

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

“Teach us to number our days....”

It is surely a monstrous thing that men can measure all distances without themselves, that they know how many feet the moon is distant from the centre of the earth, what space there is between the different planets . . . while yet they cannot number threescore and ten years in their own case. It is therefore evident that Moses had good reason to beseech God for ability to perform what requires a wisdom which is very rare among mankind.

John Calvin

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MEDITATION

Remembering God's Name

Rev. H. Veldman

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God."
Psalm 20:7

New Year's Day, 1984! What shall we say with respect to the calendar year that now lies before us?

In this psalm the church of God of the old dispensation is involved in strife with its enemies. David, on whose person the well-being and safety of the church was dependent, is in difficulty. He has prayed very fervently unto the Lord. And, as is evident from verse 6, the Lord had heard his plea

and will save His anointed. And now, anticipating this victory, the inspired writer declares that, whereas some trust in chariots and others in horses, we will remember the Name of the Lord, our God.

Shall we also resolve to do this in the year that lies before us? This is our only hope.

* * * * *

Chariots and horses.

Applied to the church of God in the old dispensation, these are military terms. Psalm 20 speaks of the struggle between Israel and its enemies. With these weapons Israel's enemies, and later also Israel, in conflict with the Lord's direct command, had equipped themselves. These chariots and horses were formidable weapons then; they represented the highest development in warfare in the time of this psalm. Indeed, the outcome of the battle depended upon these weapons.

Applying it to our day, the new dispensation, we will not call attention merely to the military weapons employed by the nations of the world. The struggle implied in this text is spiritual. Fact is, the struggle between Israel and its enemies was also spiritual in the old dispensation. Israel's enemies were determined, also then, to destroy Israel because she represented the cause of the Lord Jehovah in the midst of the world. How the world today would destroy the church of God, the cause of the Lord! Unto that end the world will use all its powers and resources to silence and destroy the cause of God and of His Christ. Hence, these "chariots and horses" represent all the weapons used by Satan and all his host to their uncompromising conflict with the kingdom of our God and of His Son, such as the weapons of the lie, of false philosophy, of heresy, of every wind of doctrine, also of force and violence.

Over against these chariots and horses stands the Name of the Lord, our God. We would read this text as follows: "We shall remember the Name of our God, namely Jehovah." Hence, God, as Jehovah, receives here all the emphasis. A name is the expression of the being of anything; it is that being's self-revelation. "Adam" is the expression of what he is — taken out of the dust of the earth. Adam named the animals, gave them names in harmony with their being.

God's Name is Jehovah. God has many names in Holy Writ. Jehovah, however, is *the* Name of God. He is Jehovah, first of all and primarily, in Himself. He Himself is Jehovah, the I AM, eternally the same, the unchanging God as He is eternally the same in all His virtues and perfections, in all His love and mercy and goodness and compassion, but also in all His wrath and indignation, righteousness and justice. This God, however, is also the Unchangeable in respect to all things. He is God alone. All other existence has its life and being from Him, and is determined and controlled by Him. The Lord, however, is ever the same. In fact, should heaven and earth, yea the entire universe, disappear, the Lord God would remain the same — He is dependent upon nothing; He lives exclusively out

of Himself.

From this it must follow that He is also the unchangeable covenant God of His people. God is the unchanging Jehovah. This is the precious significance of this Name for the church of God in the old dispensation. Thus He revealed Himself unto Moses at the burning bush, which burned and was never consumed, the symbol of Jehovah Who loves His own and is never consumed, remaining everlastingly the same. How wonderful is the revelation of this Name in the new dispensation! That Name is Jesus! In Jesus our covenant God revealed Himself in all His unchangeable faithfulness, remembering and fulfilling His promise of redemption and salvation, promised to His people at history's dawn. In Christ Jesus our covenant God revealed Himself in His unchangeable love, loving His own even into the depths of hell upon the cross of Calvary. In Christ Jesus are revealed all His virtues and perfections, His love and also His wrath, all His justice and righteousness. In Christ Jesus we see God revealed as the unchangeable God of His covenant, the God of our salvation. This is the Name to which the inspired writer of this psalm calls our attention: the Name of our God, our covenant God.

This Name, the unchangeable Jehovah, our eternal Father, Who has saved us, and in Whom we have the victory, the victory over sin and death and hell and grave, and also over the world, as we behold Him through the Mediator, God with us, must be the only object of all our remembrance. Indeed, what a contrast we have here: on the one hand, chariots and horses, and on the other hand, the Name of our God, Jehovah. On the one hand, we read here of the power of the world, revealing itself in various human and worldly attempts to destroy the cause of God and of His covenant, but which efforts are all vanity, less than nothing. On the other hand, we read here of the Name of our God, Jehovah, the unchangeable covenant God in Christ Jesus, out of Whom and through Whom and unto Whom are all things, including the devil and all the temporal and temporary powers of sin and darkness. The contrast is ludicrous; they cannot possibly be compared. Our God does not simply stand over against all these "chariots and horses"; He does not simply oppose them and finally have the victory over them. His is the Kingdom and the power and the glory; He has the victory, not only over against them but through them; they are instruments in His hand, they serve His purpose, the glory of His alone adorable Name.

* * * * *

The world trusts in chariots and horses. There is no reason why we should read "trust" in this text. The reader will notice that the King James Version

has the word in italics — hence, it does not appear in the original Hebrew. Literally we read of causing to be remembered, either chariots or horses or the Name, Jehovah, of our God. Even as we, for example, erect monuments in honour of a Lincoln or Washington, a William of Orange, etc., in order that these men may be remembered, so we cause to be remembered either chariots or horses or the Name, Jehovah, of our God.

Indeed, the world remembers chariots and horses. The world sets up monuments in order that the memory of their heroes may be preserved. Think of all the monuments erected in honour of our heroes in the wars of our country: the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I and II. How true this is in the field of Science — physicians and surgeons must be remembered because of their contributions to the relief of mankind from its troubles and diseases. Also the world's efforts to destroy the cause of God and of His covenant must be remembered. Schools and institutions are built that these efforts may ever remain in the memory of the children of men. Buildings of Natural Science are erected to laud the theory of Evolution; seminaries are built, where the truth is undermined and the lie is taught, where the truth of divine and infallible inspiration is denied, where the kingdom of God and of Christ and of heaven is replaced by a kingdom of this world, characterized by humanitarianism, the seeking of this world and the things that are below. In these institutions of learning Arminianism and the free will of the sinner are championed, and the truth is wilfully destroyed.

However, we shall remember, or cause to be remembered, the Name of our God, Jehovah. He shall be remembered as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He shall be remembered as being alone the God of our salvation. Whatever would detract from the truth of His sovereignty, that He is God alone, must and shall be discarded. We must and shall erect monuments unto the honour of Jehovah, our God. We shall witness of Him in our churches, cause His Name to be remembered in all our preaching and teaching. Engraved into the cornerstones of our church edifices will be nothing that speaks of the greatness of man — everything must witness of the power and glory and sovereignty of His grace, of His sovereign will and election, and of our calling to walk antithetically in the midst of the world. Our schools, therefore, must serve this glorious purpose. In these schools, primary and secondary, our children are prepared to assume their place in the midst of the world, and these children must always be reminded of their calling, because of the power of God's sovereign grace, to speak of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Let the people

all around us see who and what we are, divinely and sovereignly chosen pilgrims and strangers, journeying to a better land, to the City that has foundations, Whose Architect and Builder is the living God. All instruction must serve that purpose. Indeed, some "trust" in chariots and others in horses; they speak of Man and his exploits. But we will remember the Name of the Lord, Jehovah, the Name of our God.

* * * * *

The world "trusts" in chariots and horses. Of course! They know not the living God. They know Him not as the covenant of God in Christ Jesus. Their life is from below. They hate the living God and His precepts. Higher than this earthly life the children of the world cannot climb. They would establish themselves here forever, seeking the kingdom of this world and the things that are below. Man glories in himself; he is carnal in all his lusts and aspirations and is a child and servant of the devil.

However, we will remember the Name of the Lord, our God. We will do this, the church of the living God, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. This we can do because God, in Christ Jesus, is Jehovah, our covenant God. He has redeemed and saved us, called us out of sin and darkness into His marvelous light, made us His own. And, therefore, we shall also remember Him, our faithful covenant God, in the year that lies before us. Only, this we can do and will do, not in our own strength, but only in His strength, through prayer, and in the light of His Word.

The world remembers chariots and horses.

Jehovah, however, is our God, now and forever.

His Name we shall remember.

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Editor's Note

We take this opportunity to wish you, our readers, a blessed New Year. We realize that for many of you, especially our overseas readers, this greeting will reach you a good many days or weeks after January 1; but this is the proper place for such a greeting, seeing that this is our first issue in the year of our Lord 1984. We do well to remember that this is indeed the "year of our Lord," and that, too, from every point of view. He is on the throne! And while there are increasingly some very ominous clouds on the horizon of history, clouds that seem to threaten the very right of existence of the church of Jesus Christ in the midst of the world, we may have peace in the assurance that He rules the world, and that therefore all things must and do work together for good to them that love Him, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

* * * * *

Publication News. Earlier we had mentioned the possibility of publishing the RFPA Bible Story book in late 1983. As you now realize, that proved to be impossible. There were simply too many details connected with the preparation of this book to achieve that goal. At this writing we are almost ready to go to press, and we are hoping to have the

book on the market sometime next spring — if everything goes smoothly, early spring. We also hope to have the new edition of our *Church Order* (the RFPA is handling the publishing details of this) available in the near future. Our Managing Editor encountered considerable difficulty and delay in getting the right kind of looseleaf binder for this book; but it appears now as though this difficulty is solved.

* * * * *

Postal Service. Recently I received some personal reports that the *Standard Bearer* arrives very late in some localities. I may inform you that such tardiness is not the fault of our Business Office. Our Business Manager invariably has the *Standard Bearer* in the mail within a day or two of its publication date. The problem lies with the Postal Service. If you are one of those who is the victim of extreme tardiness, please let our Business Office (not the Editor) know about it. We will inquire whether anything can be done about the problem.

* * * * *

Due to abundance of copy, your editor is taking a vacation for one issue.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Our Order of Worship

Prof. H. Hanko

Our worship is communal worship, that is, worship of the congregation. There are, of course, different ways in which we can speak of the worship of God. Historically, a distinction has been made between "solitary worship" and "communal worship." The former refers to the individual acts of worship performed by the believer in his own "inner closet" — to use the expression of Jesus. The individual worships when he prays, studies, and meditates upon the Scriptures, searches himself in true spiritual self-examination, and engages in such

similar acts which bring him consciously into the presence of God. There are also different forms of "communal worship." Family devotions about the table, believers reading Scripture together or praying together — under whatever circumstances this may be — all these are various kinds of communal worship. The communal worship of which we are speaking in these articles is the worship of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. This too is an important part of worship, specifically commanded by the Lord and enjoined upon us in the Scriptures.

It is quite important, I think, to consider this aspect of our worship for a bit. The importance of considering it lies in the fact that this is being increasingly ignored in those churches which engage in forms of liturgical renewal. I do not refer to the fact that in many churches, the church buildings are half empty during the worship services because some of the members of the congregation do not come to church on the Lord's Day. This is true, and a situation to be deplored. But I refer rather to the fact that it is becoming increasingly common for children to be sent out of the worship services very shortly after the services are begun.

Usually what happens is something like this. After the service is introduced, the minister descends from the pulpit, stands before the front row of pews, summons the children of the congregation to the front, and talks to them for a few moments about some subject that happens to strike his fancy. After he has finished, the children are ushered out of the auditorium to hold their "children's services" in some other part of the building under the leadership of someone other than the minister. Only the adults remain to participate in the rest of the service.

The argument which is used to justify this course of action is usually that the service as a whole is aimed primarily at adults, that it is far beyond the comprehension of children, and that it is therefore better to exclude them from the worship service so that they can have their own services under someone other than the minister on a level more suited to their intellectual capacities.

This is an extremely serious mistake and a totally false line of argumentation.

Whatever may be the nature of those meetings which are held with the children outside the auditorium, they can never be called worship services by any stretch of the imagination. The result is that children simply are not given the opportunity to worship God on the Lord's Day. Nor is it true that the intellectual capacity of children is so small that they cannot understand anything of the worship services, that what goes on is over their head, that the service is aimed at adults only. This is all specious reasoning which has not a grain of truth in it. Of course, we recognize the fact that the capacity of children to understand is less than that of adults — all other things being equal; but, on the one hand, children understand a whole lot more than we give them credit for; and, on the other hand, the ultimate benefit of the service in worship depends upon the work of the Spirit of Christ Who works in the hearts of the children of the covenant as well as in the hearts of the adults.

But these are not really my main objections.

The question may very well be asked of all covenant parents: Why do you take your children to church on the Lord's Day when the congregation is gathered for worship?

I recall asking this question on family visitation from time to time; and sometimes the answer surprised me. There were those who answered, in effect: while it is true that our children do not really get anything out of the worship service because it is "above their heads," we take them to church so that they get used to the idea of going to church and so that they learn to sit still.

These are not very good reasons.

From another point of view, this same point can be emphasized by considering the question from another perspective. There are some of our young people who, when they are planning their marriage, want a "church wedding." A church wedding is a wedding which is held in a worship service. But, for one reason or another, they do not want to have their wedding on the Lord's Day and so they ask permission of the Consistory to hold a special mid-week service at which service their marriage will be solemnized. Usually the reason is that young people want to have their "reception" on the same night as they are married because they are eager to be off on their honeymoon, and it is not proper to have a reception on the Lord's Day.

Now, there is nothing wrong with a mid-week service, of course. At the time of the Reformation, in various places services were held every day of the week. Nor is the desire to have a "church wedding" a bad one. I personally favor church weddings — especially in these days when such fierce attacks are being made on the institution of marriage. But the kind of "church weddings" which are held during the week are not really "church weddings" because they are not really worship services. The Consistory is there; the minister preaches a sermon; the liturgy and order of worship are followed. But one important element is lacking: the congregation is not there. Perhaps a few of the members of the congregation are present, but the congregation is not. True communal worship takes place in the congregation.

Now there are a few points which have to be considered in this connection; and it is well that we remind ourselves of this.

In the first place, a congregation is, in itself, a *complete* manifestation of the body of Christ. It is true that the whole body of Christ, the full number of the elect as it will someday be gathered in glory, is the body of Christ. It is also true, therefore, that one congregation is only a very small fraction of that innumerable company of saints. Nevertheless, the individual congregation also is a complete

revelation of that body. It is a kind of microcosm of the whole. All that is true of the whole body is also true of the individual congregation. Christ's body is there in that congregation, and I, as a part of that congregation, am a part of the body.

This is true from different viewpoints. It is true because the great variation which exists between the individual members and by means of which they are one organism is present in the congregation. There are old people and young, parents and children, different nationalities and races, people with a wide variety of gifts — all serving the unity of the whole. An organism is, after all, like a tree, a unity which binds together a diversity of parts. But it is also true that in the congregation the fulness of Christ is manifested. This is true in the office of believers which all the elect hold; but it is also true in the special offices which are present in the worship service. Christ is present as our Prophet — through the pastor; as our Priest — through the deacons; and as our King — through the elders. In all His fullness, in all the riches of His grace as our Mediator and Savior, Christ is present when a congregation comes together to worship.

Hence, worship is possible only when the *congregation* is present.

But there is another point here.

The congregation of God's people is the gathering of *believers and their seed*. We spoke earlier in these articles of the fact that worship is always a profoundly covenant idea: God enters into covenant fellowship with His people, and that covenant fellowship comes to expression through a "holy conversation" between God and His people when the congregation comes together for worship.

But if the idea of worship is profoundly cove-

nantal, then also it is a worship which includes believers and their seed. Children belong in church, not to get them used to the idea of going to church, and not to teach them to sit still; but because they, as well as adults, have a place in the everlasting covenant of grace. They are a part, an important part, a necessary part, of the congregation.

They are not there as appendages, but they are there to gather with their parents *to worship*.

Of course, they have to be taught this. Parents who are conscious of this ought to take pains to teach their children why they go to church, to teach them the meaning of worship, to help them through the worship service so that they may learn to worship, to help them to listen to the sermon so that they also may receive the preaching as the power of God unto salvation in them. Parents are sadly remiss in their duty when they fail in these important respects. And there can be no doubt about it, but that, when parents do this, children also receive much blessing from the worship service.

This is one reason why it is good that families sit together in church. It is an idea to be condemned that children are sent out of the service to go to their own little room to hear a "Bible story." It is equally not good when families are scattered throughout the auditorium. I know, young people, when they get into their teens, like to sit by themselves — oftentimes so that they can escape the discipline of their parents. But the fact is that when families sit together, they express the fundamental truth of Scripture that a congregation is the gathering of believers and their seed.

Communal worship is covenantal worship. And covenantal worship is the worship of believers and their children.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Unique Birth of Christ

Rev. H. Veldman

There is, obviously, a marked and striking difference between the works of God (particularly as the God of our salvation) as they were manifest in the old dispensation, and as they are revealed at the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. These

works of God in the old dispensation are generally of a spectacular character. There is, first of all, the Scriptural account of the flood as recorded in Genesis 6-8. What a spectacular display of the saving love of God for His church and the wrath of God

upon a wicked world that had become ripe for judgment, having filled its measure of iniquity, which means that it had attained unto the greatest manifestation of sin whereunto it was capable. Forty days and forty nights the rain of God's judgment had descended upon that wicked world, until the waters arose some fifteen cubits above the highest mountain. Then, we would call attention to the work of God which He performed upon the wicked land of Egypt. Ten devastating plagues were visited upon that godless nation, culminating in the death of the firstborn of man and beast. And Pharaoh knew that these plagues were no accidents, but visitations by Jehovah in His wrath upon his ungodly land directly through Moses. The king of Egypt could not possibly have any doubt in regards to the origin of these plagues. And these plagues are followed by Israel's spectacular deliverance through the Red Sea, narrated for us in Exodus 14. Jehovah's right arm brings deliverance unto His people. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; the Lord caused a strong east wind to blow all that night, causing the sea, we read in verse 21, to go back, and He made the sea dry land and the waters were divided. Then, when the last Israelite had been led upon the opposite shore, with all their cattle, and the last of the Egyptians had followed them into the sea, the Lord caused the waters to return and Pharaoh and all his host were drowned. Finally, we would call attention to the Lord's spectacular display upon Mount Sinai, recorded for us in Exodus 19. We read that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and the voice of the trumpet exceedingly loud, and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And we also read in verse 18 that Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. No living creature among Israel, man or beast, was allowed to touch this mountain; contact with it would mean instant death. Indeed, what a spectacular display of the presence of the living God of Israel!

In connection with these Old Testament displays of Jehovah, the God of Israel, we would make the following brief observations. First of all, as far as the flood and Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea are concerned, two events occur: the deliverance and saving of the church of God and the destruction of the world. These two facts always occur simultaneously, in the old dispensation and also in the New Testament when Christ comes into our flesh and blood, dies upon the cross of Calvary, and returns presently upon the clouds of heaven. How true this is of the flood and Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea! The salvation of the

church and the destruction of the world always go hand in hand. Secondly, these mighty events (the flood and at the Red Sea) speak loudly of Jehovah's sovereignty. It is the Lord Who revealed to Noah that He would destroy the world with a flood. True, the apostle Peter speaks of Noah in II Peter 2:5 as a preacher of righteousness, implying not only that Noah preached in God's Name of the coming of the flood, but also that this flood would be a divine visitation of His righteous judgment. But God revealed it to Noah; God visited the deluge upon the wicked world; and it is Jehovah Who reveals to Moses the feast of the passover and Israel's deliverance by the Lord's mighty arm; in fact, the plague of the slaying of the firstborn is withheld from wicked Egypt. Thirdly, need we call attention to the obvious truth that these events in the old dispensation are displays of the Lord's mighty power? Fact is, according to Romans 9, God is the Potter and Pharaoh is but clay in His hand; in His might the Lord sends a deluge upon the wicked world, delivers Israel through the Red Sea, drowns a wicked and obstinate Pharaoh in the same sea, gives His people bread out of heaven and water out of a rock; and then displays His awesome power upon Mount Sinai. And, finally, these events speak loudly and clearly of God's holiness and justice and righteousness. Noah, friend of God, to whom the Lord reveals the secrets of His heart, walking in faith, is saved with his family, and the wicked world, having filled its cup of iniquity, is destroyed by the same water that saved the church of God. Israel is delivered through the Red Sea, because of the blood of the lamb of the passover, type and symbol of the Lamb of God and of Calvary; and the wicked and obstinate Pharaoh is drowned by the living God with all his wicked host. And Mount Sinai speaks of the dreadful majesty of the Lord, His awesome holiness and righteousness, to Whom no man of himself can approach. Our God is a consuming fire.

Indeed, all these events of the old dispensation are awesome displays of the living God. This is understandable. Types and symbols, being earthly, can be revealed. And when they are revealed as types and symbols of the alone living God, the result is the spectacular displays of the old dispensation. Such is the character of these events in the Old Testament.

If it be true, as it is, that the Lord's revelation of Himself, particularly as the God of our salvation, was spectacular in the old dispensation, being the dispensation of the symbols and shadows which can be revealed, how different is the Lord's revelation of Himself in connection with the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ! Then, at the time of Jesus' birth, nothing is spectacular — i.e., nothing is spectacular as far as what the human eye can see is concerned.

Of course, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is surely awesomely spectacular. Is it not beyond all human comprehension that a virgin conceives, brings forth a son and remains a virgin? Are not all the events wonderful when Jesus is born, such as the various announcements: the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist by Gabriel to Zacharias in the temple, the aged priest who with his aged wife, Elizabeth, were beyond the age of bringing forth a child; the announcement by the same angel to a virgin, Mary, at Nazareth; and the subsequent announcement of Jesus' birth to shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock in the fields of Ephratah? Indeed, all these events are tremendous and awesome. But, nothing is spectacular as far as the human eye is concerned.

Everything appears to be routine. There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, or that the whole world should be registered for the purpose of taxation. In Palestine this meant that everyone would go to his own native city. There was nothing unusual about this. Augustus was the emperor of Rome, the world empire at that time. He had decreed that all the world over which he ruled, should be taxed to support his world empire. Hence, Mary and Joseph must go to the city of Bethlehem, the city of David, inasmuch as they were of the lineage of David. Of course, this was according to God's decree — the Son of David must be born in the city of David. But, as far as appearances are concerned, everything appears normal and routine. And when Mary's firstborn Son is born, He is born in a cattle stall and laid in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. The little village of Bethlehem was crowded and the travellers from Nazareth had arrived too late to find lodging in the city. And there the Firstborn of Mary is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Nothing spectacular except that the Heir of all things is born in abject poverty! This is surely spectacular, but it cannot be seen with the human eye. Everything is so routine. That there was no room for them in the inn was certainly not because of any animosity toward them from the world. The world did not even know these weary travellers from Nazareth, and they surely did not know the identity of the Child that would presently be born. How spectacular the works of God may have been in the old dispensation, so completely different is the coming of our Lord into our flesh and blood! And when this Child grows up in the city of Nazareth, except for Scripture's recording of His wonderful visit to the temple at Jerusalem when He was twelve years old, nothing is recorded of all those years in His city of Nazareth.

How must this be explained and understood?

First of all, why should the announcement of Jesus' birth be made to the wicked? How can it be declared to the ungodly that "unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, Christ the Lord"? Besides, why should this announcement be addressed in the city of Jerusalem, a city that would presently be replaced by its heavenly fulfillment, the heavenly Jerusalem? Besides, the wicked would never be able to receive this announcement of the Saviour, spiritually and gladly.

Secondly, there is indeed nothing of man in this wondrous event in Bethlehem. How true is the song of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest." All glory is to God alone. This Jesus is born of a virgin who remains a virgin. Here we have the Incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, Immanuel, born in our flesh and blood. This is the wondrous fulfillment of the promise of God as declared by Isaiah, in Isaiah 7:14, that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a son, and His name shall be called Immanuel, God with us. There is nothing of man here because it is all of God.

Thirdly, there is nothing of the earth here because it is all heavenly, the birth of the King of the kingdom of heaven. From the earthly point of view, all we have here is the sign of the swaddling clothes and the manger. Shall we remove these swaddling clothes and the manger? Shall we clothe this baby in royal apparel? Shall we replace the manger with a crib in a beautiful and gorgeous palace? However, how out of harmony this would be with reality! Fact is, this Babe of Bethlehem is a heavenly King to Whom the ends of the earth have been given as an inheritance. "My kingdom," He will presently declare to the Roman governor, "is not a kingdom of this world." Presently they will even remove from Him the swaddling clothes and the manger. Presently they will call Him a rebel, an insurrectionist; they will inflict upon Him all that their devilish hearts can concoct, finally crucifying Him. But, then, in the way of the cross He will suffer and die for His own, pay all their guilt, merit for them everlasting life and glory, seal the condemnation of the world. He will establish, in righteousness, the Kingdom of Heaven, be raised from the dead, ascend to heavenly glory at the Father's right hand, and then realize His kingdom through all things, establishing His Kingdom in everlasting glory and heavenly immortality. Indeed, there is nothing spectacular here from the earthly point of view, because this Jesus is the promised Messiah, David's Son and Lord, God's King in the heavenly sense of the word. "Glory to God in the highest," for unto you, unto God's people throughout the ages is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (20)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

(The Euthanasia of a Mission, The Views of Henry Venn)

In order to appreciate the views of Henry Venn one must understand something of the environment in which he worked. Venn was appointed secretary of The Church Missionary Society in 1841. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) was a denominational society of the Church of England (Anglican). John Venn, Henry's father and one of the founders of the C.M.S., characterized the Society as "Church but not High Church." (Cf. *The Responsible Church And The Foreign Mission*, Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, p. 25.) John Venn and his colleagues who founded the C.M.S. were decidedly low church and staunchly evangelical. However this may be, they were members of the Church of England and that communion existed wherever there were Anglicans within the British Empire. Wherever the first missionaries of the C.M.S. went, they found that the church had preceded them, if only on paper. They found themselves in an Anglican diocese, even though only a very few of the inhabitants could properly be called Anglicans, and that too in an area often many times the size of all of England. The bishop was there. From the very beginning of the work, therefore, there was the question of the relation between the bishop and the C.M.S. missionaries working in his diocese.

In the early years of the C.M.S. this question posed no real problems. The C.M.S. was generally well received within the Church of England as a voluntary organization of members of the church. Henry Venn, as Secretary of the Society, expressed its position as being: "in subordination to Church authority but upon the basis of voluntary action" (Beyerhaus, Lefever; p. 26). The potential for tension and even conflict between church and society is all too obvious.

As the C.M.S. grew in strength and in the scope of its operations, it became crucial to find a solution to the problem of how the Society and its mission work could be fitted into the Church of England at home, but more especially in its colonial branches. The urgency of finding a solution to this problem

was made all the greater by the rise of what some called a "militant clericalism," represented mainly by the High Church movement. Henry Venn began his work as Secretary of the C.M.S. during this head-on collision of Evangelicalism and High Church Anglicanism.

When Venn assumed his duties as Secretary of the C.M.S. he immediately concentrated his efforts on resolving this conflict. Under his leadership the Society limited itself to what may be called temporal or lay functions. These functions Venn listed under four main headings: "1. The collection and administration of funds for the work; 2. the selection and training of missionary candidates; 3. the sending of ordained missionaries to mission-stations, and 4. the supervision of the missionaries in their work among non-Christian people. The spiritual side of the work, that is, the arrangements for worship and pastoral care, and, as time went on, arrangements for the building up of an indigenous ministry — in fact, all that in the admittedly narrow sense, might be called "church-work" — is handed over to the local bishop" (Beyerhaus, Lefever; p. 26).

These distinctions made it possible for the bishops to accept the Society as a voluntary organization co-operating with them in their work. This also implied that the C.M.S. was merely the servant of the church, and that, as the church grew, the work of the mission might very well change or (as Venn himself thought) come to an end altogether. Venn considered the goal of missions properly to be the creation (or better, gathering) of an indigenous church. The native church must be completely responsible for all pastoral duties, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, discipline, and its own support. The missionaries would then be free to evangelize among the unconverted and unchurched heathen. Venn stressed this as the goal of missions not to relieve the C.M.S. of financial burdens but because he firmly believed the indigenous church principle to be biblical. The development of the indigenous church ought to be promoted in order that the native church and its ministry might be, for its own spiritual well-being and financial security,

made free, as far as possible, of foreign support over which it had no control.

Concerning these views (remarkably similar to those of John L. Nevius) Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever correctly observe: "Venn saw, decades before it was at all widely appreciated, the essential evil of missionary paternalism which in the name of affection, actually thwarted this development (the indigenous church, R.D.D.). All this led to his epoch-making aim, formulated as Point 10 of his Memorandum of 1851: 'the settlement of a Native Church under Native Pastors upon a self-supporting system.' Venn realized that the 'native church,' on this basis, was still a distant goal, but he was to be disappointed that even his very modest expectations were not realized. His plans were frustrated by this very missionary paternalism which we have already mentioned, so that, ten years later, in 1861, he issued another Memorandum embodying stricter instructions to missionaries and a more fully worked out program of church-development. Missionaries, he says, are to limit themselves to evangelistic work, and are not to become involved in church-administration — at least once the native church is established" (*The Responsible Church And The Foreign Mission*, p. 27).

The first calling of missionaries, as Venn saw it, was to organize converts into groups which he called "Christian companies" rather than churches. At this stage the work was still part of the mission work of the C.M.S. The next stage is reached when these Christian companies are transformed into churches. This step is reached when the missionary considers the group's contributions sufficiently high to support a native minister. At this point the missionary raises the group to the status of a "Native Pastorate under an ordained Native, paid for from the Native Church Fund" (Beyerhaus, Lefever; p. 28). The native minister is still responsible to the missionary as long as the native church fund is administered and subsidized by the C.M.S. The final phase is reached when groups of these "Native Pastorates" meet together regularly in a District Church Conference. The missionaries are to attend this Conference along with the native pastors but, says Venn: "when any considerable District has been thus provided for by an organized native Church, the foreign agency will have no place in the work and that District will have been fully prepared for a Native Episcopate." Further, Venn says: "If the elementary principles of self-support and self-government and self-extension be thus sown with the seed of the Gospel, we may hope to see the healthy growth and expansion of the Native Church" (Beyerhaus, Lefever; p. 28). At this stage the missionary will be able to give over all pastoral work into the hands of the native

pastors and their congregations. The missionary will also be able, according to Venn, to relax gradually his "superintendence over the pastors themselves till it sensibly ceases" (cf. Beyerhaus, Lefever; p. 28). At this point the missionaries of the C.M.S. are to be transferred to other unevangelized fields of labor. As far as the former field is concerned the work of the missionaries is finished. In Venn's words "the euthanasia (painless putting to death, R.D.D.) of the mission" has taken place.

Venn's methodology, revolutionary in his times, is certainly commendable in many ways. There is much that we of the Protestant Reformed Churches can learn from it. We are still in the "pioneering stage," at least as far as foreign mission work is concerned. The gathering of an indigenous church ought to be the goal of mission work. The church must be native to its own land, have its own pastor, elders, and deacons. The new church too is called of Christ to "go into all the world" preaching and baptizing, making disciples of all nations. The "native church" must support itself and it must govern itself in obedience to the teachings of the Word of God. Venn's warning against "missionary paternalism" is also to be heeded. That is a sore evil under the sun and, perhaps more than any other single factor, hinders the establishment and growth of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Apart, therefore, from the obvious differences we would have with Venn, especially in the area of Church Polity (Venn was Anglican), there is much we can learn from him.

There are weaknesses in Venn's methods. There are many or at least several questions left unanswered. When and how is all of this to be implemented? Just what are the criteria for the organizing of a "Christian company" into a "Native Church"? Is it merely the fact that the group is able to support itself financially? What is the relationship between the "Native Church" and the sending church? With these questions we shall deal, D.V., in the next article.

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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

James, Evidence of a Living Faith (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

This letter of James is placed within the category of "catholic epistles," designated as such because they were written to the children of God without mentioning a specific church. They are, in this sense, universal-catholic. The author was burdened by the threat of dead orthodoxy in the churches, so he challenged them, "Show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works." We do well to heed this warning in our day.

THE AUTHOR

The author identifies himself simply as, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). There are three New Testament men of note by that name. There was James the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles and brother of John. Both were fishermen in Galilee and called by Jesus to become disciples. In the course of Jesus' ministry he became one of the intimate three, the others being his brother John and Simon Peter. Subsequent to the crucifixion of Jesus, James became the first martyr when Herod put him to death by the sword (Acts 12:12). The second James was the son of Alphaeus, also one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:3). The third one was James, the brother of our Lord (Matt. 13:55). The question we have to face is, which of these three is the author?

The best argument for choosing James, the brother of our Lord, lies in the fact that he does not identify himself as son of Zebedee or son of Alphaeus as was commonly done in the gospel narratives for the other two. Besides this, James, the Lord's brother, had attained a certain notoriety by the time that he wrote this letter, so that a simple description as "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus" was sufficient.

Let's consider some of the background that led James, the brother of our Lord to write this letter.

When Jesus toured Galilee, the leaders of the Jews in Nazareth referred to James as one of the Lord's brothers (Matt. 13:55). This was to belittle the ministry of Jesus, since in the estimation of the Jews He came from a lowly family. He was also referred to in Matthew 12:46 as one who wanted to

talk to Jesus when He was in Galilee. He went with Jesus to Capernaum and tried to persuade Him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:3). He was present with Jesus at this feast in Jerusalem (John 7:10). At this point in his life he did not believe in Jesus (John 7:5).

What a change came over James! He progressed from unbeliever to leader of the Jerusalem church. The change began with a personal appearance of Jesus to James after the resurrection (I Cor. 15:7). He then became active in the early New Testament church. He was present in the upper room with the disciples (Acts 1:14). When Paul went to Jerusalem after his conversion on the way to Damascus, he had an interview with James (Gal. 1:19). When Peter escaped from prison, he requested that those in the house of John Mark inform James and the brethren of his escape (Acts 12:17). By the time that the Jewish council met, the one which considered the question of the circumcision of Gentile converts, James was the presiding officer (Acts 15:13). At this council, James gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, an indication that his approval was significant (Gal. 2:9), and James gave a moving speech that summarized the significance of this decision (Acts 15:13-29). Later, when Paul returned from his missionary journey, James was still leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:17ff.). Such a man was in a position to write a letter to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1).

For further verification of authorship, we can cite the following. The letter is filled with brief and pointed exhortations, typical of one who is in a position of leadership and authority. A comparative study of the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), with the words of this letter (see Hendriksen, *Bible Survey*, pp. 326-327) indicate that the Lord's brother did much reflecting upon the teaching of the Lord Jesus. There is a striking similarity in the use of words between the speech in James recorded in Acts 15 and the ones used in this epistle (see Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, page 388).

Tradition adds two interesting details that cannot be substantiated by the Bible; but the Bible does not contradict them either. Eusebius, the historian, quotes from a Jewish historian, Hegesippus, who describes James, the Lord's brother, as drinking no wine nor strong drink, eating no flesh, and spending so much time on his knees praying that they were calloused and looked like a camel's knees. He was called James the Just because of his piety. He also claimed that his piety led to his martyrdom. Jewish tradition tells us that James was taken to the balcony of the temple and ordered to shout to the Jews below that Jesus was not the Messiah. Instead, James cried that Jesus was the Son of God and the Judge of the world. In anger the Jews threw him down and he fell to the ground below. Before he died, they stoned him and he was finally clubbed to death. The year was A.D. 62.

TO WHOM IT WAS WRITTEN

The designation is simply given, "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). The question arises, who is intended with such a description. A similar reference is recorded in I Peter 1:1 where the definite article is lacking and interpretation allows for Christians, Jewish and Gentile, that were scattered throughout the world. Here we are limited by "the twelve tribes." We may certainly say that James intended that this letter should be for Jewish Christians who were scattered by the dispersion. It would hardly do to say that he wrote it for all Jews, whether Christian or not (see James 2:1). The twelve tribes never returned from captivity, though representatives of the tribes did. Such a reference to the twelve tribes was common among the early church, indicating their spiritual unity (see Acts 26:7, when Paul was before Agrippa).

The problem that arises in this connection is whether those Jews scattered by the dispersion, upon the invasion of Palestine by foreign nations such as Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Syria, could have been converted to Christianity at this early date. To answer this, one need but recall the Feast of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. Already then, representatives of all nations were present in Jerusalem for the feast and were converted to the Christian faith by the Holy Spirit. From then on the Christian faith spread among the Jews and Gentiles.

James, the Lord's brother, as leader of the Jerusalem church and caring in a special way for the Christian Jews that were scattered throughout the world, felt the need to write this letter to them. We should next examine what circumstances led to the need for this letter.

A number of things are indicated in the letter itself. It was a time of oppression, many rich land owners, both Jew and Gentile, were using their

wealth to work hardship upon the Jewish converts (James 1:2-11; 2:6ff.; 5:1-6). Still more, some Jewish Christians were over-reacting against the Phariseism which had been prevalent in the church. Rejecting work righteousness, they went to the other extreme, they insisted that all one needed was faith, and that works were not significant. This led them headlong into dead orthodoxy: one need only accept certain truths, without living a Christian life. To counter this evil, James spells out the true idea of faith, and that one finds the evidence of such faith in good works (James 2:10-26). There is no contradiction between Paul, who emphasized justification by faith without works, and James, who taught the need for a working faith. Martin Luther failed to see the difference and consequently labelled the epistle of James an epistle of straw, and relegated it to the back of his Bible. One more thing that concerned James was the factious spirit among some of the Jews. They showed favoritism (James 2:1-7), they were guilty of evil speech (James 3), there was strife in the church (James 4), they neglected to care for the sick and pray for one another (James 5).

This letter deals with the spiritual-ethical principles of Christian faith. James is rightly called the Amos of the New Testament. As such, this epistle is very important for us today. We too must know the important place of good works in our lives and how this affects our relationship to one another in the church.

DATE AND DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Accepting the authorship as James, the brother of our Lord, the date usually given is A.D. 45-50. The things that enter into consideration for this date are the following. It seems to have been written before the gospels, for the doctrinal basis set forth in the gospels is lacking in James. The economic conditions referred to in the letter ceased to exist with the outbreak of the war with Rome, around the mid 60s. The church life presented here is simple, e.g., reference only to elders (James 5:14). It contains reference to the expectation of Christ's return which was common to this period. If this is true, then James was the first New Testament book written.

Some of the distinctive features of this epistle, pointed out by Harrison in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, are the following.

1. The work has an authoritative tone. Nearly every other verse contains an imperative. Yet there is no autocratic spirit; the writer addresses his readers as brethren.

2. There is a lack of Christian doctrine. There is no teaching on redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ. These doctrines are more as-

sumed than expressed.

3. The epistle is eminently practical in its approach. From start to finish the writer accents the practical outworking of true religion.

4. The letter is notably impersonal. There is no particular personal relation between him and those whom he addresses. The picture of readers and the figure of the writer are equally colorless and indistinct.

5. There is a fine appreciation of nature in this book. It has been said there is more of this in James than in all of Paul's letters combined.

6. The teaching bears marked similarity to that of Christ, especially to what is contained in the Ser-

mon on the Mount. Two examples: on judging (James 4:11, 12; Matt. 7:1) and on swearing (James 5:12, Matt. 5:34-37).

7. James belongs to the wisdom literature, revealing kinship with the wisdom books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha.

8. The Greek of the epistle is of a high quality, comparing favorably with that of Hebrews and I Peter. It has a rather high percentage of words peculiar to itself among the New Testament writers.

Well may we read and study this letter so that we may benefit from such a true faith as the Holy Spirit describes it.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Nicene Creed

Rev. James Slopsema

Article 3 (cont'd)

Article 3 of the Nicene Creed speaks of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

We have already discussed in a previous article the idea of the incarnation. Through the wonder work of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our flesh. He Who is eternally God also became a man. This is the wonder of the incarnation. This wonder is set forth in the Nicene Creed especially in the phrase, "and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost by the Virgin Mary."

There needs to be discussed yet the remaining expressions of this article, namely, that the Son of God was incarnate "for us men and for our salvation," that He "came down from heaven" and that He "was made man."

The idea that the Son of God was incarnate "for us men, and for our salvation" was inserted by the early church in her creed to contradict the error of Arianism.

The position of Arius and his followers can be summed up in the statement: the Son of God was *made* for us men and for our *creation*. In a previous article we have seen that to Arius God is so highly

exalted that it was impossible for Him to create the universe directly. Due to His highly transcendent character God could create the universe only through an intermediary. Hence, He created the Word or Logos as His Son. And it was through the Word that God in turn created the heavens and the earth.

This according to Arius is the chief significance of the Son of God. It is true that Arius acknowledged the incarnation of the Son of God. And Arius also connected the incarnation of the Son to the salvation of man. The Son of God became flesh to bring salvation to man. However, because Arius denied the true divinity of the Son it ultimately became impossible to speak of Arius' Christ as the Savior of men. For how can one who is less than God reconcile fallen man to God? Besides, this in the thought and scheme of Arius was secondary. The primary significance of the Son of God was not man's salvation but man's creation. For without the Son creation was impossible. God created the Son exactly so that He could through the Son create man and the universe.

Over against this idea the early church confessed that it was for man, that is, for his *salvation*, that the Son of God was *incarnate*. It is true of course that the Son of God also took part in the creation of man. This is John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word

was God . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." However, the eternal Son of God is also the Savior of man. He is that Savior and can be that Savior only because He is truly God. He alone is able to bring man back to God. Hence, the primary significance of the Son of God for man is his salvation. And that salvation is possible only through the incarnation. This is the emphasis of the Scriptures. And this truth the early church also set forth here in her creed.

In this connection the early church also confessed that the Son of God "came down from heaven." The Son of God came down from heaven for us men and our salvation and was incarnate. In this way the early church sought to emphasize over against the Arians that the Son of God came into the flesh *voluntarily*.

According to the Arians, the Son of God is not one with the Father. As far as His being or essence is concerned He is different from the Father. And He is subordinate to the Father. That implies two things. First, this means that the will of the Son is not the will of the Father. Because they are not one in being, neither are they one as to their will. The Father has His will and the Son has His own will. Secondly, because the Son is subordinate to the Father in every way, so too is the will of the Son subordinate to the will of the Father. The Son must do what the Father wills even if it be contrary to His own will. Carrying this error through to the incarnation of the Son, the Arians could only acknowledge that the Son was incarnate according to the will of the Father. It was not necessarily the will of the Son that He come into the humiliation of man to suffer and die and secure the salvation of man.

To emphasize the willingness of the Son to be incarnate, the early church confessed that *He came down from heaven* for us men and for our salvation.

We read repeatedly in the Scriptures that God is in heaven. We are even taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, Who art in heaven."

That God is in heaven is of course not to be understood in the sense that God's very being is limited to heaven, to be found only in heaven. For God is everywhere present. In recognition of this we are told in II Chronicles 6:18 concerning God, "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee."

Nevertheless, the Bible still presents heaven as God's dwelling place. This is to be understood in the sense that God has manifest Himself in a special sense in heaven. It is in heaven that God especially reveals His love and fellowship to His own. It is in heaven therefore that we can see the

face of God. It is in heaven that we can live and dwell with God in covenant fellowship as nowhere else. And therefore it is also from heaven that the wrath of God is revealed against the wickedness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18).

Quite in harmony with this idea the Scriptures also connect the sovereignty of God with the fact that His abode is in heaven. The will of God is not limited in any way. God for example is never required to do anything against His will. Nor can anything frustrate the will of God. That which God has determined to do He most certainly will accomplish. He is the sovereign God. And this is evident from the fact that He is in heaven. He Who is so highly exalted that His very throne and dwelling place is in heaven must surely be sovereign in all His ways. And so we read in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."

And now in this third article of the Nicene Creed the early church confessed that the Son of God came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation and was incarnate. In light of all that we have just seen it is quite obvious that in this way the early church sought to confess that the Son of God took upon Himself our flesh by His own will. The incarnation was not the will of the Father in distinction from the will of His Son. No! For the Son of God has His abiding place in heaven. And He Whose abode is in heaven does only according to His own will. In the incarnation therefore the Son of God was a willing participant.

This is in harmony with the confession of the church in Article 2 of this same creed that the Son of God is very God of very God, of one substance with the Father. The Son is one with the Father in being. They both subsist in the one divine being. And to that one divine being there belongs the one will of God, which is the will of the Father and the Son. What the Father wills therefore the Son also wills. This applies also to the incarnation. It was the will of the Father and the Son that the Son should in the fulness of time take upon Himself our flesh.

What a beautiful truth this is! How precious is our Savior. For He came into our sin and death not against His will but according to His will. We know this for He came down from nothing less than heaven itself.

Finally, the early church in this third article of her creed confessed that being incarnate by the Holy Ghost, the Son of God "was made man."

Again the church sought at this point to emphasize the truth of God over against the error of the Arians. The Arians taught that through the incarnation the Son of God did not become a complete

man. They taught rather that the Son took upon Himself only the flesh of man, that is, a human body of flesh. Christ however never possessed a human soul. The rational soul of Jesus was the divine mind of the Son of God. Hence, He was not completely man, just as He was never completely God.

Over against this the church confessed that through the incarnation the Son of God became man. To express this the church coined a new word. The phrase, "was made man," is in the original Greek of the Nicene Creed only one word, expressing the idea of assuming manhood. Hence, the early church, in addition to confessing that Jesus Christ is truly God, also confessed that He is truly man. He is both God and man.

If we examine the truths set forth here in the Nicene Creed in the light of subsequent history, we find that much more needed to be said by the church on these subjects. The truth concerning the identity of Jesus Christ our Savior had not been brought to its full development in the Nicene Creed. Nor did the church at this time fully understand the incarnation in relation to the salvation of man.

However, as the powers of darkness attacked the truths set forth here in the Nicene Creed and the church was called to defend these truths, she was able to bring these truths to a further state of development.

Thus, for example, through the errors of such

men as Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches the early church was forced to develop more fully the identity of Jesus Christ. They came to see, on the basis of God's Word, that Jesus Christ is not two persons as some claimed, but one person, the divine person of the eternal Son of God. Furthermore, Jesus possesses through the incarnation not only the divine nature of God but also a real and complete human nature. And these two natures, the divine and the human, are perfectly united in the divine person of Christ "without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division." These conclusions were arrived at in the great councils of Constantinople (A.D. 381), Ephesus (A.D. 431), and Chalcedon (A.D. 451).

Having established the full identity of the Savior, Jesus Christ, the church was later able also to develop the relation between the incarnation of Christ and His work of salvation. This was done especially by Anselm in the eleventh century. In his work *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man) Anselm developed the truth of the atonement and demonstrated how that to atone for the sin of man God indeed had to become man. The fruits of Anselm's work were later incorporated into our own Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 5 and 6.

But it all began with the Nicene Creed. The truths confessed here in Article 3 became the basis for further development of the doctrines which we today hold most dear.

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

A Prayer for Youth at Year's Beginning

Rev. Ron Cammenga

Our Father Who art in heaven, at the beginning of a new year we approach Thy throne of grace in behalf of the youth of Thy Church. At the end of the old year, its weeks and days and moments having sped by, and as we stand at the threshold of another year, impress our young people with the vanity of earthly existence. Apart from Thee, life is vain. No matter how great the riches, how glorious the fame, how thrilling the pleasures, it all ends in death. Oh, teach us to number our days, to live in the consciousness of the brevity of our earthly existence, so that we set our hearts on wisdom's way.

Deliver our young people from the fool's heart. Deliver them from the notion, the foolish notion of the young people of the world, that the good life is the life of doing what they please. The world in which we live, and especially the youth of the world, is lawless. On every hand God-ordained authority is disdained. Deliver our young people from this spirit of the age in which we live. Work in their hearts love for Thee and the desire to live in obedience to Thee. Give them the grace to be obedient to all authority in their life. May they honor and obey their parents and teachers. May they receive the instruction and admonition of their pastor and

elders. In all their obedience give them the eye to see that by obeying those in authority over them, they are in very truth obeying Thee.

Keep our young people, we pray, from the temptations of the ungodly world in which we live. We know the severity of these temptations. And we know the weakness of the young people themselves, the same weak and sinful nature which we possess. Keep them from the Devil, who goes about to destroy them. With particular severity he tempts them. They especially are the objects of his unrelenting assaults. For Satan knows that if he can lead astray the young people, he has destroyed the church of tomorrow. Give them the strength to resist the Devil and to stand steadfast in the face of his opposition.

In the days of their youth, may the young people remember their Creator. May they not forget Him or ignore Him at a time in life when so many other things demand their attention. May they not forget their Creator by forgetting His Word. Give them diligence, and the needed self-discipline, for regular study and reading of Thy Word this year. May they be faithful to receive instruction from Thy Word in the preaching services and catechism classes of the church. May they not be embarrassed about Thy Word, but may they be ready and eager to discuss the Word with one another, especially in Young People's Society.

Lord, teach them to pray. May they be more and more impressed with the important place that prayer occupies in the Christian life. Through prayer may they live the coming year close to Thee, in conscious dependence upon Thee. The temptations are great, the struggles well-nigh overwhelming. But through prayer Thou wilt give them the needed strength and grace. For it is through prayer that God is pleased to give us His grace and Holy Spirit. May they be young men and young women of prayer, then, who in prayer bring their problems and troubles to God. May they experience God's answer to their prayers.

Give our young people this year the grace to be witnesses for Thee in the midst of the world. May they be unashamed of the Christ and of their discipleship of Christ. In whatever place Thou hast set them, whether they work at a job, or whether they attend school, may it be plain to those about them that they are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. May it be plain not only by what they do, but by what they refuse to do, not only by what they say, but by what they do not say, that they are the children of God.

May they confess their faith openly and publicly. May they give a testimony of the faith that lives in their hearts. Impress upon them their calling before

Thee to make this good confession. May they give serious thought this year to their responsibility to make public confession of faith in the church and to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Be especially with the young people in their dating. May they have serious thoughts about dating and marriage. Keep them from the filthy use that the young people of this world make of dating. May their lives be characterized by holiness and chastity. In their dating may they have an eye on marriage and their calling from God to marry in the Lord. May they not become entangled with an unbeliever, the consequences of which entanglement they will have to bear the rest of their life. But for the glory of God, the joy of their own married life, and the welfare of the children which God may give them, may they marry a young man or young woman who is one with them in the faith. May they, even in their dating and marriage, put God and God's kingdom first. May they not, for the sake of a husband or wife, leave the church and turn their back on God.

Be with those young people who struggle with the question of their calling in life. May they give this question careful and prayerful consideration. Cause them to know the particular place in Thy kingdom to which Thou dost call them. As they consider their life's calling may the overriding consideration not be where the most money is to be had or the most honor obtained. But may their consideration be first of all, "How can I best serve the cause of God's Church in the world?" May employment and promising job opportunities, as well as the pursuit of higher education, never become with the young people a reason to leave the church and the truth of God's Word.

We are mindful of those young people who have special burdens to bear. We think of those whose physical health and strength have been taken away from them. There are those who must spend their days in a wheelchair, those who are handicapped, those who are confined to a bed. Give them, and their loved ones who must care for them, a special measure of Thy grace. In their times of despondency and questioning grant them the strength of faith to confess that our life is in Thy hands and Thou knowest what is best for us.

We offer up a special petition, heavenly Father, on behalf of those young people who have strayed from the path of righteousness and who are walking in sin. They have broken the hearts of their parents and pastor, they have grieved the members of the church, but most of all they have offended Thee. Some of them simply have no interest in spiritual things. They have become irregular in their church attendance, or have stopped coming to

church altogether. Others have fallen into a particular sin from which they will not turn. Still others have made friends with the world and are running with the young people of the world.

Oh God, our hearts and our prayers go out for them. We have exhorted, and admonished, and brought the Word of God. But we are powerless to touch the heart. We depend upon Thee.

Work repentance! Restore! Break their hard hearts and subdue their stubborn wills! May they see the error of their way, the foolishness of their life. Work in them sorrow over their sins and a turning from sin unto Thee. Thou, Oh God, art a God able to bring the prodigal back from the filth of the pig pen, to restore the wayward to the favor of

Father. Work Thy work in their hearts. Give them no rest, until they find rest in Thee.

May we all together live this new year in anticipation of the day when time shall be no more, when the last moment shall have passed, and when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come again on the clouds of heaven. Then we shall all appear before Him with Whom we have to do, to give account of the deeds which we have done in the body. Then each one shall stand before the great Judge of heaven and earth. God grant that we may appear before Him unafraid, without terror. May we have the certainty of hearing the Word of our Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

The Apostolic Fathers and the Word

Rev. T. Miersma

The apostolic fathers and their writings reflect the doctrine and life of the church immediately following the death of the apostles. They are called apostolic fathers because in their days the teaching and preaching of the apostles was still a matter of living memory in the church of a not yet remote past. The identity of these men and the authenticity of their writings are to some extent matters of scholarly debate which need not fully concern us. They lived and wrote roughly in the period from A.D. 100 - A.D. 200. They include such men as Polycarp, the minister of the church of Smyrna, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John. They include also some names which are familiar to us from the New Testament, such as Barnabas and Clement (Philippians 4:3). Whether these men are to be identified with the men mentioned in the New Testament is uncertain. It is possible that the Clement whom Paul mentions and the writer of a letter to the Corinthian church are one and the same individual. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas appears to have been merely an individual in the early church who happened to have the same name as the Apostle Paul's co-missionary in the Book of Acts.

The days in which these men lived were days of severe persecution for the church. Polycarp himself lived to be a very old man and ended his life as a martyr, being burned at the stake. Upon such men

as these the care of the churches fell in the days following the apostles, and some of their letters have survived and come down to us.

It is evident from their writings that at the outset, the church, continuing in the teaching of the apostles, regarded the writings and teachings of the apostles as God's revelation unto His people. Although the exact boundaries of the Word of God had not yet been fully drawn, nevertheless the early church recognized that Christ had spoken unto them by His apostles, who were sent as His instruments to found and establish the church of the new dispensation, and by which Christ gave His Word to the church. Clement, speaking of the apostles, writes to the church of Corinth, "The ministers of the grace of God have, by the Holy Spirit, spoken of repentance" (1st Epistle of Clement, Chapter 8). Similarly in Chapter 47 of the same letter he says to the Corinthian church,

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.

They fully believed that Scripture was the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, and that

moreover the apostles were given the Spirit in a different way and in a higher sense than they themselves wrote and spoke. Thus Polycarp, writing to the church of Philippi, recognizes this difference and the uniqueness of Paul's letter in distinction from his own. He says to the Philippians in chapter 3 of his letter,

For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you . . .

While one must not read into these fathers a fully developed doctrine of inspiration, yet nevertheless the seeds of this truth lived from the very beginning in the early church. In a similar manner the Old Testament was regarded as the Word of God, and that as the Word of God to the Christian church and not as the property of apostate Judaism, as some today want to regard it. The early fathers also freely quote other writings, such as the apocryphal books. They sometimes confuse them with Scripture and they sometimes quote these books also as if they were Scripture. When seeking to determine their doctrine of Scripture it is important therefore to remember that they labored before the full determination of the canon of Scripture. They labored also in times of persecution, and with the Word of God written upon scrolls, not always easily obtainable, rather than the kind of books we have today. The result is that to quote the Scriptures, they often did so from memory, sometimes imperfectly and confusing their sources. Modern apostate scholarship likes to make much of these things as a tool with which to attack the truth of inspiration. In spite of their weaknesses in understanding the truth of inspiration, the apostolic fathers nevertheless confessed it, and that principle governed their work.

Thus, we also find in their writings the idea of the unity of Scripture and of the right relation of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament is used and applied by them to the new dispensation. It is seen as the Word of God which speaks concerning salvation in Christ, foretelling His coming, suffering, and death. Polycarp, in chapter 6 of his epistle to the Philippians, tells them,

Let us serve Him in fear, and with all reverence, even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord

have alike taught us.

One Word of God concerning Christ, a unity, such are the Scriptures, and this also did the early church confess. The Epistle of Barnabas shows a similar sense of the unity of the Word of God. It was written particularly with a view to the Judaizers who continued to plague the early apostolic church. This letter is an attempt to develop some of the typology of the Old Testament. This the writer does by trying to compare Scripture with Scripture. While there are many weaknesses in his exposition and principles of interpretation, yet behind them stands the sound idea that Scripture is a unity which speaks of Christ.

It is evident in their writings also that in harmony with the principle that Scripture is the Word of God, these early fathers attempted to develop the truth of the Word of God out of the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. The writer of the Epistle of Barnabas proceeds from this principle in the whole of his letter. Though it is also quite evident that he does not thoroughly understand it with the clarity of later ages, nor does he always apply it in a proper manner, yet it is from this principle which he proceeds. The other apostolic fathers reflect this same principle and attempt to apply it to the Word of God as they had received it.

The authority of that Word of God is also evident from their writings. It is set forth and expounded and applied to the church as the Word of God, which the church must hear. The Spirit had spoken to the church through the apostles, and the church was to take heed to their word as the Word of Truth. God addressed the church through the Old Testament, setting forth Christ and the coming of salvation for the Gentiles. By that Word the church was taught concerning her salvation in Christ. The Word of God, once given unto His people in the old dispensation, now spoke with greater clarity unto them, by the fulfilment of the promise. In that Word they rejoiced with thanksgiving, conscious of its authority in both testaments, as the Epistle of Barnabas (Chapters 4, 5) demonstrates, in which the writer says of a passage in the Gospel According to Matthew, "It is written," and of Isaiah, that it was written not only for Israel but also for us,

And all the more attend to this, my brethren, when ye reflect and behold, that after so great signs and wonders were wrought in Israel, they were thus (at length) abandoned. Let us beware lest we be found (fulfilling that saying), as it is written, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

For to this end the Lord endured to deliver up His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins,

which is effected by His blood of sprinkling. For it is written concerning Him, partly with reference to Israel, and partly to us; and (the Scripture) saith thus: "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: with His stripes we are healed. He was brought as a sheep to the slaughter, and

as a lamb which is dumb before its shearer." Therefore we ought to be deeply grateful to the Lord, because He has both made known to us things that are past and hath given us wisdom concerning things present, and hath not left us without understanding in regard to things which are to come.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter X

We must say just a word yet about the prophetic prediction of God concerning Israel when they stood at the nether part of Mount Sinai, after coming from Egypt's cruel and tyrannical bondage.

The LORD, Who is faithful to His elect people, tells them that if they walk in His ways, and obey His voice as they hear this in the Decalogue, the covenant words, then they shall be a peculiar people unto Him. It is a matter of keeping God's *covenant*. Contrary to the teaching of Dispensationalism it was not a mere keeping of a dispensation of law, which really never existed. The teaching of a "dispensation of law" is pure fiction. The "Covenant" of God was the new redemptive relationship in which Israel is set by sovereign grace. And this Covenant must be *kept*; it must be kept by Israel the redeemed people of God, the blood-sprinkled people (Ex. 12:1-17; 24:8; Heb. 9:18, 19).

Now the Covenant shall be in the generations of those who keep it. Yea, those who by grace fear the LORD shall be a "peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth in Mine" (Ex. 19:5). They shall be the people, who were bought with a great price. Of these the Holy Spirit says through Peter, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar people*, that you should shew forth the praises of Him, Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9).

Only when we interpret Exodus 19:5 in the light of the infallible application of I Peter 2:9 do we hew to the line of all the teaching of Scripture, and do we not try making a clever biblical mosaic of our own human invention. We must for our very life's sake teach the pattern of sound doctrine in these matters. We must not be wise in our own conceits.

We must follow the searchlight of the prophets and walk in the light of the more sure prophetic word which shines in a dark place, till the daystar arises in our heart, the hope of the blessed eternal morning (II Peter 1:19, 21).

It is well to take sharp notice of the term "peculiar people." The Dutch translation is *volk des eigendoms te zijn*. Likewise the German translation is *Eigenthum sein vor alle Volkern*. And Israel is to be this in distinction from the nations (*Goiim*) which too are the possession of God. Israel is the "elect" generation in sovereign predestination. We see this explicitly stated in Deuteronomy 4:37, 38: "And because He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt, to drive out nations before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day."

Here we see unfolded before the eyes of Israel the mystery of God in their salvation and deliverance into the eternal rest. Israel is God's peculiar possession because of sovereign love and election. They were not loved because they were greater or better than the nations who were destroyed before them (Deut. 10:12-15). What moving words Moses speaks in the plains of Moab to Israel, when he says, "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."

It is in the heartfelt conversion, the putting off of the old man in true godly sorrow for sin, and the putting on of the new man, that Israel can "circum-

cise the foreskin of their hearts," whether male or female! To keep the covenant of God is thus as far from a "principle of law" as the east is from the west.

Furthermore, the keeping of the covenant was to be of an antithetical nature. They were to remember the word of James, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Israel was to be God's peculiar possession; they were to gainsay and destroy all that which was contrary to God's covenant of grace. They were to cut down the idolatrous groves, destroy their altars, and burn their graven images, and only worship God in the shadows and types which pointed to the Lamb of God (Judges 6:27, 28). Thus they would be in the world, yet not of the world (Deut. 7:6, 7, 8).

For the LORD tells Israel that they shall in this way prove themselves to be a "kingdom of priests." They would stand in God's house and temple forever, singing God's praises and harping as harpers with the harps of God (Rev. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2). They will dwell in God's temple forever more, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men (Rev. 21:3).

Such is the prophetic perspective here at the foot of Sinai. For those who keep God's covenant are they who prove themselves to be anointed with a heavenly anointment of the office of all believers. No, they shall not merely be a people in whose midst the Aaronic priesthood stands in the earthly temple, which priesthood was done away forever in Christ's death on the Cross, but they shall all be "priests" in God's *kingdom*, the kingdom of heaven. Of this kingdom both John the Baptist and Christ spoke when they preached and heralded "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; Dan. 2:44). The time had come that all might be made kings and priests unto God (Rev. 1:5, 6).

That such is the prophetic perspective here in the Word of God, Who proclaims the end from the beginning, is evident from I Peter 2:1-10. I suggest that you read this entire section carefully and prayerfully from your own Bible. I would meanwhile call your attention to the following elements here.

In the first place, let it be noticed that this holy priesthood is composed of newborn babes, who are born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. These are they who have been brought efficaciously to conscious faith by the Gospel preached (I Peter 1:23-25, 2:2). These are not under a "dispensation of law," no more or less than was Israel at the law-giving at Sinai.

In the second place, these are they who have tasted that the LORD is good, and full of kind compassion. Are they not elect of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto the obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus? (I Peter 2:4)

This holy priesthood, thirdly, are they who have not rejected the chief cornerstone laid in Zion, as did reprobated and unbelieving Israel, who would not keep God's covenant but rather establish their own righteousness of the law. They came unto this Stone laid in Zion, elect and precious of God (I Peter 2:5-7).

These are priests both out of the Jew and the Greek. And these priests are, therefore, the church universal which the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves out of the whole human race, elect unto everlasting life in the unity of faith! These are they who have come out of the great tribulation, and who have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb. Always they kept God's covenant, loved His law and His precepts, and kept them as a great and precious treasure in their hearts.

Yes, Hosea foresaw this as a prophet of the Lord. It was a time when the reprobate shell of Israel, the children of the flesh, utterly had forgotten the LORD'S covenant, and the great confession of Israel: "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." Of these fleshly Israelites, who never kept God's covenant, but are evil fish in the Net of the Kingdom of heaven, Hosea writes that they are no more considered with the commonwealth of Israel, but are hence forward no more God's beloved, but they shall be called both *Loruhamah* and *Loammi*, neither beloved nor My people (Hosea 1:1-9). They are cut off from the Vine as dead branches (John 15:1-10; Rom. 11:17).

But the promise of Abraham stands. His seed shall be as the stars in the heavens and as the sand by the seashore innumerable. (Gen. 12:3; 15:5). And this promise of God did not fail (Rom. 9:6). It is only a remnant that shall be saved (Rom. 9:27; Is. 10:22).

The true Israel did not rashly vow that they would do all the covenant words of the Lord. Scofield taught that Israel here at Sinai "rashly" left go of the promise to be placed under a law-principle. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For, as we have already pointed out, God's word to Israel is His sure covenant word that He will one day have a perfect church, which is His peculiar possession, about all the nations of the earth.

Dispensational teaching does not believe all the prophetic Scriptures! This is not a matter of method of interpretation, the literal versus the spiritual, at all. It is a matter of simply taking God at His Word

and interpreting Scripture in the light of Scripture in childlike obedience of faith in the holy Scriptures. For these are all covenant words, priestly words in God's holy temple, the church the temple of the living God.

Dispensationalism does not believe really the doctrine of God's sovereign election, as this is woven into the very pattern of Sacred history. Their teaching lacks the foundation stone of the *Cor Ecclesia*, the heartbeat of the church. Only this faithful teaching of the Scriptures will keep us on the rock-bottomness of the "Nevertheless, the

foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: the LORD knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19).

They who teach the doctrine of elective love can only give heed to the injunction, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

Let us cling to the Bible, and shun vain and profane babblings.

Book Reviews

EXPLORING CHURCH GROWTH, Wilbert R. Shenk, ed.; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 312 pp. (paper) \$10.95 (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

The Church Growth movement, which has had a tremendous impact upon the field of missions, has its origin in the School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, particularly under the leadership of Dr. Donald A. McGavran, now Dean Emeritus of this school. Dr. McGavran published in 1970 a book entitled: *Understanding Church Growth*. This volume was revised and republished in 1980. Shortly thereafter this book was reviewed in our *Standard Bearer* by the undersigned. Without reading McGavran's book one will not gain much by reading the book under review.

In the preface the editor states: "The purpose of this volume is to continue the exploration into the phenomenon of church growth . . . we wish to probe further into the premises, principles, and goals of church growth. Our aim is not to offer definitive answers, but rather to open up fresh lines of inquiry — historically, experientially, methodologically, and theologically. We are asking: What issues are pertinent to understanding the growth of the church, and how can we avoid methodologies which obscure and distort the results of research? At relevant points we interact with previous studies; but our purpose is not polemics. We hope to contribute fresh insights and encourage students to carry the investigation further."

The book consists of twenty-two essays by twenty different contributors. These essays are an in-depth and rather scholarly study of church growth. They are divided into three sections: I.

Case Studies, II. Methodological Issues, III. Theological Issues. Among the contributors are: Harvie M. Conn (Westminster Seminary), Harry R. Boer, Richard R. De Ridder (Calvin Seminary).

The book ought to be read by anyone interested in the subject of missions in general, and especially by anyone interested in the church growth movement. It is a book intended primarily for students, ministers, and professors. At the same time it is certainly not beyond the grasp of the "man in the pew."

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGY (1812-1921), Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Warfield, Ed. by Mark A. Noll, Baker Book House, 1983, 344 pp., \$14.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Especially within our circles, not a great deal is known of the Princeton theologians, Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield. This book is an excellent introduction to them. The editor has compiled and edited a number of articles taken from their writings in magazines and books and given in speeches, and has arranged them under the general headings of "Method," "Scripture," "Science," and "Polemics." Taken together, they constitute an excellent survey of the thought of these outstanding Presbyterian thinkers. They will give one who takes the time to read them an overall survey of their approach to philosophy and theology and will help to understand the influence they have had on subsequent Presbyterian thought.

The Princeton theologians were deeply indebted and committed to Common Sense Philosophy as it was developed in Scotland over against the rational-

ism and idealism which had vitiated theology in Great Britain. Taking their starting point in this philosophy, they made philosophical principles the underlying foundation of their theology. Theology, so they argued, is firmly rooted in philosophy and is built upon it. Philosophy gives one the basic suppositions upon which a truly biblical theology can be constructed.

It is this approach to theology which explains the philosophical characteristics of their writings, and it is only in this light that one can also understand the works of later theologians who stood in this tradition, viz., the works of such men as J.G. Machen and C. Van Til. Van Til's *Apologetics*, e.g., can be understood only when it is seen that he was deeply indebted to this methodology which was set forth by the Princeton theologians.

The book is recommended reading, although it must be understood that this reviewer does not agree with this basic approach to theology. There are many excellent articles on a variety of subjects, and the overall result of reading this book will be a greater appreciation for Presbyterian thought.

THE RULER OF THE KINGS ON THE EARTH, A Clear Look at Amillennialism for the Lay Person; by R. G. Currell & E. P. Hurlbut; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1982; 118 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book, so the authors claim, is written by lay people for lay people to help them understand the intricacies of the controversy between various millennial views. The authors were raised premillennialists, but were persuaded to become amillennialists by a study of Scripture and other writings.

After a brief introduction and an historical survey of the whole question of the millennium, the authors deal with twenty separate questions which are the most common questions to arise as amillennialists and premillennialists defend their respective views. The book is not so much a critique of premillennialism as a defense of amillennialism overagainst premillennial claims and objections. It is also an explanation of the passages which are in dispute between these two views. From time to time the postmillennialists are also allowed to make their contribution to the general discussion.

The book is considerably different from what one would expect. It vividly demonstrates the fact that there are almost as many different kinds of amillennial views as different kinds of premillennial views. And the authors do not take the commonly accepted position on many questions. While holding indeed to the idea that the millennium is this present period of history, they hold that the great tribulation has already taken place during the

reign of Nero, and that the battle of Armageddon was the destruction of the Roman Empire. These are only two examples of divergent interpretations. To get another kind of amillennialism before you, we recommend this book.

CONVERSIONS, Edited by Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983; 265 pp., \$12.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The information sheet which accompanied this book reads in part:

The first collection of personal conversion accounts to span all of Christian history, *Conversions* is a careful selection of writings in which 50 well-known Christians tell about their own conversion experiences. From the Apostle Paul, St. Augustine, John Bunyan, and John Henry Newman to Leo Tolstoy, C.S. Lewis, Simone Weil, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Charles Colson — here are first-person conversion accounts of men and women whose names are known and respected wherever the Gospel is proclaimed.

A rather lengthy introduction by the editors discusses the meaning of "conversion," but discusses it from a theological, psychological, and sociological point of view. The result is that the editors' idea of conversion differs in some fundamental respects from that of Scripture. Because of this, conversion stories are included which are Arminian in character, which speak of conversion to Roman Catholicism from Protestantism, and very general "conversions" to some mystical idea of a Supreme Being.

Each conversion account begins with a brief, but interesting, biographical sketch of the person whose conversion account follows.

The book makes for very interesting reading, contains some nice devotional material, can even be inspiring in some instances, but must be read with discretion.

Read and Study The Standard Bearer

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church extends its sincere sympathy to our brother office bearer, Deacon Marvin Mastbergen and his family, in the recent death of his father-in-law, MR. MELVIN WIERSMA.

May God comfort the family through His Word.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever." (Psalm 118:1).

Rev. Carl Haak, Pres.
Richard H. Teitsma, Clerk

News From Our Churches

December 14, 1983

Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands held a special program on Thursday, December 1, marking "50 years of Congregational existences.... Rev. C. Hanko gave the address and Rev. Kortering was present to greet the Congregation." In addition, their "50th Anniversary-dedication booklets are now complete....Extra copies may be purchased from the clerk for \$2.00 each."

In *Across the Aisle*, Vol. III, No. 8, December 1983, I found this news about Jamaica. "Since receiving the mandate from Synod to call a missionary to labor in Jamaica, the council and committee have been quite busy. After calling Rev. R. Miersma and Rev. W. Bekkering, the committee met with each one to discuss the field....Both men expressed that their main concern was their family and the education of their children. This concern is very real when one considers moving to a different culture and lifestyle. However, the rewards of working in the field are immeasurable and we believe the Lord will prosper our labors." Rev. R. Van Overloop is now considering the call.

First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland made this announcement in their December 11 bulletin: "Rev. & Mrs. Heys are now in their own apartment; their new address is below. Rev. & Mrs. John A. Heys, 44A Norton Park Avenue, Lower Hutt, New Zealand. Presently their phone number is 011-64-4-676-669. You can dial direct with that number." Rev. Heys is assisting a small group of believers in the city of Wellington and plans to be there six months. "It is our joy and privilege that we can send Rev. Heys to minister to their needs."

In Southeast's November 20 bulletin, I found this announcement: "Next Sunday we will open our pulpit to the Seminary. The consistory has decided to have Seminary Sunday every two months. Next Sunday Prof. Decker will preach in the morning and Prof. Hoeksema in the evening."

First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids has decided to resume their monthly 15-minute Sunday song service. The December 4 bulletin reads, "The first sing will be held after the evening service on Christmas Sunday. Then each succeeding month, on the last Sunday of the month, a 15-minute song service will be held prior to the evening service....Come early on those Sundays and become better prepared for the worship

service."

Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church's November 27 bulletin read in part, "Starting tomorrow morning at 11:30 our pastor will be conducting an open line discussion program on WKPR Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each week for the next three months. Listen and invite others to do so also."

The Blue Bell mission has for its place of worship The Wissahickon Historical Society, The 1895 School House, Route 73 (Skippack Pike) & School Rd., Blue Bell, PA. Their worship services are at 10 A.M. & 6 P.M. Candidate Hanko's phone number is 572-0786. Candidate Hanko writes in a letter of November 30, 1983: "The work is going fairly well. We are working now on advertising. We have ads in some newspapers and are planning to begin the distribution of some pamphlets....These will be accompanied by a letter of introduction to the PRC and to our group in Blue Bell. Furthermore, we hope soon to put some literature and an advertisement for our services in Westminster Seminary, perhaps also in RES."

A recent newsletter of the *Reformed Witness Hour* states, "We have an operating deficit of approximately \$5,000 for the year ending December, 1983. Our need includes \$2,000 to bring the radio sermon printings up-to-date and \$3,000 to pay off the radio stations. We also covet your prayers."

The Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church's Men's Society has published one volume of the late Rev. G. Vos' meditations on the Psalms. You can purchase this volume, entitled "O Taste and See," for \$7.00. The November 20 bulletin of Doon Protestant Reformed Church read in part, "We need this type of literature in our homes. Our brother had an unique gift of expression and his writings reflect the fact that he was mindful of the needs of God's people for whom he wrote."

From Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church's December 4 bulletin, I read "The Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Christian School Society organized on Monday, November 21, with 103 members."

The Byron Center consistory has made the following trio: Rev. C. Haak, Rev. B. Woudenbergh, and Prof. Decker.

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