Christ's return.

Such an organization of current events, however, is never pursued by the newspapers and news

magazines of the day. Of course not! The writers and publishers of these are ungodly men of this world! They do not understand nor do they watch for the signs of Christ's coming!

It is for this reason then that it would be most interesting to see some of the current events organized in their proper way. This we will now do.

"The beginnings of sorrows (birthpangs WB)" are those signs that have occurred even before the first advent of Christ. It is fitting therefore that we begin with them. Jesus tells us of them in Mark 13:8, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows."

"There shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles. . . ."

The eruption of Mt. St. Helens on May 18, 1980, left more than 60 dead or missing. "I think it's

reasonable to expect that any of the large volcanoes in the Cascade Mountains have the potential for this kind of eruption," was the remark of Robert L. Christiansen, a volcanologist.

On October 10, 1980 an earthquake struck the Algerian city of Al Ansam leaving 400,000 homeless and killing about 10,000 people. On November 23, 1980 another earthquake unleashed its forces on southern Italy. It left about 3,000 dead and another 1,574 people missing.

Last summer the United States was plagued with drought. Crops withered and died in more than a dozen states succumbing to the sun's blistering heat. Crop and livestock damage was estimated at 12 billion dollars.

In late November of 1980 Southern California was struck with a week of raging brush fires. These fires destroyed 423 houses and 140 square miles of timber. This natural catastrophe was preceded earlier in the year by torrential rains and gale-force winds which ripped through Southern California and central Arizona claiming the lives of 26 people.

It was early 1981 when the worst flood to hit the southern Philippines in two decades killed 71 people and sent 300,000 fleeing to higher ground.

"And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be. . ."

Saudi Arabia will soon sign an 800 million dollar pact to help Pakistan make an atomic bomb.

Thousands of teenagers have taken up rifles and joined the civil war that has claimed over 8,500 lives in El Salvador. They have joined the guerrilla bands which rebel against the military-civilian government.

In January, Irish republican guerrillas bombed their way into the castle of Protestant leader Sir Norman Stronge and shot him and his son to death. Police blamed the outlawed Irish Republican army for the attack, but other sources say it looked like a "tit-for-tat assassination" by the Marxist Irish National Liberation Army.

When the King of Spain, King Juan Carlos, visited the Basque Parliament he was greeted with fist fights between Basque separatists and police. The Basques are demanding more autonomy for their region than had been granted in a recent home-rule decree.

Makeshift firebombs were found inside two U.S. Army observation helicopters in West Germany last month. There was no indication as to who planted them.

There yet remain today 200,000 Asian War refugees in Asian hold camps. These refugees were

forced to leave war-torn Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. But they had nowhere to go. Many must wait to be resettled in some country which is willing to take them. They wait in crowded, unsanitary camps.

With a few days left in his administration President Carter warned of the growing Soviet "war machine." President Reagan takes a firm stand over against Russia. The Soviets "don't subscribe to our idea of morality. They don't believe in an after-life. They don't believe in a god or a religion, and the only morality they recognize therefore is what will advance the world of socialism." Because President Reagan is openly hostile toward the Soviet Union they turn on the U.S.; Moscow accuses the U.S. not only of preparing for limited nuclear warfare but also of broadcasting secret instructions to the Poles who are striking against communist authorities in Warsaw.

The horses of Rev. 6:1-8 definitely are running their courses through this world. The red horse stirs up strife between the nations. The hatred of God and fellow man is awakened in the hearts of men. The covetous passions of power and wealth take hold of the leaders of the nations and the result is that nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The black horse causes social and economic upheaval. The pale green horse works death wherever he rides. Besides regular death he destroys by means of all these natural catastrophes—storms, floods, and fires, as well as by wars.

Jesus speaks also of other signs which we, who now stand in the last minute of the eleventh hour, witness in the world about us. In Matthew 24:12 he states, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Paul reiterates this same idea in the words he wrote to Timothy in his second epistle chapter 3. We find in verses 1-5 this: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves. . . without natural affection, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: From such turn away." (For more details open your own Bibles and read this passage in its entirety.)

"Iniquity shall abound. . ."

Several Atlanta City Council members joined the relatives and friends of Chuck Geter for his funeral. The 14 year-old youth who was strangled to death was the 15th victim to be found in the string of slain black children. Two youths remain missing.

In England the Yorkshire Ripper has finally been arraigned. Thirteen young women had fallen prey to his murders. He is being charged with twelve murders and seven attempted murders.

A controversial school where "students seek carnal consciousness and doctorates in sensuality" has moved to the inner city of Oakland, California. Although the school is authorized by the state to grant undergraduate degrees and a Ph. D. in sensuality, it seems that it was being too restricted in the suburbs. Because of the move three of its courses will be dropped from the curriculum; "Mutual Pleasurable Stimulation," "teasing," and "Fundamentals of Sensuality."

"Without natural affection. . . ."

Although President Reagan is now in office, countless unborn babies continue to be murdered through legalized abortion.

Alan Madden was beaten for about four hours, at times with fists, at times with a wooden club wrapped with gauze. "Police found his frail body on the living room floor, his blond hair red with blood, his hands bruised from trying to deflect the blows." He was five years old.

National statistics show that 25 out of every 100 youngsters are sexually abused. Eighty-five percent of all such cases are incestuous. Incidentally, child abuse is the number 1 killer of children in the U.S. today.

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affection. . ." (Rom. 1:26).

Jon Hinson, state representative from Mississippi was arrested on attempted sodomy charges and has decided to resign from office. He was caught in the act in the restroom of a congressional office. Hinson was re-elected to office despite his acknowledgement of visiting two homosexual hangouts.

The "beautiful" city of San Francisco is said to be made up of over 50 percent openly-practicing homosexuals.

In 1968 the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches was organized. Today it has 150 congregations in eight countries with about 29,000 members. The denomination was formed for practicing homosexuals. Fifteen congregations were added in the past two years.

One last sign cannot be overlooked. That is the rising apostasy in the Church-world. Paul tells us in II Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Those who fall away from the truth are not those who leave the established church. They remain in the church and continue to practice an outward form of godliness while in their hearts they deny the power thereof. This general falling away from the truth affects not just individuals but entire denominations. The result is that doctrinal differences are disregarded

and amalgamation is sought.

"Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof...."

The Feminists who seek to break down the differences between male and female have been at work publishing a new Bible. In it they attempt to "neuterize" God. They also elide all passages which even hint of male superiority. All in the name of Christianity!

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and in America have begun to accept into their confines practicing homosexuals. Some maintain that Scripture gives normative guidelines on homosexuality. Others claim Scripture demands that we must love them and must take them in, in order to influence them in a godly way.

Because of the iniquity in the world about us the love of a godly life has waxed cold in many. We do not have to look far for this. Worldly amusements are becoming more and more an accepted thing. Dancing, drunkenness, movie attendance, godless music, all are accepted things even amongst those who frequent the house of God.

"Even now are there many antichrists whereby we know that it is the last time. . . ."

Last month the evangelist Billy Graham dropped by the Vatican and had a private talk with the pope. In welcoming the world-renowned evangelist the pope was heard to say, "We are brothers." An official release later said the subject of their discussion was "inter-church relations, the emergence of evangelicalism, evangelization, and Christian responsibility towards moral issues, in light of values of the gospel."

It seems they might just as well discuss their ideas with Jerry Falwell, who is the leader of the Moral Majority organization. This 72,000 member organization was founded by fundamentalists who push for a return to traditional values. Members of the organization consider themselves "a growing, potent political force."

These are but a few of the events currently taking place around us which clearly reveal that Christ is coming quickly. If you and I are watching and not sleeping we will be waiting for Him. The premillennialists speak of the unexpected return of Christ; not even the child of God will be aware of His rapture. We repudiate that! I Thessalonians 5:2-5 states, "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all

children of the light. . . ." We hear the warning shout, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." We shake

the sleep from our eyes, and with eager anticipation wait! The King is coming!

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Response and Reply

Rev. Rodney Miersma

In this particular article I will reply to two separate letters that the undersigned received with respect to two articles that I wrote last fall in the November 1 and December 15 issues of the *Standard Bearer* entitled "Choosing At The Becoming Of Age" and "The Choice Of Faith." In order that the reader may see the complete picture and benefit from this exchange I will quote these letters insofar as they pertain to the subject.

The first letter reads as follows:

In your article in Nov. 1 *Standard Bearer* you speak of the choice of Moses "for or against God." Also you direct this to us readers as well, suggesting that "God certainly chooses His people...; but man also chooses."

It is very true that we must make decisions in this life. However, to say that I must choose between God or against God is not in harmony with God's command to serve Him only! If God commands us to serve Him, then we never have a choice. It is purely of God who works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure; and I may never say that God places a choice before me. Could you please explain this more fully in a future S.B. article?

Also, you quote from Joshua who said to Israel "Choose you this day whom ye shall serve." Joshua says "We shall serve the Lord." That is all Joshua and his house can do because that is what God commands them. Israel had forsaken God and Joshua tells them to choose between the gods on the other side of the flood or the gods of the Amorites (Joshua 24:15). Oftentimes this text gets quoted to suggest that Joshua gives Israel a choice between God and the Devil. This is not the true meaning of this text.

One more question. Is there a difference between choices made in our every day life and decisions as to spiritual things?

The second letter is similar and reads as follows:

We are writing in connection with your articles in the *Standard Bearer*, "Choosing At The Becoming Of Age" and "The Choice Of Faith." We are in disagreement with these two articles because they are contrary to Scripture.

Your first article, first two paragraphs, we strongly oppose. I quote "...but man also chooses. He either

chooses the way of sin or by God's grace he chooses the way of life." In fact man acts only when activated by God, so that we cannot turn to what is right unless God turns us (Lam. 5:21). "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." A man's heart indeed does devise his way, but never independently of God's control. For his thoughts and words come by the sovereign operation of God upon his heart (Prov. 16:1 & 20:24).

Man is totally depraved, deprived of all spiritual ability (Eph. 2:1-3). He is wise to do evil, but to do no good when it is his nature only and continually to do evil (Jer. 13:23). Man goes according to his nature which is totally corrupt, for "the heart is deceitful above all things..." (Jer. 17:9, 10).

But we believe through grace alone (Acts 18:27 & Eph. 2:18) our believing is from God. Faith is a gift from God. We are confident of this very thing (not of our doing) that He who has begun a good work in us will perform and perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ. For we trust, not in our strength (for we have none) but in His power to keep us from falling, so that we are faultless before Him.

There are more answers in the Canons of Dordrecht and Catechism. It all points out very clear that man *will* only evil. So man cannot and will not *choose* God's kingdom. If a child does not confess publicly, it does not mean that he has "spiritual weakness" (your words). It means the Lord has not bestowed grace upon that child as of yet. But we know that grace may abound in the heart of the regenerate man through the working of the Holy Spirit. From that will he confess before God and His people. "God is Faithful and Gracious."

In reply to these letters I want to express my appreciation, first of all, for the concern shown for the truth of God's Word, and secondly, for the Christian way in which the letters were written. I will attempt to clarify the articles in question and thus try to remove any misunderstanding that there may be regarding this truth.

The basic problem, which has always been difficult to understand, is how to harmonize the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man. Scripture teaches both. The question then is, "If God is sovereign, wherein does the responsibility of

man lie? And if man is a responsible creature, how is God still sovereign?"

To answer this question we must see that Scripture does speak of choosing. In fact, God exhorts us to choose. Let us first look at Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Then Joshua 24:15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Also consider I Kings 18:21, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Now let us go to the Psalms, chapter 119:30, "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me." Now just one more, Luke 10:42, "But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

These are just a few examples from the Holy Scriptures which, in each instance, literally mean "to pick out, to select." Now, how do we understand this without becoming Arminian?

To show that the position of my two articles is in harmony with our Reformed heritage let us turn to several of our church fathers who wrote on this same question some years ago. The late Rev. G. Vos, in explaining Joshua 24:15, had this to say in S.B. Vol. 13, p. 394:

Does it not seem very poor leadership to leave the people as it were to the inclination of their own hearts? Would it not sound much wiser to say to them: Don't you dare serve other gods! Don't let me see the semblance of idolatry in your midst! Would it not work much better to whip them into shape, like a dictator?

Ah, but Joshua is not the leader of a political party which must be kept intact by hook or by crook. He is not a dictator who will stand or fall all according to the size of the following he has. Joshua is the type of Jesus Christ our Lord!

And the theme of his discourse is *religion, the service of the God of heaven and of the earth!* That makes a tremendous difference.

Religion, the service of God, is entirely a matter of freedom, of liberty, of spontaneous endeavor. There is not an inkling of compulsion in religion. On the day of the Lord of hosts, He will have a people that are very willing and very eager to do His sovereign will. Religion is that we submerge our will entirely in the will of God. And that will is that we love Him, know

Him and obey Him from the motive of purest love.

And Israel must learn this. Therefore Joshua casts the ball their way. Choose ye this day!....

Concerning this same passage the late Rev. G.M. Ophoff wrote in S.B. Vol. 9, p. 192:

That He is the author of our good choice, that we choose as His instruments, does not remove the necessity of our choosing, nor render our choosing superfluous. Man's life is a perpetual choosing between good and evil, though it be true that the natural man can do nothing but will to choose the wrong, will to choose the gods of this world. Choosing is an action of the rational, moral creature and sets man off from his fellow creatures as a responsible being.

God wills to be served only as a being chosen by His worshippers, chosen in distinction from darkness, from the lie, from gods that are no gods, from gods that constitute the dark and horrible reserve from His own blessed self. Therefore He not only places His blessed self within the range of our vision, but also confronts His people with the dark reverse of His adorable self, namely, the devils at whose shrine the world worships, and He bids us to compare, to appraise, to choose, to decide whether it is evil to serve Him. And in choosing Him we declare that we loathe darkness, hate sin, and love Him, as a being blessed forever.

That we are always under the necessity of choosing between God and Mammon, truth and the lie, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell,—means that life is an unbroken test trial. But in this trial we are kept by His power through faith.

Let us look at one more, the late Rev. H. Hoeksema as he explains Deuteronomy 30:19 in S.B. Vol. 9, p. 26:

For, strange though it may seem, impossible though it may at first appear, man always does and always must make the choice, either of life or of death!

...Choose you must and choose you do, constantly, every day and every night, with every breath you take, with every move you make, with every word you speak, with every wink of your eye, with every inclination of your will, with every desire of your soul, with every thought of your mind. Always you choose between righteousness and unrighteousness, between light and darkness; you prove them, you evaluate them, you distinguish between them, you clearly manifest that you know them, you express preferment of either of them you approve of righteousness and loathe unrighteousness, or you love the darkness and hate the light.

...Behold, I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing! What will ye?

And constantly, persistently, with his heart and mind as well as in all the directions of his walk the natural man replies: I will death!

Choose therefore, life!

Only by grace will the admonition be heeded!

After having read the various Scriptural passages and after having read what some of our church fathers have written concerning two of these passages, it becomes very evident whether or not man chooses. Yes, man chooses! God did not create a stock and a block or a robot, but God created a rational, moral creature capable of judging and choosing. *By nature* he chooses the evil and *by grace* he chooses the good. But he chooses! This is precisely what I wrote. I quote, "He either chooses the way of sin or *by God's grace* (emphasis added, RM) he chooses the way of life." The title of the first article stated the truth that man *must* choose, while the title of the second article stated that this choice is *of faith*, referring, or course, to Moses and to every child of God. The articles in question were designed to instruct, and again, by God's grace, strengthen the faith of the young people so that

when they come to years of discretion they will publicly confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And, yes, some of these young sheep are weak and they need to be strengthened. How does God do that? By His Word and Spirit. What is this Word? Choose you this day whom ye will serve!

Not to confess the Lord's name when one has "come to years" is halting between two opinions. We may not serve God and mammon. The demand is love Me, serve Me with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength! Our young people who are weak will hear the admonition and exhortation of the Shepherd. By grace! By the grace that God gives by the means of that very exhortation, His Word.

If there is still any difficulty with the articles and/or this reply please write again. Through such discussions the truth is made plain.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

God's Covenant With Man

(Westminster Confession)

Rev. R. Van Overloop

We continue our examination of the seventh chapter which deals with God's covenant with man. In sections one and two the relationship of God with man before the fall is treated. That we have already considered in previous articles. The remaining four sections of this chapter examine the Biblical data on the gracious condescension of God to form a positive relationship with man before the fall.

3. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second,^a commonly called the Covenant of Grace: whereby He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved;^b and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.^c

a. Galatians 3:21; Romans 8:3; 3:20,21; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 42:6.

b. Mark 16:15,16; John 3:16; Romans 10:6,9; Galatians 3:11.

c. Ezekiel 36:26,27; John 6:44,45.

4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in the Scripture by the name of a Testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.^a

a. Hebrews 9:15-17; 7:22; Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25.

5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel;^a under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come,^b which were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah,^c by Whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.^d

a. II Corinthians 3:6-9

b. Hebrews 8,9,10; Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11, 12; I Corinthians 5:7.

c. I Corinthians 10:1-4; Hebrews 11:13; John 8:56.

d. Galatians 3:7-9,14.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance^a is exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper,^b which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy,^c to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles;^d and is called the New Testament.^e There are not therefore two covenants of grace differ-

ing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations.^f

- a. Colossians 2:17.
- b. Matthew 28:19,20; I Corinthians 11:23-25.
- c. Hebrews 12:22-27; Jeremiah 31:33,34.
- d. Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 2:15-19.
- e. Luke 22:20.
- f. Galatians 3:14,16; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:21-23, 30; Psalm 32:1; With Romans 4:3,6,16,17,23,24; Hebrews 13:8.

Section three describes just what God's covenant with fallen man was like. It makes clear that God institutes this relationship without any consultation with man. This relationship does not come about by mutual agreement between God and man. Section one made clear that if God and man were to have any positive relationship it was because of the condescending goodness of God. This section reiterates this and adds that the state of fallen man makes the source of the covenant to be only of grace.

Some might raise their eyebrows in suspicion at some of the terminology in this section. We would agree that some of the terminology is not happy. However, we also believe that the Confession is not suspect here.

The Arminians hold that Adam incurred the penalty of death because he did not perfectly obey the command of the Lord. They would say that God responded to man's failure by sending Christ and thus introduced a new covenant, offering the eternal life Adam lost to all men upon condition of faith. This virtually makes the relationship of God with fallen man also a covenant of works, with faith a work of man.

This is certainly not the presentation of the Westminster.

Notice first the beneficiaries of this covenant. Listen to the Larger Catechism.

Q. 30. Doth God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God doth not leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery, into which they fell by the breach of the first covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Works; but of His mere love and mercy delivereth His elect out of it, and bringeth them into an estate of salvation by the second covenant, commonly called the Covenant of Grace. (emphasis mine -RVO)

Q. 31. With whom was the covenant of grace made?

A. The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him with all the elect as His seed.

Secondly, we regret that present day usage of the word "offer" (in theological circles, especially) has so changed this word that it cannot be used today without confusion. I believe that the Westminster uses this word in the same manner as does the

Canons of Dordt in the Third and Fourth Head article nine, viz. "to present." We are sorry that even the notable A. A. Hodge in his commentary on the Confession does not see this idea of presentation, but rather uses the term in the same way Arminians do.

Thirdly, the Confession confirms our conviction *re* the use of the word "offereth" when it shows that faith, both as a power and activity, is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and that work is only in the elect. There are no conditions for man to fulfill. Salvation is not probable but actual, for it is the work of God alone. He bestows the ability, the attitude, and the action in man necessary for the receiving of that salvation.

Terminology which troubles us in this section is the following. As we pointed out in an earlier article, we prefer to speak of one kind of positive relationship which God had with man, being in essence the same with Adam before the fall as after the fall. Therefore, we would not care to speak of a first and a second covenant. Also, the idea that man made himself incapable of life "by that covenant" seems to imply that the covenant was not an end in itself, but the means to the end of life. We do not prefer this language.

Section four describes the possibility and nature of the covenant of grace. An analogy exists between a testament or will and the covenant. The will is executed only upon the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:16,17). The death of Christ is necessary for the establishment of the covenant of grace, for His death wrought the glorious and everlasting inheritance of heavenly life and all the blessings of that life.

The Confession emphasizes the essential unity of the work of God in the Old and New Dispensations. It does this over against the error of dispensationalism, which teaches that God uses different ways of saving man in different periods of history. Each one of these different periods is called a dispensation. Although there is disagreement among themselves, most dispensationalists divide history into seven dispensations. In each dispensation the way God gives salvation is essentially different. The Confession maintains that the Covenant of Grace has remained the same in essence from the beginning. The Confession does recognize two dispensations, but differs radically from the dispensationalist in its definition of a dispensation. The Confession holds that the two dispensations are but two administrations of the same covenant. There is an absolute unity of the one and only Covenant of Grace, though there is variation in the manner of administration of that covenant. "There are not therefore two Covenants of Grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations."

The two recognized different ways in which the Covenant of Grace has been administered are "under the law" and "under the gospel." The dispensation under the law is called the Old Testament and the dispensation under the gospel is called the New Testament. A reading of II Corinthians 3:6 and 14 will show that this is Biblical terminology. In this passage "old testament" and "new testament" do not mean the major divisions of the Bible, but they refer to dispensations.

In the old dispensation the Covenant of Grace was administered by types and shadows which pointed ahead to Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation. In the new dispensation this covenant is administered by the gospel, i.e., the good news of the reality; Jesus Christ has come and earned the salvation which is dispensed primarily through the preaching of the Word of God.

The new dispensation is superior to the old in "fulness, evidence and spiritual efficacy." The more revelation given resulted in the truth being more clearly understood. (This was already true within the old dispensation. The revelation Isaiah

had was much larger than that possessed by Abraham, for example.) This increased revelation is not only in the volume of the written Word of God, but especially in the incarnation of Christ (John 1:14) and the presence of the Spirit of truth (John 16:13).

We wait for the eternal dispensation when all will be made plain. Even now in the new dispensation "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (I Corinthians 13:12).

Our anticipation of a better dispensation does not change the present reality of the glorious salvation we have. Nor does the increased fulness and evidence which we have of this salvation change the reality of its existence in the old dispensation. They too had "full remission of sins, and eternal salvation." Christ was the only Savior in the old dispensation too, for He is the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world.

What a marvellous grace that works the covenant. What a wonderful God Who works all things that to Him may be all the glory.

GUEST ARTICLE

G.L.T.S.—The Evidence of God's Sovereign Leading

Mr. Francis Quek Kok How

The story you are about to read is a story of the sovereign leading by God of a people which were once not a people but are now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. We invite you to walk with us through our pathway, one with many narrow corridors of strife and purging, to the present, and experience with us the grace of God to His Church. Many there were who walked in our band and left; many there were who had sharp disagreements with the path taken; and many were the misunderstandings. But it was God Who led. For the purpose of Christian charity and prudence, only names of persons who are at present leaders of the group will be mentioned. All others will be reduced to initials which may or may not be the true ones.

The G.L.T.S. has not always been known by her present name. She had her beginnings as a Bible class in a public school, the Monk's Hill Secondary

School. In around the year 1962 a teacher in that school began witnessing among the students and meeting with converts every day during class breaks and before and after school. Mr. G.S.F., then barely nineteen, had a tremendous zeal for God and gathered many students around him. Among these students was our brother Lau Chin Kwee, the only remnant from those early years.

As the group grew she was brought under the wing of the Youth For Christ (YFC) organization and became known as the "Monk's Hill YFC." The group had by then picked up momentum. The short daily meetings in the school soon proved insufficient, so it began longer meetings in a Methodist Church. The group flourished under the diligent labors of Mr. G.S.F., who spared nothing in time or wealth to help the young people (he conducted extra tuition classes for weaker students on his own time and often purchased meals for the

group on his meagre salary). About 1967, Mr. G.S.F. began to bring some of the older members of the group to Gilstead Life Bible Presbyterian Church where he himself was attending. During that period, a certain Rev. H.C. of a local baptist church, HBC, had very close ties with Rev. T.T. of the Life Church and was often invited to preach at this church. The leaders of the Monk's Hill YFC attending Life Church soon became very close to Rev. H.C. He was invited on many occasions to preach for Saturday meetings of the Monk's Hill YFC. Rev. H.C. gradually influenced the young leaders in Baptist teachings which differed from the Life Church. Relations between Rev. T.T. and Rev. H.C. soured amidst accusations of sheep stealing. Rev. H.C. took nearly all of the young leaders to the HBC. In later years many of these young men declared before the entire congregation that they had never been saved. By the grace of God, brother Lau Chin Kwee and sister Shi Soi Fah and only a few others were spared a similar bitter end, for they remained.

Mr. G.S.F. continued to teach the group the honor for the Word of God and godly separation from the present world. The group began to see the errors of the YFC, which encouraged worldliness and supported such neo-evangelicals as Billy Graham. Thus led by the Lord, the group broke from the YFC. But the result was that the Methodists expelled the group from their meeting place. By the grace of God, we found favor in the eyes of Rev. T.T. and were given a room at the Life Church. At this time too, through the S.M.C.C.C., a subsidiary of the I.C.C.C. (a council of Churches supposedly set up to oppose liberalism in the W.C.C. by enforcing the "Fundamentalistic" position), Rev. T.T. developed close relations with a Rev. N. of a local group, the JSM. Mr. G.S.F. too was close to Rev. N. and soon became very involved in the work of the JSM. The labors of the group were left mostly in the hands of the young leaders. A severe disagreement arose between the Life Church and JSM. Mr. G.S.F., caught between the fighting ministers, refused to take the group with him though he continued as a domestic missionary of the JSM.

While this was happening, the Monk's Hill Bible Club was slowly evolving. There had been a "Gospel Letters and Tracts Department" within the Bible Club. The group adopted this name, with the letters, G.L.T.D., with intentions to merge with the Life Church Sunday School, but this did not materialize. Rev. T.T. wanted very much to have the G.L.T.D. as part of Life Church, but the session opposed this, saying they had had their lot with the mud-slinging Rev. N. The G.L.T.D. was left to fend for herself, with no ties to any church save the use

of the place in Life Church and the friendly counsel of Rev. T.T.

With Mr. G.S.F. more involved with the JSM, and the aftereffects of losing most of the older members to Rev. H.C., the group floundered and the numbers diminished from the once proud sixty to seventy to barely twenty. It was at this time that God raised up one of our present leaders, brother Johnson See who led the group with a few brothers and sisters.

In September of 1972, Mr. G.S.F. left Singapore for ministerial training in the U.S. With none else to finance him, the G.L.T.D. pooled all her resources to come up with \$800 (a sum accumulated through the meagre five and ten cent daily pledges of the members). With some remuneration also from the JSM, he set out with the intention of enrolling in Bob Jones University. He finally enrolled in a Baptist College that was willing to take him and finance him.

Meanwhile the G.L.T.D. attendance dwindled to eleven persons under the leadership of brother Johnson See. The work had to be supported financially by some of the older members in their late teens. Brother Johnson labored on undaunted and slowly the membership grew. The turning point came when the first Annual Bible Camp was held in December, 1972. After the camp, students from other schools than Monk's Hill were added to the Saturday Club meetings where Johnson spoke every week. The group grew to thirty. At the second Bible camp, where brother Lau Chin Kwee was the speaker, two more of the present leaders joined, brothers Tan Kok Leong and Francis Quek. Two more of the present leaders, brothers Tan Boon Kwang and Teo Hwee Meng, who were Monk's Hill students, also joined. By 1975 the group had grown to seventy.

In 1975 some of the leaders realized that the G.L.T.D. could not remain perpetually a Christian organization. The idea of moving toward the formation of a church led to sharp dissension in the group. There were those who wanted to merge with the Bible Presbyterians. The conflict among the leaders led to the leaving of some of the leaders.

In the same year, the Lord saw fit to introduce us to the Reformed Faith we hold today. Prof. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America were passing by Singapore. Brother Ong Keng Ho, the present chairman of the G.L.T.S., who had received the truth through the O.P.C. of Christchurch New Zealand, was trying to arrange for the Life Church to organize a series of lectures by the P.R.C. ministers. He was turned down. Finally he sought the G.L.T.D. to host the lectures. In the process brother Lau Chin

Kwee came to know brother Ong.

In March of 1976 the G.L.T.D. acquired a unit of its present premises at River Valley Road for the purpose of setting up an outreach, River Valley Outreach, RVO (a name used even until today). At first only the Sunday Fellowship, which was set up earlier to cater to the many who had left school and could no longer attend the Saturday meetings, used the place. For a time, many of us attended the Life Church worship services and went to the fellowship at RVO in the afternoons. We met in a small hall ten feet by twenty. There the seed of the Sunday worship services was sown. It was decided that, in line with the desire to set up an autonomous church, the GLTD should have her own services at the completely unfurnished RVO. The wall separating one of the adjacent rooms was torn down to make room for increased numbers. Since then more walls have been broken down and more units acquired and we have graduated from floor sitting to chairs.

The spark of truth which was kindled in the breast of brother Lau Chin Kwee in 1975 was soon a raging fire as he studied the Reformed Truth on his own, and he could not help but pour it forth to the rest of the group. About the middle of 1976 brother Lau began to teach the Heidelberg Catechism at the Saturday meetings. This incurred the opposition of the rest of the leadership, but like a living shoot striving incessantly against huge rocks in its quest to rise above the ground, the truth then firmly in the heart of our brother was not shaken. At times he felt that none stood with him, and it was not until the end of that year that some of the brethren began to hold the same truth he loved. These brethren, among whom were brothers Francis Quek and Hwee Meng, however, could not be of much help, not being then leaders and having little influence.

In the twelfth month of the same year, Mr. G.S.F. returned from the U.S. and began immediately to work in the G.L.T.D. He became our "missionary pastor" and, being Ana-Baptistic by persuasion, he tried to bring his teachings into the group. The respect of the group being much with him, he taught us the Congregational form of church government with a one-pastor (elder) rule, opposed the doctrine of the universal catholic church, and tried to propagate his teachings on the mode of baptism. The members of the G.L.T.D., having by then learned the honor of the Word of God, searched the scriptures, and many were thrown into perplexity. One of the leaders holding the Presbyterian form of government sent letters to all of the members against the teachings of Rev. G.S.F. Although most of the other leaders agreed with him, they had to censure him for the way he aired

his grievances. The brother left the group. There were forums held on the mode of baptism, where brother Lau Chin Kwee battled with Rev. G.S.F. before the entire congregation. It was surely by the grace of God that brother Lau, being untrained, managed to hold his ground against the "Greek-quoting" Rev. G.S.F. As the conflict continued, Rev. G.S.F., sensing perhaps his inability to change the whole group, started another group elsewhere. This led to the final confrontation between him and the leaders. While he was questioned by the then chairman of G.L.T.D., brother Johnson See, at a congregational meeting, about the way he wanted to control all of the G.L.T.D. activities while he devoted more time to his other work, Rev. G.S.F. simply walked out and left us. This took place in mid-1977.

All this time the Reformed truth was brewing in the hearts of some of the members, but even after the departure of Rev. G.S.F. they faced much opposition. Among the dissenters against the Reformed Faith, the strongest was brother Johnson See; but, by God's grace, he was led away for further studies. In Scotland, brother Johnson, away from his heavy responsibility to lead the brethren in what he believed, came also to embrace and cherish the Reformed Truth. In Singapore brother Lau Chin Kwee, knowing the allegiance of the group to the Word of God, continued with those who loved the same truth to show them that the Reformed Faith and scriptural Christianity are one and the same. It was a hard time for these brethren, but they labored on amidst much opposition and discouragement from other factions of the group.

In January, 1978 brother Lau Chin Kwee left his job as a school teacher for the full-time ministry. This made him the second person to do this, joining brother Tan Boon Kwang, who had felt called in 1976 and was already studying in a local Bible college of the Bible Presbyterians.

March 1978 saw the coming of Rev. J. Slopsema and Elder Dewey Engelsma to investigate the group as emissaries of the P.R.C. Being the first Reformed delegation to Singapore, they bore the brunt of the attack of the faith. Those holding to the Arminian position sought to assail them at the public discussions held. Neither did those holding the Reformed Faith support them at these meetings, for they saw in the emissaries an invaluable avenue to answer the many questions heaped on them. It must have appeared to the emissaries that the entire G.L.T.D. was rank Arminian.

After his departure, Rev. Slopsema conducted a tape program with the G.L.T.D., and a commission of ten members was appointed to study the P.R.C. beliefs. God worked in the hearts of the members of the G.L.T.D. and soon there was a

clear dividing line between the truth and the lie of Arminianism. Many members left during this period of extreme contradiction in which God purged us to be a bearer of His Truth. The pain of seeing many bosom friends leave was somewhat alleviated as God added others to the group, but the period was fraught with discouragements. The work of the first emissaries was not without fruit.

By the time the second pair of emissaries came, Rev. M. Kamps and Elder Engelsma, much of the wrangling concerning the issues of limited atonement and irresistible grace was dispelled. The emissaries who were in Singapore in early 1979 did much for the spiritual development of the group, and it was through their hands that the group, then called the Gospel Literature and Tract Society, G.L.T.S., requested a missionary from the P.R.C. The name of the group was changed to G.L.T.S. when it was registered with the authorities of Singapore.

After the departure of the emissaries the leaders of the group discussed at length the advice of the P.R.C. men to stop the administration of the Lord's Supper until the church was organized. After much study of the Word, the sacrament, which had been administered by a Bible Presbyterian minister, was discontinued.

In February of 1980, the missionary from the P.R.C., Rev. Arie den Hartog, arrived in Singapore with his family. Finding him to be a man of great zeal and compassion, the group quickly grew to love and respect him. Within a matter of months, the American of Dutch origin became accepted in a very real sense as our missionary pastor. He is, up till today, serving as a faithful minister of the gospel

in our midst.

May, 1980 saw the third visit of Elder Engelsma, and immediately the old ties, developed in past years, bound the hearts of the members of the G.L.T.S. to the heart of the man, very much their senior, and his wife. Their short stay in the republic did much to encourage the saints. They gave much wise counsel and brotherly kindness.

In August the same year, brother Lau Chin Kwee, on whose shoulders had fallen the awesome responsibility of leading the saints in the G.L.T.S. through many difficult years, bade a tearful farewell to the church and went with his wife to further his ministerial training in the U.S.

When one views the history of the G.L.T.S. one cannot but confess that it is all of Sovereign Grace. From the beginning God had planted the seed which initially appeared as an ugly shoot. Trials and toil, hope and joy were the portion of the young band as they trod the pilgrim way together. As the tree began to take shape, God introduced the Reformed Faith, at first in a trickle and then in its soul-overwhelming torrents. God had prepared a vessel of unworthy clay to bear the treasures of His Truth. Today there is in the G.L.T.S. a greater cohesion among the members and the leadership than has ever been experienced in her history. The truth that binds our hearts to God also binds our hearts to one another. We are still a young group, and many are still the difficulties ahead; but none can remove our hope. Our God, Who was our help in ages past, is still our Guide for years to come. We know that our God has a mission for us to bear His Truth in the darkness around. In all this, God is our Help.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Luke—The Gospel of the Son of Man (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

The Gospel of Luke spells out in greater detail the life and ministry of Jesus Christ than any of the other Gospels. The author, Luke, the beloved physician, also wrote the book of Acts. Hence his interest in a historically accurate account of the ministry of Jesus extended also to an account of the establishment of the New Testament church. In a real sense he is the inspired historian of the early church.

THE AUTHOR

For determining who the author is we must begin with the gospel account. There is no direct mention within the gospel itself that Luke is the author. Nevertheless, the first four verses of chapter one give us insight as to who the author is. The truth of the matter is that these verses form a classical example of the truth of organic inspiration.

By this, we distinguish the inspiration of the Bible from a mechanical process, as if the Holy Spirit used the authors as robots or typewriters. The Holy Spirit inspired these men as real living tools. He used their minds, wills, natural abilities, and personalities so that the end product reflected it. He did this in such a marvelous way that sin never entered into the process, the words written were without error, the truth of the Word of God alone.

Concerning this organic inspiration we include several elements.

First, God prepared the authors to write their particular message. Let's examine how this applies to Luke. We learn first of all that Luke was a traveling companion with Paul on some of his missionary journeys. This is established by identifying Luke as the author of Acts. Without getting into the technical aspects of language, we can simply turn to the first part of the book of Luke (1:3) and Acts (1:1) and see that both are addressed to the same person, Theophilus. Besides, Acts 1 refers to a previous treatise written to Theophilus which contained the things that Jesus did and said (an obvious reference to the gospel he wrote). Since Luke wrote Acts, use of the pronoun "we" identified Luke as being present with Paul. This begins in Acts 16:10. When Paul traveled from Troas to Philippi, Luke mentions "we." Then after Philippi there is no reference to "we" until Paul returned to Macedonia, as recorded in Acts 20:6. From this we conclude that Luke stayed in Philippi as a pastor until Paul came back on his third missionary journey. They continued together on this journey and Luke accompanied him to Jerusalem and eventually to Rome and was with him while Paul was in prison (II Tim. 4:11).

How do we know that the "we" referred to Paul and Luke and not someone else? This is determined by the process of elimination. Luke was with Paul in Rome. This is established by the so-called prison epistles. These letters mention the following as being present with Paul: Epaphras, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Tychicus, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Demas, and Luke. Epaphras and Epaphroditus did not arrive in Rome with Paul, hence they could not describe the sea voyage of Acts. Tychicus, Timothy, and Mark are mentioned in Acts in the third person "he." Demas departed from the apostle; Jesus Justus is not mentioned anywhere as being on the journey with Paul; hence only Luke is left. Both in Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:14 Luke is identified as being in Rome with Paul.

Luke is also referred to as the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14). He was probably converted in Antioch (hence he writes in great detail of the church at Antioch, Acts 11, 13, 15, and 22). He was a gentile, well-educated, as his writing indicates. He

uses 180 Greek words which appear in his gospel alone and not in any of the others. This is compared to Mark who uses 44, Matthew 70, and John 50. Luke's grammar is more involved and sentence structure more complex. He became the personal physician of the apostle. Some evidence of his medical background shows in the gospel, e.g., mention of the woman with an issue of blood having spent her livelihood on physicians, Luke 8:46, and observing the fact that Jesus sweat drops as of blood, Luke 22:44.

All this indicates that God prepared Luke to write this particular Gospel. He was educated, had a specific aptitude for accuracy, was personally acquainted with Paul, labored as pastor and missionary. All these qualifications become evident in the gospel itself.

Secondly, organic inspiration includes God's revelation of the truth which they had to write down. There were times when this truth was revealed directly to the author, as for example by a vision or by the voice of God. Other times, however, the Holy Spirit over-ruled the use of references and oral tradition. Luke explains that he had at his disposal, "a declaration of those things, which are most surely believed (fulfilled) among us" (vs. 1). Some of these were written by others, some by the apostles, noble Jews, even relatives and friends of Jesus. They were reliable because Luke states, "they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (vs. 2). Luke had access to them because he lived during that period. He could, for example, talk to the apostles. He met Peter, Mark, and Barnabas at Antioch, James at Jerusalem, and Philip at Caesarea. This led him to say, "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first" (vs. 3). He felt qualified to write. The Holy Spirit so worked in Luke that he was able to discern what was historically accurate and what was not. In the finished account we have the truth of Christ's ministry.

Thirdly, God by His Holy Spirit gave the author the desire to write. This is expressly stated in verse 3: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order most excellent Theophilus." The Spirit did not force Luke to write or compel him to do a work that he detested. On the contrary, He so influenced him that he considered himself qualified for the task and desired very much to do it. The occasion was his friend Theophilus. We do not know much about him, only that his name means either "lover of God" or "loved by God." He probably was brought to faith through the preaching of Luke and therefore became a close friend, and Luke desired to see him grow in the

faith. The designation, "most excellent" was used in connection with official dignitaries. It could be that he had some position in government and therefore was in a key position to influence the spread of the gospel. At any rate, Luke's love and concern for the spiritual welfare of this man prompted him to take his pen in hand and write a careful account of the ministry of Jesus.

Fourth, at the time of writing, the Holy Spirit guided the hand of the author so that he wrote accurately what He wanted him to write. This was the conviction of his soul. He would write "*in order*" (vs. 3), that is, accurately and precisely, because he had perfect understanding. Not only was this his personal idea, it was a fact, because the Holy Spirit was working in him to accomplish this. The writers were conscious of the fact that they were writing more than a personal letter to a friend. They were writing for the ages, and they knew the Spirit was present.

Finally, the Holy Spirit guided the church to include the inspired books in the completed canon of the Scripture. The presence of this gospel of Luke is testimony of this truth. Not only did Luke consider this gospel worthy of such consideration, but the early church fathers soon looked upon it as an inspired gospel. Irenaeus says, "Luke, the physician, whom Paul had associated with himself as one zealous for righteousness, to be his companion who had not seen the Lord in the flesh, but having carried his inquiries as far back as possible began his history with the birth of John." Justin Martyr does likewise. It is found in all the ancient manuscripts and translations. The Holy Spirit guided the church so that this gospel was included in the Bible.

DATE AND PURPOSE

As in the case of Matthew and Mark, we encounter difficulty in trying to pinpoint a date for writing. There are a few things that we can consider. We know it was written before Acts, and the earliest date for the writing of Acts would have been A.D. 63, during the second year of Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Here, too, the question of Luke's having used Mark enters into the picture. We can't be far off if we date it around the middle of the 60's.

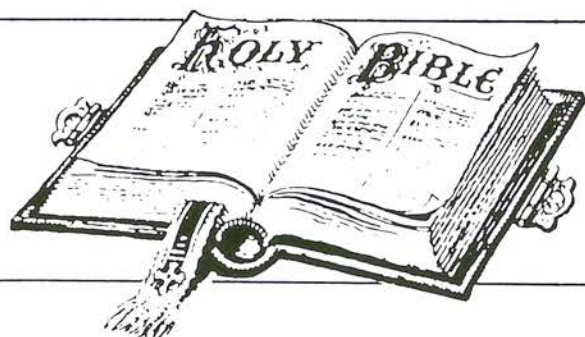
As to the purpose of writing it, we can point out as we did before that Luke had Theophilus in mind. He in turn represented the Greek world. Matthew was directed to the Jews, Mark to the Roman Christians, and now Luke to the Greek converts. A few things serve to illustrate this. If a person were acquainted with the geography of Palestine, he might not need such additional information as to how far Mt. Olivet was from Jerusalem, or descriptions of the towns such as Capernaum or Nazareth. Greeks might not know those things. Besides, Luke directed the attention of his readers to the ancestry of Christ, going back to Adam, not Abraham. It would impress the Greek mind that Caesar's decree had a direct effect upon the history of Jesus.

We suggest that Luke also had a specific theme in mind, such as Jesus the Son of Man. We must remind ourselves that all the Gospels had one central theme, namely, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The whole Bible extols the God of our salvation. The point is that each of the gospels emphasize a certain aspect of this work of the Savior. Matthew presents Him as the Messiah, the fulfillment of prophecy. Mark sets forth Jesus as the Servant of Jehovah, qualified and faithful in the work of salvation. Now, Luke also sets forth a specific emphasis, that is that Jesus as Savior is the Son of Man. This becomes obvious when we thumb through some of the details of the gospel. Even before He was born, Mary struggled with the mystery of divine conception—how He could be a man without a human father. In Luke's gospel, details of His humanity come forth: His birth, infancy, early boyhood, and thus we see a true Son of Man. He had to grow in wisdom and stature. The genealogy places him within the line of mankind, going back to the very beginning. Luke gives us the greatest detail of His humanity.

All this is given in order that we may know that the salvation brought by Jesus is for us. As the Son of Man, He took our place. Well might the virgin mother sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and the malefactor be at home in paradise.

The Son of Man is in truth, our Savior.

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Book Reviews

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, Chapters 1-8, William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 303 pp., \$14.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema.)

This is one of Dr. Hendriksen's series of New Testament Commentaries. Like others of the series, it is, generally speaking, a conservative, reliable, and helpful commentary. It is also written for the general public, that is, in such a way that references to the Greek do not interfere with its use by those who do not know the Greek language.

Like all commentaries, however, it must be used with discretion and not simply swallowed, "hook, line, and sinker."

In checking a few passages, I was disappointed to find that Dr. Hendriksen's "common grace" bias affected his commentary in more than one place. For example: 1) The gospel, "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), "has achieved and offers something far better...." (p. 59, italics added). 2) The author is, to say the least, very weak in his interpretation of "God gave them over" in Romans 1:18-32. This was a passage which was cited in 1924 for the idea of the restraint of sin. (p. 75) 3) With respect to Romans 2:4, the author paraphrases the text and speaks of the idea that "God's kindness seeks to bring you to conversion," and "that the purpose of God's kindness...is...to bring him to conversion." The text speaks of a *fact*, not of a purpose. Hendriksen's interpretation would have to lead to Berkhof's conclusion: that in the case of the unbelieving Jews the result did not answer to the divine purpose. (p. 90) 4) The doctrine of total depravity is watered down in the name of "avoiding extremes." (p. 100) Jesus taught "that there is a sense in which even the unconverted 'do good'."

I was happy to note that Dr. Hendriksen explains Romans 7:14, ff. as referring to the regenerated Christian.

But again, I was disappointed by Hendriksen's explanation of the "golden chain of salvation," Romans 8:29, 30. (pp. 281, ff.) I do not believe his explanation of vs. 30 can be maintained when it makes division between links of the chain in time as distinct from the link of predestination in eternity. Dr. Hendriksen changes the "glorified" of the text, for example, into something future.

These are just a few items to show that this commentary, which in many respects is a good one, must nevertheless be used with discretion.

THE THEOLOGY OF CALVIN, Wilhelm Niesel (Translated by Harold Knight); Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 258 pp., \$6.95 (paper). **ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION OF JOHN CALVIN**, Ford Lewis Battles (assisted by John Walchenbach); Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 421 pp., \$10.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema.)

Obviously both of these books have to do with the theology of John Calvin. But in a way, they are opposites.

The Niesel book is a commentary on Calvin's theological system. In my opinion, however, this is one of those many works on John Calvin's theology which, while it presents Calvin's theology in a sense and to a degree, nevertheless does so in such a way that the final result is what I would call a "de-Calvinizing" of Calvin. That is, it so waters down Calvin's theology that the essence of that theology is denied and destroyed in the process. Here is a sample, p. 166: "Calvin could not express more plainly from a formal point of view that the doctrine of election has no intrinsic significance for theology in the sense that other doctrines might stem from it. It must be considered at the appropriate point within the total structure of a theological system; but no more than other questions." I contend that statements like these do not faithfully present Calvin's theology.

The Battles book could serve as an excellent study aid. It is intended as a guide in the study of the *Institutes*, and furnishes a detailed outline of the text of the *Institutes*. As far as I have checked it, I believe it faithfully outlines that great work of Calvin. This is a useful book if it is employed correctly. It should not be used as a substitute for study of the *Institutes* itself, but rather as an aid, or guide. There is no substitute for the study of the *Institutes*. Recommended.

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH, Douglas Kelly, Hugh McClure, and Philip B. Rollinson, Eds.; Attic Press, Greenwood, S.C.; 102 pp., \$5.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema.)

This is a modern-English, updated version of the Westminster Confession of Faith. I can best describe it by quoting from the Introduction:

"...we are offering here a modern version of the

Westminster Confession, which attempts to be absolutely true to the full content of the original theology and at the same time to be clear and comprehensible to the ordinary church member of this generation. Our version of the Westminster text is, of course, merely a private translation and makes no claim to be the authorized work of any church. We simply offer it and the ancillary matter on the changes in the text and proof text as tools for studying and understanding what many believe to be the greatest single statement of reformed Christian doctrine. We hope that laymen, churchmen, and scholars will find use for this work. Laymen not only need to be aware of the changes which have taken place in the text and in the proof texts. Churchmen and scholars will also find this version of interest in so far as any translation is inevitably interpretive and hence a kind of commentary.

"The changes which have been made to the original 1647 edition and which are reflected in the current American editions are significant but not too extensive. Both the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA, now UPCUSA after the merger in 1958 with the United Presbyterian Church of North America) and the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS), the two largest American Presbyterian denominations, added to the original thirty-three two new chapters, 'Of the Holy Spirit' and 'Of the Gospel of the Love of God and Missions' (PCUSA—simply entitled 'Of the Gospel' in the identical PCUS version) in the twentieth century. PCUSA also added a 'Declara-

tory Statement' interpreting the original Chapters 3 and 10, and both churches independently developed new versions of the original Chapter 24 on marriage. Our modern version is of the basic pre-1900 American text, which with a few exceptions is the same as the original British version of 1647. We have also included the two new Chapters 34 and 35 (9 and 10 in PCUS), the 'Declaratory Statement,' and the two new versions of Chapter 24 for comparison...."

"In addition to these comparative textual inclusions, Appendix I discusses and systematically lists all the changes from the original text of 1647. Appendix II does the same thing for the proof texts, which have also undergone independent major revision by both PCUSA and PCUS. Using Appendix II the reader will readily be able to identify all the proof texts which are now or have been used to support a particular statement or section and to recognize the status of each citation, whether added, retained, or deleted, and by which Church body."

To this reviewer, the value of this little book does not lie so much in its new translation as in the fact that it serves as a good reference work with respect to the confessional literature of the two largest Presbyterian bodies in this country. Frankly, I did not know of all the changes and revisions and additions made to the original Westminster. Some of these changes are very significant. It is worth inquiring also as to which version of the Westminster some of the smaller Presbyterian denominations have.

For any of our readers who may be interested, we will make this book available through our Protestant Reformed Seminary Bookstore.

ATTENTION!!!

PRIMARY TEACHERS

The Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, IL, will need a primary teacher for the coming school year. Interested persons should call the school — phone 312-333-9197 or write to the school. The address is 16511 South Park Ave., South Holland, IL 60473.

The Education Committee

NOTICE!!!

The Spring meeting of the Eastern Mens and Ladies Society will be held on April 7, 1981 at 8 PM in the Holland Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Rodney Miersma will speak on the subject — "The Moral Majority Movement — Should We Support It?".

Elsie Kuiper, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its faithful member, Mrs. Martha Huizenga, and her family at the death of their husband, father, and grandfather, MR. THEODORE HUIZENGA.

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:26 & 27)

Rev. K. Koole, Pres.
Mrs. Jake Soodsma, Secy.

News From Our Churches

While our Pella and our Hope, Michigan churches rejoice in the recent installations of their new pastors, Reverends Lanting and Flikkema respectively, our Redlands congregation has extended another call, this one to Rev. Koole, who

currently serves in our church of Randolph, Wisconsin.

Our "retired" ministers continue to supply the Redlands pulpit as they continue to wait upon the Lord for an undershepherd. Rev. H. Veldman, who

has been preaching catechism sermons for our Hope, Michigan congregation during their year and a half vacancy, plans, the Lord willing, to preach for Redlands following Rev. Heys' "tour of duty" there. Whether or not these plans are carried out, however, may hinge on Rev. Koole's answer to the Redlands call.

Prior to his work in Redlands Rev. Heys preached at the Bradenton Christian School in Bradenton, Florida on four consecutive Sundays. A report of that work from the consistory of our First Church in Grand Rapids informs us of a considerable amount of interest there "in distinctively Reformed preaching and dissatisfaction with what is presented in other churches in the area. . . ."

Still in the realm of our "retired" ministers, we find that Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers have again been sent to Skowhegan, Maine under the auspices of our Pella consistory. You may recall that Rev. Lubbers spent a few months in Skowhegan last fall. If you would like to correspond with them—which I'm sure they would greatly appreciate—send your letters to: 47 Main Street, Skowhegan, Maine 04976.

How carefully do you read the *Standard Bearer*? Do you remember reading an article of Rev. Heys in which he alluded to the desirability of having the S.B. and other worthwhile materials available on cassette tape for the benefit of those who because of the infirmities of the flesh have difficulty reading? Well, it now appears that that desire may become a reality. Our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids is experimenting with and checking into the feasibility of an S.B. taping project. At this writing the February 15 issue has already been taped, and is nearly ready for distribution. The committee in charge of this project is eager to get these tapes in the hands—or should I say cassette recorders—of those who would find them helpful. They ask all who would like to receive these tapes for themselves or another to contact immediately Mr. Michael Engelsma, 2720 Madison Blvd. S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507. Those who receive the tapes might like to know that the voice they hear is that of Mr. Gary VanDerSchaaf, member of Southeast Church and teacher at Adams St. Protestant Reformed Christian School.

Four consecutive Kalamazoo bulletins make reference to the recent occupation of their new church edifice. In the February 8 bulletin we read: "Today with thankfulness to God we begin our services in our new building. It is the answer to many prayers and efforts; and we can only pray that God will bless us as we worship here together and give glory to His Name." A dedication service is planned for the evening of March 6 with Prof. H.C. Hoeksema scheduled to speak.

In our February 15 news we wrote concerning the emissaries sent to Jamaica by First Church. More recent information reveals that the emissaries, "attended the Classis meeting of our Jamaican Churches, worshiped with each of the seven congregations, met with the ministers and office-bearers, and dealt with the many needs they found among the people. The emissaries bring greetings from our brethren and sisters in Jamaica to our congregation and churches." I count it a special privilege to pass these Jamaican greetings on to our churches.

More greetings I am privileged to extend to our churches: these from Barnsley, England. A little background in this case might be helpful. It begins with Prof. H. Hanko who has for some time corresponded with a certain Pastor Rawson of the Measbro Dyke Evangelical Church. When Prof. Hanko heard that Mr. and Mrs. C. Kregel and Mr. and Mrs. J. Swart, members of First Church, planned to go to England, he suggested they visit Barnsley. Well, they did visit Barnsley, thoroughly enjoyed their stay there, and have since had contact with Pastor Rawson via letters and tapes. One of those tapes to the Kregels contained a recording of their New Year's Day service. In the course of the service the pastor reminded his congregation of the Lord's blessing in giving them opportunity to visit with the Kregels and Swarts a few months earlier. He went on to say, "Will you join me this morning in sending greetings to the Protestant Reformed Churches of the United States of America."

I wonder if I would be overstepping my bounds were I to send our greetings to Jamaica and Barnsley in return? Certainly these last few news items remind us of our confession: "I believe an holy catholic church."

CK