



**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

...Luther said the words, "Here I stand," in a more impressive way than only by speaking them with the mouth. He said them with the deed. He stood! ...

Because he stood, genuine Protestants enjoy the gospel of grace and its benefits today.

Without his standing, publicly, courageously, and firmly, there would have been no Reformation.

See "Taking a Stand" — p. 53

Vol. 70, No. 3
November 1, 1993

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In This Issue...

The previous (October 15) issue of the *SB* was a special issue celebrating the Reformation. We planned this. Without any planning, except for the editorial, this issue continues the celebration of the Reformation begun in the past issue.

Since the present issue is received by the readers during the week of the annual commemoration of the Reformation (October 31), this is timely.

Prof. Hanko presents Luther's earthly protector, Elector Frederick the Wise, and some of the history of the Reformation.

Rev. Ron VanOverloop and Rev. Ron Hanko write on the central doctrine of the Reformation: sovereign grace. Rev. VanOverloop proclaims and explains the truth positively. A former missionary, he shows that the doctrine does not stifle missions. Missionary Hanko defends the doctrine against an attack upon it on the mission field.

The meditation magnifies Holy Scripture as the Word of God and calls us believers and our children to use it. As Scripture was the foundation of the Reformation, so our hearing and reading Scripture were the goal.

The editorial, the one article deliberately written for the occasion, reflects on Luther's "taking a stand." "Heroic," we would say. "Mere duty," Luther would have said.

Perhaps even our "Letters" column bears some resemblance to a famous "relic" of the Reformation: the church door at Wittenberg. People post their positions here for debate.

As you read all the articles, do not neglect to rejoice in heart over what Christ did for us in the early 1500s in Wittenberg, Germany.

—DJE



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Written For Our Learning

Romans 15:4 *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."*

God is the Author of the Scripture, which is a Word of power. The Scriptures are the living Word of God. They are this because they are the Word of the living God. No other book is able to lead us with authority and guide us with power as does the Holy Word of God. Thus the Scriptures become a precious treasure for God's people. To hear them proclaimed, and to take them in hand for study, is a precious thing for us. For through that Scripture we hear God speak to us.

This is true because God is the Author of the Scriptures. The sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures were penned by many men throughout the history of our world, and yet one voice alone speaks throughout its pages. The Scriptures themselves testify that this is true, and we may in no way detract from this testimony. We read in II Timothy 3: 16 that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The presentation here is that God has breathed the words of the Scriptures, so that by His Spirit God so directed that each word of the Bible was set down exactly as He determined that it should be given to us.

While He used the instrumentality of men to write the Word, these men could not write one word apart from this work of God, this inspiration of the Word. Therefore the prophecy, the Word of God, came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as we read in II Peter 1:21. It is for this reason that the prophets had to search their own writings as to the meaning of the very words that they wrote, as is the testimony again of Peter in the first chapter of his first epistle. Men wrote the Word, and this from different perspectives because God had brought them forth in different times and different circumstances. God did so in order that they would be prepared to write His Word exactly, word for word, and in the style that God had determined for His Scripture.

We may not then tamper with this Word by paraphrasing it in any manner, nor may we be careless with the use of that Word. Both are a real possibility. We are aware of the many paraphrases of the Bible that we find on the market. One of the better known is the one titled "Reach Out," or the "Living Bible." To illustrate what the Living Bible does to the Word, we note the following. In Acts 13:48 the KJV has "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." The paraphrase makes a mockery of this text. It reads, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and rejoiced in Paul's message: for as many as wanted eternal life believed." Thus, instead of the teaching that God is sovereign in

the salvation of the church, man is presented as the author of his own salvation. Salvation is set forth as dependent upon the desire of man. He must want it.

But no less is this the case with a much more accepted paraphrase of the Bible, the New International Version of the Scriptures. This version is touted in Reformed circles as a faithful translation of the manuscripts of the Scripture, but in reality it is a paraphrase, for so many words are added or subtracted from the original in this version. For evidence of this, you would do well to read a pamphlet published by the Trinitarian Bible Society, entitled "New International Version."

It is important that we not be led astray by those who would bring less than the full Word of God before us, by whatever means and for whatever reasons. Are we to believe that the old versions of the Bible and the KJV are not clear in their teaching, or that they contain language that cannot be understood? Are we that much slower of understanding than our fathers, who did not receive nearly as much formal education as we do today, so that we cannot understand the old English of the King James Version?

Do not believe this. Whatever version of the Scriptures that is used must not be a paraphrase, and it must not change the meaning of the original manuscripts. Further, we know that the King James Version has stood the test of time, and that it is a faithful setting forth of the Word. Thank God that we still hold to it in our worship and homes, even though the charge is made that we be old-fashioned.

Now this Word of God, the Bible

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as it is proclaimed and then also studied and taught, is such that we find that through it God speaks to man. It is not a book that merely speaks about God, but it is a book by which God speaks to us. We see in the Scriptures the Divine God reaching down to us who are creatures to reveal Himself unto us, and to set forth His will for us. And we through that Word hear the voice of our God say, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live."

The Word that we receive, which shall also serve as the armor of light (cf. Romans 13:12), must not only be instructive, but must also be a Word of power, to change and to rule in the lives of God's children. The Word of God is such. It brings comfort to the child of God and leads him in a patient walk as he passes through the midst of this life. For it is a powerful Word of God that declares to us that our sins are forgiven. It is a power to conduct us beyond the grave into heaven.

It is an instruction that contains also the divine power of execution. Jesus teaches us, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6: 63). So different from the word of man! We must understand that the Word of God actually brings to pass. This is seen in the creation of the world. The Word is powerful. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. We read in Psalm 33:6, 9, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." The Word that God speaks through the Scriptures and whereby we learn is spoken with the same efficacious power. It has the power to deliver from sin and to lead us in life. It also has the power to condemn to death. It is not a mere word of man that may or

may not be received.

But as the Spirit has quickened the child of God, and as He applies the preaching of this Word to the heart of the regenerated sinner, that sinner is delivered from the power of sin to walk in newness of life. At the same time, when the wicked come before that Word with hearts hardened in sin, the same power of the Spirit applies the Word to their greater condemnation. The result is that, as the elect child of God is led to receive that Word, as he in this

sense learns from the Word, the Word works within His inmost being the testimony of salvation.

In I Thessalonians 2:13 we read, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The Word itself works within, because it is the effectual Word of God that is applied by God through the Spirit to the heart of His church. In this sense the mere letter profits nothing. The Bible sitting on the coffee table, not proclaimed, not studied, and not loved, has no power.

But God promises to abide by His Spirit of power in the heart of those who listen to His voice and who tremble in reverence before His Word. Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). By God's grace our hearts are quickened by the Spirit as we study the Word and as we come under its power through the preaching, and we experience that God and our Savior Jesus Christ abides with us. And if God be for us in Christ, and if He dwells in our hearts, then we shall be victors in all of life.

Thus the Word is our sure de-

fense. Jesus Himself gives us the perfect example of this truth. We may say that Jesus is very God come into our flesh, perfect man; and yet when Satan came and tempted Him, He turned to the Word of God. Even Jesus says, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30); and if Jesus, who is perfect and holy man as well as the Son of God, says this, then certainly we also must say that of ourselves we can do nothing. This must be our confession.

Jesus said to Satan, "It is written!" Three times He so answered the temptations of Satan. The Word of God is sufficient for the battle. Christ found safety in the Word, and so must we. It is our shield against the enemy. As very man Jesus kept the Word of God in His heart and mind, and as did the Psalmist, so our Lord could say, and we must say, as God gives us the grace, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11).

The Word is the nourishment that we need in this life of faith as the church of Jesus Christ. How sad it is when a congregation no longer receives that Word, but casts it aside for other things, whether that be testimonials, extended liturgy, stories, or the plain philosophizing of men. How sad it is too if we come to church and promptly go to sleep, or fill our heads with thoughts of the business day, or the date that will soon follow. How sad when we find all kinds of excuses to absent ourselves from the preaching of the Word, and attend church only once on a Sunday, or even skip a few Sundays of worship altogether. How sad when we do not find time to study the Word or prepare for catechism, or we skip going to our Bible studies and Society meetings. Even worse, how sinful it is to make light of the spiritual things of God's kingdom, by not taking time for them.

The Word of God is food for the soul. Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." By the grace of God the child of God hungers after the Word of God. He seeks the pure

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preaching of the Word, and longs to study the Scriptures. When we are rushed we may skip a meal at home, and think little of it, until another meal-time comes and our stomachs remind us that if we do not eat soon we shall become sick or weak. We need food to live and to be strong and thus to work and be well. And yet, when it comes to spiritual food, sometimes we think that we can do without it. It is not so! We can no more sustain spiritual vigor and health without feeding daily and weekly upon the Word, than we can maintain physical power and strength without eating daily bread.

By the grace of God, that Word is for the child of God "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"; for every Word of the Lord is full of

sweetness and life for God's children.

The Scripture is a complete rule for faith and doctrine. Within the Scripture is the fullness of the doctrine of salvation, and the guidance and rule for the life of faith. This is the plain testimony of the Scripture itself. We read in II Timothy 3: 15-17, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Our calling is therefore to turn to this Word always, to study this Word,

and to sit under its tutelage. For by that Word we learn the ways of our God and are led by Him in all of this life. We are led by the Lord of the church in the faithful service of God, and are comforted by the Savior's Words of peace.

The Scriptures to which we turn and which we learn are those which testify of Christ, our Salvation. Jesus says of the Scriptures, "They are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). "To him gave all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). And Jesus says to us that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). To whom else, then, shall we turn? Jesus has the Words of eternal life. True comfort and hope. □

Editorial

Taking a Stand

Martin Luther took a stand.

Publicly he confessed the truth of the Word of God. Courageously he defended the truth against all attacks upon it. Firmly he stood his ground, maintaining his confession and routing the enemies of this confession. He did not fall silent, did not compromise, did not even waver.

He took a stand although everything that a man values was on the line: reputation, livelihood, membership in the church, liberty, and life itself.

He took a stand even though he stood alone. It is one thing to take a stand in the company of others where there is encouragement and support. It is another thing to stand alone. This, he tells us, troubled him in his weaker moments. For the enemies of his confession and stand, clever as the devil, attacked him especially at this

point. "Are you alone right, and is all the church wrong?" With this he struggled in his temptations.

Still he stood.

The whole world knows of his stand at Worms on the evening of April 18, 1521. Before the high-ranking representatives of the church, the most powerful civil authorities of the day, and the emperor himself, under the most intense pressure to recant his confession of the truth, when at the very beginning of the Reformation all was at stake — true church, gospel, salvation, and the glory of God — Luther stood.

The question was this: "Will you recant or not?"

This was his answer:

Your Majesty and Your Lordships ask for a plain answer. Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain rea-

son—I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, since they have often contradicted one another — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.

Scholars question whether the words, "Here I stand," are authentic, but unnecessarily. They are found in the earliest accounts of the event. The night before, facing this test, Luther wrote to himself, "With Christ's help, I shall not recant a single particle." Fact is, Luther said the words, "Here I stand," in a more impressive way than only by speaking them with the mouth. He said them with the deed. He stood!

Because he stood, there was a Reformation.

Because he stood, genuine Protestants enjoy the gospel of grace and its benefits today.

Without his standing, publicly, courageously, and firmly, there would have been no Reformation. There would only have been the tyranny of the Roman papacy, the superstition of Roman tradition, and the Roman lie of free will, works-righteousness, and human merit.

It was not only at Worms that that man of God stood. Nor was the stand at Worms the only stand that mattered for the Reformation. Again and again, on critically important issues, at moments of crisis, invariably alone, Luther stood. Marvelously, he stood for the truth of the Word of God.

He took a stand at Leipzig in 1519 in a debate with that shrewd champion of the Roman Catholic papacy, John Eck. The issue was that of authority in the church, whether pope or council, or Scripture alone. Pressed by Eck, Luther declared that popes and councils can err and, in fact, have erred. He denied that the authority of the pope is of divine origin. Cried Eck, "Luther is setting himself above popes and councils." Replied Luther, "No, I am setting Scripture there." Seemingly fatal to Luther's personal interests, this stand was fundamental to the Christianity of the Reformation. The sole authority in the church is Scripture.

In 1522 Luther took a stand against the "heavenly prophets" who invaded Wittenberg in his absence at the Wartburg Castle. These forerunners of the charismatics of our day claimed direct revelations from the Spirit, performed miracles (so they said), and minimized Scripture, doctrine, and preaching. Luther's colleagues were receptive, at least uncertain. Luther returned, condemned the movement ("I slap your 'Spirit' on the snout"), drove the self-styled prophets from the city, and preserved the Reformation from mysticism.

He took an equally decisive and important stand in 1525 in the matter of the Peasants' Revolt. The oppressed workers in Germany wanted to use Luther's gospel of liberty in their re-

volt against their masters and against the civil authorities. The issue was this: Would the Reformation faith become an earthly force for social, political, and economic change? Would the gospel promote revolution in society? Would the Reformation church surrender her spiritual identity? The temptation is still with us, and not only from the liberal left.

Luther took a stand. He took a strong stand against a powerful temptation that is especially destructive of the faith of the Reformation. His stand was far too strong for many today who claim to be his spiritual descendants. Luther wrote a tract entitled, "Against the Thieving, Murdering Hordes of Peasants." In it he radically dissociated the Reformation gospel from all such revolutionary movements. He called on the magistrates, indeed on "everyone who can," to "smite, slay, and stab" the rebels. That was costly for Luther. It cost him and the Reformation the support of much of the working class. But it saved the gospel, according to the Word of Christ in Matthew 26:52: "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

If his stand against the peasants cost Luther the support of the workers, his stand at the same time for the truth of the bondage of the will of the natural man cost him the backing of many of the scholars and humanists. In 1525, responding to an attack on the Reformation's doctrine of the bound will by the most famous and influential scholar of that day, Erasmus, Luther wrote the book, *The Bondage of the Will*. In it he defended the essential truth of the Reformation: man is a helpless slave of the devil spiritually, so that his salvation must be the work of the sovereign, particular grace of God alone. He humbled man and exalted God. He also offended the proud.

In 1530, in connection with the conference of Protestants and Roman Catholics at Augsburg, Luther adamantly opposed any compromise of doctrine in order to achieve union with Rome. As is always the case, the appeal to unity was powerful.

Melanchthon bent and was ready to break. At a distance from the proceedings (for he was an outlaw), Luther stood, and he virtually compelled his colleague to stand. There would be no compromise of truth for the sake of unity. For the unity of the Spirit of Christ is unity in the truth.

The 95 Theses were really a stand. Although posted as propositions for discussion, they breathed the spirit of a stand against the entire Roman system of penance and for the gospel-system of free forgiveness to every penitent of heart by faith in the Christ.

Luther was ready to take a stand in his own congregation. It is very well possible that this called for more courage than did his stands against pope, Roman Church, revolutionaries, and proud humanists. Every pastor knows the pressure to avoid the sensitive areas in his own congregation, exactly the areas that faithfulness to Christ demands be addressed. Certain it is that it is here that many pastors and theologians betray Christ and sell out the truth today. They are bold to speak out against heresies and immoralities "out there" in the world or in other churches. But they dare not address errors in their own congregations and denomination. They refuse to take a stand on controversial issues in their own circles.

Late in his life, at the age of 56, Luther mounted his pulpit in Wittenberg to deliver himself of one of the most vehement sermons ever preached against drunkenness and gluttony—the drunkenness and gluttony of the members of his congregation.

Where one can find sermons which will stop the Germans from swilling I do not know.... To sit day and night, pouring it in and pouring it out again, is piggish.... If you are going to be a born pig and guzzle beer and wine, then, if this cannot be stopped by the rulers, you must know that you cannot be saved. For God will not admit such piggish drinkers into the kingdom of heaven.

Luther took a stand.

We love him for this, but this did

not make him a "nice guy." He was not the kind of pastor or theologian who is popular today: careful to offend no one; skilled, and often schooled, to please everybody; the man who can skirt every issue or come down wonderfully on both sides of the issue; the smiling, pleasant, back-slapper and hand-shaker. Most Protestant churches today would throw Luther out as fast as the pope did, and it took the pope only three years. They would use the same language: "Arise, O Lord! a wild boar is devastating your vineyard."

But his motivation was love.

He loved the truth of the Word of God. He did not only *know* the truth. He *loved* the truth. The reason why ministers, theologians, and churches will not take a stand for the truth today is that they do not love it. There is in Luther's magnificent *The Bondage of the Will* a line that is touching, almost haunting, the more so because it is a "throw-away" line as Luther hastens on to the issue before him. "You," says the Reformer to the sophisticated, learned, heretical Erasmus, "who never shed a tear over Christ's doctrine in all your life."

The reason why ministers, theologians, and churches will not take a stand for the truth today is that they do not love it.

"Shed a tear over doctrine"? Who does this? Of course, only one who loves the doctrine of Christ. Is there anyone at all today, we are tempted to ask, including ourselves, who loves the doctrine of Scripture so? But then neither will we take a stand.

He stood because he also loved the church. He saw her in her ignorance and drunkenness, and he loved her as the manifestation of the elect, redeemed body of Christ. Everything he did, everything he gave, everything he suffered — and he did, gave, and suffered much — he did for the church. The reason why ministers and theologians will not take a stand is that they do

not love Christ's church.

Above all, he loved God in Jesus Christ. He wore this love on his sleeve. One does not prove this in Luther. One only observes it with a certain awe. He loved God in a friendly way, as one loves a daily companion. He loved God in a personal way, as the wife loves her husband. He loved God in a vehement way — more than father, mother, family, friends, name, position, possessions, and life.

This goes far to explain why Luther stood at that critical juncture of post-apostolic church, and, therefore, world history. But not entirely. The explanation of Luther's standing is not Luther, not even the godly, Christian, Spirit-filled Luther. It is Christ. Christ upheld him in all that fearsome, confused struggle. Christ made him stand.

Luther himself sang this in the original of his great Reformation hymn, "A Mighty Fortress":

By our own strength is nothing won.
We court at once disaster.
There fights for us the Champion
Whom God has named our Master.
Would you know his name?
Jesus Christ the same
Lord Sabaoth is he.
No other God can be.
The field is his to hold it.

This is why, regarding the need of the hour for the truth and church of God, we may not doubt.

The need of the hour is that officebearers and churches take a stand for the truth and against error — the very same doctrines and the very same evils concerning which Luther took a stand.

There will be preachers and churches that take such a stand.

At least one. □

— DJE

Letters

■ Execution of the Homosexual

Informative, edifying, instructive, and scripturally-sound articles concerning the vile sin of sodomy appeared in the July, August, and September 1, 1993, issues of the *Standard Bearer*. We live in a world in which men and women have been given up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they have exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who

is blessed forever! (cf. Rom. 1:24, 25).

Editor Engelsma's comments in the editorial of September, 1993, deserve emphasis in this connection: "What is so often overlooked in the debate over homosexuality is that Romans 1:18ff. teaches that the approval and practice of this sin is itself the awful judgment of God upon a people that has deliberately held the truth of God under in unrighteousness. This shameful wickedness is divine punishment."

However, the article, "The Shameful Sin of Homosexuality (2)," August, 1993, by Brother Rev. Ronald

Cammenga contains a statement that I believe cannot stand unchallenged. Rev. Cammenga writes: "Rather than to tolerate and approve homosexuality, the churches ought to excommunicate the impenitent homosexual and *the state ought to put him to death*" (italics mine, AL). It is the second part of this statement to which I take exception.

Concerning the excommunication of the impenitent homosexual (whoremonger) there can be no doubt. The Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper speaks concerning "those who have no part in the king-

dom of Christ (those who must be excommunicated, AL) and who must keep themselves from the table of the Lord."

All sin is worthy of the death penalty. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "... knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are *worthy of death*" (Rom. 1:32). But the execution of the impenitent homosexual (whoremonger) is not the calling of the state. We no longer live in theocratic Israel, when the civil laws declared death for anyone who committed sins such as swearing, murder, and fornication.

To affirm that the state is called to execute those whom the church excommunicates is to violate the principle of the separation of church and state. This freedom is one of the good gifts of God to society.

Because impenitent homosexuals believe that such sexual perversion is their religious right, execution of homosexuals by the state would be tantamount to religious persecution. I believe Editor Engelsma correctly indicates that "whatever truth and substance of the civil law (of Israel, AL) remain ... are executed spiritually by the church" (cf. September 1, 1993, "A Holy Nation").

"For without are dogs (i.e., false teachers), and sorcerers, and *whoremongers*, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15).

Agatha Lubbers
Grand Rapids, MI

Please have Rev. Cammenga comment on his article in the August 1993 *Standard Bearer* (p. 450), where he said, "the punishment for homosexuals in Israel was the death penalty. *Still today that penalty ought to be enforced.*" What does he mean by that?

Wouldn't he have to say the same about all the other sins punished by death in the Old Testament and all those mentioned in Romans 1:29-31; I Timothy 1:9, 10; and I Corinthians 6:9, 10? In God's sight all sin is worthy of death. How would the state put to death, for example, the unrepentant covetous of our day? Isn't Rev.

Cammenga trying to put us back under the curse of the law?

Sharon Brummel
Edgerton, MN

RESPONSE:

After considering the matter raised in your letters, I remain convinced that the state ought to execute homosexuals, that is, those who publicly practice this evil. That the church is called to discipline homosexuals in her fellowship does not exempt the state from dealing with this evil. "... Christian Discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from Civil trial or punishment by the Authorities..." (*Church Order*, Article 71). To take this position is no more a return to theocratic Israel than it is to insist that the state administer the death penalty in the case of murderers. Neither is insisting that this is the duty of the state violating the principle of the separation of church and state. It is only calling on the state to carry out its God-given duty "to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil..." and to "bear not the sword in vain..." (Rom. 13:4). In administering capital punishment against homosexuals, the state fulfills its Divine duty in "the punishment of evildoers" and "the praise (and protection, RC) of them that do well" (1 Pet. 2:14).

I consider this the state's duty with respect to homosexuals, not only because this crime was punishable by death in the Old Testament economy, but because this is such a vile crime, a crime that so threatens the well-being of the citizenry that the death penalty is warranted. The basest of evils deserves the severest of punishments. Consider how many thousands have died, and are dying every day, as a result of the homosexual life-style. In a very real sense, as a class, the homosexuals are murderers, responsible for the deaths of multitudes of "innocent" people. For now, at least, I would stand by my original statement.

— Rev. Ron Cammenga

I write in response to Rev. Ronald Cammenga's second installment in

his series on "The Shameful Sin of Homosexuality" published in the August 1st, 1993 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. There are several items in this article that attracted my attention and that I believe warrant comment.

The first comes in the opening of the article labeled "Some Statistics." But, we have no source given for these data, nor do we have any idea when these data were gathered. It seems to me that responsible journalism (responsible writing, for that matter) requires that sources be given for this kind of information. But it even ought to go beyond listing a source when it comes to quoting statistics. In order to be good evaluators of these "data," in order for us (the readers) to be able to decide whether these are good statistics or bad, we need to know more about how these statistics were put together: who did the study? why was the study done? is this publicly accepted data? who were the populations that were surveyed? whose records were looked at? are these comparative data to the overall population or to the homosexual population? was this data gathered across the U.S., in Colorado, in Michigan? when was the study done? The point is that statistics don't always reveal what the truth is. Statistics are regularly "cooked," as you will realize when you read or see advertisements for products. It is interesting to note also that Rev. Cammenga quotes 1982 data from the Center for Disease Control. This data is quite out of date, and, in fact, probably represents data collected prior to the AIDS epidemic. This, it seems to me, severely limits the relevancy of these data.

There are other aspects about the presentation of these statistics that are troublesome, but I will limit myself to one since it will give an example of what I have said above. Rev. Cammenga gives the "median" age of 42. A median is the halfway point of a list of numbers and should not be confused with a "mean" or an average. The number 42 is the median, for example, of this list: 37, 41, 42, 89, 91 — it's in the middle of this group. The

average of this set of numbers, however, would be 60. A median is practically useless in a small set of numbers. And that demonstrates the point: we simply do not have enough information about the source of these statistics to make intelligent use of them.

But, the most bothersome part of the publication of these statistics is that most people are going to accept them as the gospel truth. They shouldn't. And, Rev. Cammenga should not have published them without clarification about the source and nature of these "data."

My second concern regards the use that Rev. Cammenga puts to the civil law of the Old Testament. He claims, in fact, that God's law requires that all homosexuals (impenitent ones, I think he would insist) be killed by the civil government. On what basis does Rev. Cammenga make this claim? It is hard to tell from the article itself. Without putting words in Rev. Cammenga's mouth, I would guess from the article that since God's law required it in the Old Testament, and since God does not change and God's law therefore does not change, it ought to continue until today. Such smacks of the theonomic view of the Old Testament and of history of the Rushdoony crowd. How would Rev. Cammenga distance himself from this group? Where is Rev. Cammenga going to draw the line with this? There were many instances in the Old Testament where the sinner was put to death — blasphemy, rebellion against father and mother, adultery. Now, it seems to me that if Rev. Cammenga is going to argue for the annihilation of impenitent homosexuals, he ought to continue and include all of these as well. Further, I can not recall that the Old Testament distinguished between penitent and impenitent. If you committed one of the sins requiring capital punishment, you died. Isn't that also the case with modern capital punishment laws? It's conceivable that a felon convicted of murder and given a death sentence could very much repent, could very much be a Christian, in fact, and still be executed. At best, Rev. Cammenga,

it seems, needs to do some clarifying and grounding here. We are given an assertion without the benefit of good, sound, logical argument or exegesis.

My third concern comes from the quotation of the Old Testament (Proverbs) regarding the length of life of the reprobate world: "Truly, the life of the wicked is cut short." It appears that Rev. Cammenga is a believer of his statistics, but is this an appropriate application of this text? Are there no old reprobates? Is the average life-span of the reprobate significantly different from the average life-span of the elect? How are you going to tell? Certainly sin has consequences; certain sins may very well lead to death. But it seems to me that Rev. Cammenga makes a general statement about the consequences of sin for the unbeliever — if you are committing a heinous sin such as homosexuality, you aren't going to live long — but I believe he would have a very tough, if not impossible, task to try to prove that. The point here, again, is that if such assertions are to be made and are supposedly grounded in the Scriptures, then some clarification and some exegesis is required before such assertions might be believed.

My final concern is what an article like this does for the churches in general. The *Standard Bearer* has a fairly wide circulation in this country and abroad. Is this really the kind and form of message that we want to send? Is it alright to write anything we please without proper grounds? The fact is that every sin imaginable at some time or other may (and often does) afflict the Christian. That includes the sin of homosexuality — not just the thought, mind you, but the deed. Does this article give anyone with this affliction any hope at all that someone in our churches might be willing to listen and counsel? I personally have dealt with cases, in our churches, dealing with homosexuality, so it is something with which we have to concern ourselves. This is not to say in any way, shape, or form, that I am advocating the acceptance, willy-nilly, of homosexual behavior. I, too,

believe it to be a heinous sin. But somehow we have to communicate to those who struggle with these sins that we have the compassion to help them.

Jon J. Huiskens
Jenison, MI

RESPONSE:

1. The statistics cited in the article are the most current that were available at that time. For the most part, they were taken from the mass of literature that flooded Colorado last summer and fall in connection with "Amendment Two." Unless otherwise stated, it should have been understood that the statistics applied generally to the U.S. To have cited sources for all these statistics would have taken up more space than the body of the article itself. Neither was this necessary. I have the data on file for any who might be interested. If there is any evidence that the statistics were inaccurate or misleading I would be interested in seeing this.

2. To take the position that the state ought to put to death those who are taken in the sin of homosexuality is no more theonomic than to insist that murderers be put to death. For an explanation of my position with respect to this, see my response above. This was a passing remark, not something that pertained to the main concern of the article, and therefore I did not elaborate. I would say, however, that it is not the concern of the state whether one is penitent or impenitent. The concern of the state is with the public life in society. The state is called to punish public acts of homosexuality. I ask, "What is the alternative? Is the state to take no action against this evil publicly practiced? What warrant is there for any action by the state?"

3. With regard to the objection to the use of Proverbs 10:27, of course there are wicked men who live to be old. But, as a general rule, those who live impenitently in sin suffer the consequences in body and in mind. The consequence is a shortened life. (In this connection, I also refer you to the language of the 5th Commandment.)

Certainly this is clearly the case with the sin of homosexuality. And this, too, is part of the warning to the individual who is walking in this sin.

4. With regard to the concern that the article communicated no compassion to those who are struggling with this sin, the brother ought to have done me the courtesy of reading the series in its entirety. The second article was not the conclusion. I believe that, in the articles that followed, the love of Christ, that confronts the sinner with his sin and calls him from his sin, was demonstrated.

— Rev. Ron Cammenga

■ Encouragement from an "Outsider"

The writings in the *Standard Bearer* are profitable for the encouragement, education, and spiritual benefit of its readers. But they are not directed solely to those of the PRC. The writings are perhaps also directed to readers outside of the PR denomination, the Reformed church-world at large. This reader, being an "outsider," also receives profitable benefits from your magazine.

In the August, 1993 issue a meditation written by Rev. C. Hanko entitled "Contentment" is most profitable for the lifting up of one's spirit above all that is temporal and mundane. It lifts us up to a higher plain, to the eternal and heavenly. It instructs the reader to "wait on the Lord...."

The readers are also benefited by the writing of editor Engelsma in his editorial, "A Holy Nation" (SB 9/1/93), in which he sets forth the sound scriptural teachings relative to the current state of affairs in our nation. The editor rightly expresses the prevailing mind-set of the citizenry both outside and, more importantly, within the church. He also sees grave consequences for the anti-Scriptural rulings espoused by the three components of our government. Prof. Engelsma makes a profound statement, that prompted this reader's reply to his editorial. The quoted paragraph is no doubt the foundation and core of the "Holy Nation":

Under the new covenant, after Jesus Christ, this ["Holy Nation"] is the spiritual body of all those in all the world who believe in Christ and are sanctified by the Spirit, which universal body manifests itself in congregations and denominations that clearly show the marks of the true church.

The PR churches have always maintained the teachings of the catholicity of the church. For this reader the quoted writing seems to be in some conflict with an earlier editorial, "Aloof from the Alliance" (SB 6/1/93).

Perhaps no other church-related periodicals see the need of maintaining or promoting what is known throughout the Reformed church-world as Calvinism. Thanks for the good reading the *SB* affords its readers, especially the "outsiders" and, I hope, also the "insiders."

Henry Doorn
Kentwood, MI

■ Reconstruction and Drama

I appreciated very much the editorial in the September 1, 1993 issue entitled, "A Holy Nation."

I have been uncomfortable with a movement, predominantly in Reformed circles, to "reconstruct" this nation into a Christian kingdom. Prof. Engelsma's statement, "The calling then of the true church in the United States... is to be what we are by grace: a holy nation," was especially an encouragement to me as I find myself in a climate of opinion which would say that this simply isn't enough.

I also found the last article on drama to be the most helpful of all. It was beneficial to learn that not only do a few Christians called the Protestant Reformed Churches have concerns about drama, but that saints and churches for centuries have had objections also.

D. Scott Connerley
Bedford, IN

■ Celebrating the 4th

I have just finished re-reading, for about the third time, the editorial

by Prof. David J. Engelsma in the September 1, 1993 issue entitled, "A Holy Nation."

This outstanding article clearly shows just how far from holy this nation truly is. So many things happen so subtly that people need commentaries such as this one to see the complete picture.

I was particularly interested in the paragraph concerning the July 4th weekend. This point was brought home to me in a very personal way at that time.

Having been an unchurched person for several years, after escaping the clutches of an extremely persistent and entrapping cult, I began to attend, about June or so, a small (Protestant) church near my home. I had tried several churches in hopes of finding one which came close and true to God and the Bible. I had gone to basic Bible churches, as well as some of the mainline churches. I was usually welcomed warmly and lovingly, and was sure I had found a church home. But after a few weeks, I might just as well have been invisible. I gave up for awhile, and one Sunday awoke with an impulse to attend church, *somewhere!* I thought of the little church that is just two blocks away, so I went there. In attendance were no more than a dozen people, and I felt that there I would receive adequate care for my deeply wounded soul. For a little while, it was wonderful. The pastor is a gifted and remarkable speaker, as well as loving and caring to his flock.

After I had attended for about a month, and felt well-settled and one of the group (I was invited to partake the Lord's Meal with the rest, which I did do), I received a deep shock. It was announced that there would be *no service* on Sunday, July 4th! I could hardly believe what I was hearing—that a governmental holiday, and a "day off," was put ahead of the Lord's day! I have not been back there. Nor apparently am I missed as I thought I would be. Not one person, not even the pastor, seems to care enough to call me or come to my home, to see what is the matter. I had expressed to

them how much I had appreciated being welcomed and made to feel a part of the congregation. I feel foolish that I thought this was the case.

I realize that no church that would put the Fourth of July ahead of God is one that I should be a part of, whether as a true member, or as an interested person.

I take it as a sign from God that I have not yet found a local church that lives up to God's expectations. How

I wish that one of the Protestant Reformed congregations was nearby! There is one, I understand, in the northern part of Washington at Lynden. However, that is too far away for a Sunday service, unless I happened to be up there on a weekend.

I continue to enjoy your magazine, and gain much wisdom from each issue. I was also deeply interested in the series on TV and movies,

and the series on the sin of homosexuality. The *Standard Bearer* is not afraid to approach these subjects and lay them out in the open in a way no one else does. You always bring out aspects of the subject that I have never read anywhere else.

Thank you again for your marvelous magazine. □

Marge Beltrami
Portland, OR

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Thomas Miersma

The Doctrine of the Trinity (4)

God is a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This truth is set before us, as has been shown, in all the works of God, in all His revelation to us, and in the very language or terminology of Scripture itself. This doctrine is not founded upon one or two texts of Scripture but belongs to the whole fabric of God's self-revelation.

Distinct Personal Properties and Relations

According to this revelation of God we distinguish not only three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost within the being of God, each possessing the whole of the divine nature, but we also may say something about them as to their distinct personal properties and relations to one another.

The Father and the Son

The Father is the first of the persons, as indicated by His name Father; the Son, the second. The names Father and Son point us to the distinct property of the Father and His rela-

tion to the Son; the Father begets the Son. The very names Father and Son indicate this relationship. It is moreover the express testimony of Scripture that the Son is the "only begotten" of the Father (John 1:14, 18).

Nor is this merely a matter of the Son in our flesh and blood, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ is also God's Son according to His human nature by conception of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, for it was God's eternal Son who thus assumed our human nature. But by the designation Only Begotten we are directed beyond our Savior's incarnation to His unique Sonship. As the Only Begotten, the Son, He is in the "bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). He is the Word which was in the beginning with God and was God (John 1:1-3). He is eternal Son, begotten by an eternal work of God, so that we read that his "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Moreover, as the Only Begotten of the Father He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3).

The Father stands therefore in relation to the Son as Father, distinct from the Son whom He begets. The Son is distinct from the Father as the Only Begotten, the Word and image

of the Father. Thus we confess, "The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten" (Athanasian Creed, Article 21, 22).

The Holy Ghost in Relation to the Father and the Son

The Holy Ghost is revealed in Scripture as the third person of the Trinity. As the word Spirit indicates, He is the breath of God, the divine power and might. He is not however an impersonal force, but it is He who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). The word "Comforter" emphasizes the personality of the Spirit, as well as His work in relationship to us. The word "Spirit," moreover, which in the Old Testament means wind or breath, emphasizes the distinct personal property of the Spirit, that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is breathed forth or spirated as the Spirit of God. This is also the teaching of our Savior, that the Father "will send" the Spirit in His name (John 14:26). We read also that the Son will send the Spirit. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Fa-

Rev. Miersma is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

ther, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). The Spirit is thus said to be sent from the Father and to "proceed" from the Father. The relation of the Spirit to the Father is therefore that He proceeds from the Father.

The same relationship is drawn concerning the Son and the Spirit. This point is disputed by the Eastern Orthodox churches, which deny this double procession and teach that the Spirit proceeds only from the Father. The truth that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son is however plainly taught in Scripture. The Lord Jesus, the Son in our flesh, will send the Spirit (John 15:26). The Spirit is given to the Mediator, the Son of God, in our nature, to accomplish our redemption and to be poured out upon the church as the Spirit of Christ. This work of Christ and coming of Christ in the Spirit rests upon the truth that the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father to the Mediator to be poured out on us, but from the truth that the Spirit proceeds also from the Son. Thus Jesus who is the person of the Son of God will Himself come to us by His Spirit to be with us: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). This promise of Jesus is not simply that the man Jesus Christ, in the human nature, shall be with us, but the whole Christ, God and man. Jesus says, "I" will come to you. He who says "I" in Jesus Christ is the person of the Son of God. When after His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples, we read that "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). It is He who "sends" the Spirit, who thus breathes upon them of His own Spirit. The Spirit was given as the breath or Spirit of Christ, the whole Christ, that He might be with us in the Spirit.

Accordingly, the distinct personal property of the Spirit is that He proceeds from both the Father and the Son, not as two Spirits, but as the one Holy Spirit of the Living God. We

confess therefore, "The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding" (Athanasian Creed, Article 23).

A Triune Covenant God

It is in the light of this truth of the Trinity that we must also speak of God as a covenant God. The doctrine of the Trinity is not to be conceived as a mere static, formal description of the truth of God in Himself. That God is the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence) means that He is truly the living God. He

The doctrine of the Trinity is not to be conceived as a mere static, formal description of the truth of God in Himself.

lives within Himself a life of communion and fellowship. God is Love because He lives within Himself a divine love life, in the perfect bond of His holy being. Herein lies also the deepest ground of God's covenant as He makes that covenant known to us, takes us into His fellowship, in order that He might be our God and we His people in Christ Jesus. The Scriptures repeatedly point us to the wonder of this divine life of the triune God. The Son is God's "beloved Son" in whom He is well-pleased (Matt. 3:17). The Son wills the will of the Father and comes to do the will of Him that sent Him. In the triune God there is a communion of love, knowledge, unity of purpose and will in the one only divine knowledge, will, and purpose. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son" (Matt. 11:27). The Spirit "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10).

God is the living God, not simply as the self-existent "I am," for life is more than existence, but because He lives within Himself a divinely perfect love life of fellowship and communion. Therein God is love (I John 4:8). God lives in perfect, eternally blessed communion with Himself, a Father-Son relationship in the Spirit, loving Himself, knowing Himself, searching the depths of His own glory

and blessedness, and rejoicing in His own perfection. That life is the covenant life of God. It is the deepest ground of that eternal life which is the blessing of our salvation.

It is into that life that God wills to take His elect in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-6). In Jesus Christ, God and man are brought together in one person in the communion of life which God has in Himself. For God, the Word, the eternal Son of God became flesh. Thus the apostle John writes, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (I John 1:2). By Jesus Christ God takes us into the fellowship of His own life and gives unto us eternal life, in communion of love with Him. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). He declares unto us, "I will be thy God and ye shall be my people" (Gen. 17:7; Rev. 3-4, 7). In Jesus Christ we are born unto life, adopted unto spiritual sonship, and made children of the Living God to live in communion with Him (cf. John 17:21-24; I John 4:5-11; 5:10-12). □

HE NEVER FORSAKES ME

I have a friend of all others the best,
He never forsakes me;
Trusting in Him I am sweetly at rest,
He never forsakes me.

Trials may compass me, sorrows be mine,
He never forsakes me;
Closer the arms everlasting entwine,
He never forsakes me.

Tho' the world sever my tenderest ties,
He never forsakes me;
Tho' the stars fade, and the light from the
skies,
He never forsakes me.

He thro' the valley my soul will attend,
He never forsakes me;
Praise to His name, He'll be true to the
end,
He never forsakes me.

The Standard Bearer

8-15-33

Arminianism in England

The following notice appeared in a recent issue of the periodical, *Reformation Today*, whose editor is the gentleman mentioned in the article, Mr. Erroll Hulse:

Hyper-Calvinism in Northern Ireland

The very essence of hyper-calvinism is the denial of common grace and the free offer of the gospel. A magazine with the title the *Standard Bearer* (from Grandville, MI, USA) is a vigorous opponent of common grace. A church has been started in Larne, Co Antrim which is sending out a news sheet which propagates erroneous Calvinism. Hyper-calvinism denies the Reformed faith.

Among the works of excellence from the ministry of Prof John Murray were his writings on the Free Offer (*Works*, vol 4 pp. 113-114) and Common Grace (*Works*, vol 2 pp 94-119). See also *The Great Invitation* by Erroll Hulse, EP and *The Love of God for all Mankind* RT 76.

Mr. Hulse is wrong on all counts. The Covenant Reformed Fellowship, which publishes the news sheet mentioned above, is not a church, nor has it been meeting in Larne for almost two years. But Mr. Hulse does not only have these facts wrong. The charges made in the notice that both the *Covenant Reformed Fellowship Newsletter* and the *Standard Bearer* are guilty of propagating hyper-Calvinism are also utterly false. A denial of common grace and the free offer of

the Gospel is not and never has been "the very essence of Hyper-calvinism." It is somewhat wearying that these things need to be repeated so often. Mr. Hulse has knowledge of the *Standard Bearer* and the *Newsletter*. If only he would read them! He would not then get *all* his facts wrong. In the interest of truth, however, let us go over these matters again.

First, regarding hyper-Calvinism, let it be stated again that hyper-Calvinism is the denial of so-called duty repentance and duty faith, i.e., that the Gospel includes a serious call, addressed to all who hear it, to repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ. In other words, hyper-Calvinism denies that all who hear the Gospel must be admonished that it is their *duty* before God to repent and believe. This in turn leads to the idea that the Gospel can be preached only to the elect, and makes it all but impossible to do mission work. Neither the *Covenant Reformed Fellowship Newsletter* nor the *Standard Bearer* (nor any other publication of the Protestant Reformed Churches or of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship) have ever propagated these errors. We *do* believe that all who hear the Gospel preached must be exhorted and admonished to repent. We *do* believe that this *duty* must be urged upon them most seriously. They must understand that if they do not repent and believe they will perish! We *do* urge all who hear the preaching to repent and believe! We *are* doing mission work, Northern Ireland being one field in which we are working.

Second, if a denial of common grace and the free offer is hyper-Calvinism, then both Calvin and the Five Points of Calvinism (as originally formulated in the Canons of Dordt) are hyper-Calvinistic! The Canons of Dordt mention common grace only once (III/IV, B, 5), only to reject it as part of the erroneous teaching of the Arminians (against whom the Canons were written). Calvin says the following in his treatise, *The Eternal Predestination of God*:

Calvin's Calvinism, p. 49. The fiction of Pighius is puerile and absurd, when he interprets grace to be God's goodness in inviting all men to salvation, though all were lost in Adam. For Paul most clearly separates the *foreknown* from those on whom God deigned not to look in mercy.

Calvin's Calvinism, p. 51. Pighius will himself confess that there is need of illumination to bring unto Christ those who were adversaries to God; but he, at the same time, holds fast the fiction that grace is offered equally to all, but that it is ultimately rendered effectual by the will of man, just as each one is willing to receive it.

Calvin's Calvinism, p. 104. Now let Pighius boast, if he can, that God willeth *all men* to be saved! The above arguments, founded on the Scriptures, prove that even the external preaching of the doctrine of salvation, which is very far inferior to the illumination of the Spirit, was not made of God common to *all men*.

Rev. Hanko is missionary to Northern Ireland.

Calvin's Calvinism, p. 152. After this, Pighius, like a wild beast escaped from his cage, rushes forth, bounding over all fences in his way, uttering such sentiments as these: "The mercy of God is extended to every one, for God wishes all men to be saved; and for that end He stands and knocks at the door of our heart, desiring to enter."

Honesty demands of Mr. Hulse that he admit that a denial of common grace and the free offer are not outside but within the Calvinist tradition.

Third, Mr. Hulse is the one outside the Calvinist tradition. The titles of the two articles of Mr. Hulse mentioned in this notice clearly show that his irresponsible and erroneous charges are the result of his Arminianism. Mr. Hulse is not a Calvinist, nor does he understand Calvinism, though he wishes to present himself under false colors as a Calvinist. It is not and never has been Calvinistic to believe in a love of God for all mankind. That is Arminian. Nor is it Calvinism to present the Gospel as an invitation, even if one believes in the free offer of the Gospel! That, too, is Arminianism of the worst sort.

To teach a love of God for all mankind, as Mr. Hulse does, is to teach the opposite of Calvinism. The Reformed Creeds know nothing of such a love of God for all mankind. No matter how hard he searches, Mr. Hulse will not find one reference in any of the Reformed Creeds that speaks of a love of God for all. The Westminster Standards, for example, speak only of a love of God for the elect (Westminster Confession of Faith, II, i and proof texts, III, v, XVII, ii, Westminster Larger Catechism, 30, 79, 83). The same is true of the Heidelberg Catechism (the only passage in the Heidelberg Catechism that speaks of "all mankind" speaks of "the wrath of God against the sins of all man-

kind," XV, 37), the Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt (I, 10, 13, II, 9). The closest he could come would be the quotation of John 3:16 in Canons I, 2. But Mr. Hulse knows, as well as anyone else, that the interpretation of John 3:16 which makes it teach a love of God for everyone is *not* the Calvinist interpretation of the passage. In fact, to speak of a love of God for all mankind is a blatant denial of unconditional election and of particular atonement. For Mr. Hulse, therefore, to imply that he repre-

sents true Calvinism, when he teaches something that the Calvinist creeds (including the original Five Points of Calvinism) do not teach, is absurd. For him to suggest that his Arminianism is true Calvinism is a lie.

The same is true of invitations. Whether the title of Mr. Hulse's article, *The Great Invitation*, refers to the Gospel itself as an invitation, or to the practice of ending sermons with an "invitation," makes no difference. The fact is that the whole "invitation system" developed out of the Wesleyan, evangelical Arminian, and Fundamentalist tradition, and not out of Calvinism. Nor will Mr. Hulse find any favorable reference to invitations in the Reformed Creeds.¹

It is one thing, however, to deviate from the Reformed Creeds. It is quite another to deviate from Scripture. It is one thing to be called an Arminian. It is something much more to be called unbiblical. Mr. Hulse is not only an Arminian. He is also unbiblical. Let him try to find one passage in Scripture that uses the word "grace" to refer in any sense to the reprobate wicked! There is none. Let him try to find a single passage

¹ The word "invitation" in some English translations of Canons III, IV, 8, is a blatant mistranslation, as a careful study of the original Latin text will clearly show.

that clearly speaks of a love of God for those who are not and never will be saved — just one, to set against the hundreds of passages that speak of the eternal, unchangeable, and abiding hatred of God for those who continue unbelieving and unrepentant and who are never saved. Where in Scripture is God's love for Esau or for Judas? Where is God's love for the wicked of Psalm 1 and Psalm 11?

In a letter to Mr. Hulse we raised some of these points. Mr. Hulse sent the following reply:

John Calvin is rightly esteemed as a progenitor of the doctrine of common grace (see *Collected Writings of Prof John Murray*). You are selective in your choice of reformed materials (i.e., the quotes from Calvin and the references to the Canons). The Puritans do not support your case.

The problem with both Arminians and hyper-Calvinists is rationalism. Both parties refuse the concept of what J I Packer terms "antimony" (sic). Don Carson prefers the term "tension."

For hypers God only hates the non-elect and only loves the elect. There are various ways out of this quandary. A careful study of the use in Scripture of (the Hebrew word for mercy) might be one. Arminians who rationalize see all Calvinists as hypers, and hypers see all those who do not rationalize as they do as Arminians.

This, obviously, is no reply at all. We did not attempt to prove that John Calvin did not teach common grace. That is another matter entirely and much more difficult. All we attempted to show was that a denial of common grace and the free offer of the Gospel is not outside the Calvinist tradition, either as it is defined by Calvin himself or by the original Five Points of Calvinism, the Canons of Dordt. One clear quote either from Calvin or the Canons would have sufficed to prove that point, and there are many besides those we have given. But perhaps Mr. Hulse prefers irrationality. His answer at least would seem to indicate that he does. Perhaps he prefers irrationally to believe that even

though both Calvin and the Canons do speak against common grace and the free offer, it is nevertheless anti- or hyper-Calvinistic to do the same.

Regarding the Puritans, Mr. Hulse has apparently not read them either, for neither is opposition to the offer outside the Puritan tradition, though there were many who did hold to it. John Owen, though he uses the words "offer" and "invitation," nevertheless shows himself strongly opposed to the offer-theology of someone like Mr. Hulse and rejects the idea that the Gospel as an offer reflects a desire on God's part to save all and a love of God for all who hear. Owen says, for example:

Also, the fact that believers and unbelievers live mixed together, and the preacher cannot certainly tell who are, and who are not, the elect of God, means that he must preach in general terms to all. This does not mean that the gospel promise is made generally to all, but merely that it is declared generally to all. Since Christ is only received by faith, and since faith is God's gift to whom he pleases, it is clear he cannot intend the salvation of any to whom he does not give faith.²

The charge of rationalism we have heard before. We reject this charge also as an attempt to avoid the issues. Rationalism is reason without Scripture. We are willing to go to the Scriptures. Let Mr. Hulse show us

from Scripture the word "grace" used in reference to the non-elect. Let him show us from Scripture that God both hates and loves the wicked and loves and hates the righteous. We are thankful to say he will not be able to do it. And God forbid that any of God's people should hear from the mouth of Mr. Hulse or anyone else that God hates them and loves the wicked! That is not only irrationality of the worst kind, but blasphemy against God and slander against His people.

The problem is not that we are guilty of rationalism, but that Mr. Hulse is irrational and deceptive. He wants to be an Arminian with the name "Calvinist." He calls his theology a tension. We call it nonsense. He calls it an "antimony" (the word he wants is antinomy, meaning a self-contradiction). We too call it antimony — poison. For though it may indeed be self-contradicting, such contradiction in theology is the death of all theology.

Whether or not Mr. Hulse pays any attention to what we have said, we trust that others will read what is written in the *Standard Bearer* and the *Covenant Reformed Fellowship Newsletter* and test what they read against the perfect standard of the Word of God. They will see for themselves the truth of what we have said and will not listen to rumors and lies that reflect a total lack of concern for the truth. □

² *Life by His Death*, p. 54. This book is an abridged version of *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. In an introductory essay to this book J. I. Packer says (Packer does believe in the free offer): "And when we come to preach the gospel, our false preconceptions make us say just the opposite of what we intend. We want (rightly) to proclaim Christ as Saviour; yet we end up saying that Christ having made salvation possible, has left us to become our own saviours. It comes about in this way. We want to magnify the saving grace of God and the saving power of Christ. So we declare that God's redeeming love extends to every man, and that Christ has died to save every man, and we proclaim that the glory of divine mercy is to be measured by these facts. And then, in order to avoid universalism, we have to depreciate all that we were previously extolling, and to explain that, after all, nothing that God and Christ have done can save us unless we add something to it; the decisive factor which actually saves us is our own believing. What we say comes to this — that Christ saves us with our help; and what that means, when one thinks it out is this — that we save ourselves with Christ's help. This is a hollow anticlimax. But if we start by affirming that God has a saving love for all, and Christ died a saving death for all, and yet balk at becoming universalists, there is nothing else that we can say. And let us be clear on what we have done when we have put matters in this fashion. We have not exalted grace and the Cross; we have cheapened them."

Annual Report

Mr. Cal Kalsbeek

Secretary's Annual Report to the RFPA — September, 1993

Mr. Kalsbeek is secretary of the Board of the RFPA.

From Moorestown, NJ: "I just received and read my *Standard Bearer* for March 15th, 1993. Once again we are grateful for your keen ability to expose error and proclaim truth

clearly and biblically."

A reader from Corcoran, CA who has "been tricked by Arminianism for almost 17 years" writes: "I praise God that He has sent me the *Standard*

Bearer and you as a part of His witness, to help me to understand the truth."

Port Murray, NJ: "Thank you for publishing such an excellent, outstanding Reformed magazine."

As the Reformed Free Publishing Association begins the 70th year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, the above examples of correspondence from our readers are an encouraging reminder that we remain on task, i.e., "To witness to the truth contained in the Word of God as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity," and "To reveal false and deceptive views repugnant thereto."

My responsibility in this report is to highlight for the Reformed Free Publishing Association "the principal activities which have occurred throughout the year." I will place these activities into three categories: the Board, the readers, and the magazine.

First of all, then, the Board. Your Board spent a considerable amount of time this past year with internal affairs. Questions concerning who has what responsibilities were asked and answered. We now know exactly what our Business Manager, Managing Editor, Typesetter, and Standing Committees are supposed to be doing, and furthermore we have it down on paper, just in case we forget. We now know that the Finance Committee must each year consider such matters as subscription rates, cost for bound volumes, the need for new equipment, and the balance of our accounts. It has been established that the Membership, Information, and Education Committee must concern itself with promoting the *Standard Bearer* within the Protestant Reformed Churches, submitting recommendations for the annual association meeting, updating the index, and keeping the churches informed about what is happening. And our Publication and Book Committee has been assigned such tasks as promoting the *Standard Bearer* to those outside the Protestant Reformed Churches, and dealing with matters relating to the publishing and mailing of the *Stan-*

dard Bearer. You might ask, "Were not these things being done in the past?" Our answer: "Yes, they were being done, but often in a hit-and-miss fashion."

The second — and most significant — category to which I will draw your attention this evening is "the readers." Your Board and Business Manager, Mr. Doezeema, have expended much energy in a variety of attempts to expand the readership of the *Standard Bearer* during this past year. We have advertised in the *Grand Rapids Press*, *Evangelical Times*, and *Christianity Today*. Additional promotional ideas by means of advertising are currently in the works. We have sought out and used mailing lists from various organizations of our churches. We have arranged to have the *Standard Bearer* on the magazine sale rack at Baker Book House. We have had copies of the *Standard Bearer* sent on a regular basis to all of the Protestant Reformed Churches encouraging the members to distribute them to individuals and/or places of business with waiting areas. All of these attempts to expand our readership have borne fruit, in varying degrees.

Another continuing source of new readers and subscribers is gift subscriptions. If "gift subscriptions" is made to include also those given to us by various of our churches' evangelism committees, then we have received no fewer than 275 such subscriptions during the last volume year. Of the 95 from these committees, 51 were submitted by Byron Center's. Two individuals who have been especially active in promoting the *Standard Bearer* through gift subscriptions the past several years are Eleanor Rutherford (36) and Al Salmon (26). We thank them for their efforts.

In numerical terms: On July 1, 1992 the number of copies mailed stood at 2,218; one year later 2,461 copies of the *Standard Bearer* were mailed. That is an increase of 241, or 11% in just one year! That's a sizable increase. However, it should be noted that some of these are not yet — and may never become — paying sub-

scribers. Allow me to throw out just one more statistic: in the past five years the number of *Standard Bearers* mailed has increased by 598, or 32%.

The third category I promised to address this evening is "the magazine." The Board has been active this past year in promoting some changes in the appearance of the *Standard Bearer*, including the adoption of a logo for our magazine. I need not say much about this since you will be able to see these changes for yourself when you receive your October 1 issue. Incidentally, in this connection the Board has only one complaint: The numerous excellent responses of *Standard Bearer* readers to our Editor's request for logo ideas made the selection of one an extremely difficult task.

The 69th year of publishing the *Standard Bearer* has been interesting and exciting for the RFPFA Board. We are greatly appreciative of the efforts of all those who make the publication and distribution of the *Standard Bearer* possible. At the same time we cannot help but observe what a great blessing it is that our Lord is pleased to give us this work to do. We echo the words of the apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 2:4, "... as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." □

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Calvinism and Missions

IV. Irresistible Grace

It is a commonly held position in the church world that one either accepts or rejects God's efforts to save.

It is said, too, that the only way to do the work of evangelism and missions is by seeking to persuade the objects of that work to accept Christ as their personal Savior. It is said that everyone must be told that it is his responsibility to open his heart and to let the waiting Savior into his heart and life. Whether anyone is saved or not is, thus, ultimately dependent upon the exercise of his freewill to accept or reject Christ. And when this commonly held position is challenged by an insistence that God's grace cannot be resisted, the response often given is the generalization that there is then no need to do the work of evangelism and missions.

Throughout history the Reformed fathers have faced and answered this unbiblical teaching and the rash generalization which accompanies it. They have answered with theology clearly based on the Word of God, and with a practice of prayerfully and unceasingly doing the work of evangelism and missions. When their position was ridiculed with slanderous caricatures, these Reformed fathers defended their position with more Scripture and with more ardent labors in missions.

* * * * *

The truth of the matter is that the

Bible teaches that God's grace is always effectual, that is, irresistible. It is equally true that the only way to do the work of missions and evangelism is with a firm grasp of the truth of the irresistible grace of God.

It is a tremendous reassurance to know that every sinner can be overcome by the power of God's grace, to know that the most hardened sinner can be like putty in the hands of the sovereign Potter. What a relief it is to know that the dispensing of salvation is not dependent upon how often or how well I witness. What courage is given me at the thought that the God, who uses weakest means to fulfill His will, can use my best but still very feeble efforts to be His means to cause the devil to flee. Then, in my mission work, I do not need to restrict my witness to the less than worst sinners, but the Word of God can be presented to *all* with the assurance that God is able. Nor do I need to resort to tricks to make my witnessing have greater impact. You see, I believe in sovereign, irresistible grace.

* * * * *

Calvinism rejoices in the truth that saving grace is irresistible!

It might be better to call it "effectual" or "efficacious" grace. These words would avoid the idea that grace forces or compels, a possible implication of "irresistible." God's grace does not force one to be saved against his will, but grace changes one's will.

Also, the use of "effectual" in-

stead of "irresistible" avoids an apparent conflict. It would seem that "irresistible" conflicts with Acts 7:51, where Stephen said that the Israelites "always resist the Holy Ghost."

When we speak of efficacious or irresistible grace, then, we are speaking of the internal operation of grace, not of the external means grace uses. Acts 7:51 speaks of the refusal to comply with the demands of the gospel to repent and believe. Stephen does not say that they resisted what God wanted to give to them. But by killing the prophets they rejected and rebelled against God's Word to repent. In this connection, the Rev. Robert C. Harbach writes,

God is always Almighty God! Therefore they who did resist the Spirit, did *not* resist the Spirit in *them* for they were devoid of the Spirit. That resistance is to the Spirit in the prophets and in the ministers of the

Lord; it is resistance to the external calls and reproofs through the preaching of the Word. But when the Spirit is in men in His grace ... He thus makes them willing and turns them to Himself. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Ps. 110:3). (*Calvinism, the Truth.*)

It is a truism that God does not save any man against his will. How-

ever, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

Let every reader remember that

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one's will.*

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all mankind is so totally depraved that there is not one that doeth good, no not one (Rom. 3:10-12). No human, of himself, has a desire for the true God (Job 21:14) or a desire to be saved. If God had left mankind in this terrible state to go to "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46) it would have been most just and right. But God did not do so, for it pleased Him, before the foundation of the world, to choose in Jesus Christ some of mankind unto everlasting salvation to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:4-6). The rest of mankind God chooses to leave in their sins to the praise of the glory of His power and wrath (Rom. 9:22). For those whom God chose from eternity to be in Christ, God sent His Son, who died for their sins (Rom. 5:8; I Cor. 15:3).

In the summary given in the previous paragraph everything follows an orderly fashion determined and controlled by an all-wise and all-powerful God. From this point forward do we stop with God's powerful work, and is everything left to the will and whim of sinful and fickle man? Can God elect some of mankind for nothing? Can God give His Son to die for nought, just because some are able to resist Him — resist Him whom the Scriptures call "the Almighty"? Are God's hands tied at this point? Is it possible that He could fail? Could it be that God is foolish enough not to have counted the cost before He started to build, so that He "is not able to finish it" (Luke 14:28, 29)?

Are not such questions blasphemy? The God who determined salvation for His elect and gave His own Son to die in their place will "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). There is no reason to fear or doubt, for "He will save" (Zech. 3:17)!

Grace is the favor and love of God. The power of grace is the power of the favor and love of God Himself. Therefore, it is fitting to speak of "irresistible" grace, for God is an irre-

sistible God. Does not the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to ask the rhetorical question, "Who hath resisted His will" (Rom. 9:19)? Therefore God has mercy "on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). If God's grace can be resisted, then God can be overcome. If God's

will and desires can be frustrated, then He is not God. Such a god is no greater than the idols of the nations.

The church father Augustine said, "The nature of the Divine goodness is not only to open to those that knock, but also to cause them to knock and ask."

Our Reformed fathers in the *Canons of Dort* properly and beautifully reflect Scripture when they draw a parallel between election and this dispensing of God's grace. "As He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son, that ... they may glory not in themselves, but in the Lord" (III/IV, 10b). Note well that the result is, as it must be, that God receives all the glory.

In fact, earlier that same article speaks more clearly to this point. "But that others who are called by the gospel, obey the call, and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of freewill whereby one distinguishes himself above others, ... as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God."

On the eve of the moment of His ascension to the right hand of power of the Almighty God, Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Before His "all power" none can stand. Listen to the Scriptures. Of His sheep Jesus said, "Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice" (John 10:16). Notice that Jesus does not say He will try to bring them. After all, He suffered for sin, "that He might bring us to God" (I

Pet. 3:18). "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). He said, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). He will do it! It is not that He will try to do it, but that He will accomplish it. Because not every man is drawn to the Lord, the obvious implication is that Jesus is speaking of all kinds of men, all men without distinction of race, class, or conditions. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37). Every one of them come to Him, and nothing and no one can stop them from coming to Him. The sheep do hear His voice (John 10:16, 27).

Another passage of God's Word which clearly implies efficacious or irresistible grace is Acts 13:48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." God's ordination unto election was an effectual act, because all that were ordained believed. In addition, God calls everyone whom He predestinated, and every one of them He justifies (Rom. 8:29, 30). Jesus said that He "gives eternal life to as many as" the Father gave Him (John 17:2).

* * * * *

Every man, by virtue of his relationship to Adam, is at enmity with God and "will not come to" Jesus (Rom. 8:7; John 6:40). If God's grace is not effectual or irresistible, how could any man be saved?

That someone believes is not because he wanted to believe. Nor is it because he began to strive to believe, and so God helped him. Nor is it because he cooperated with God's grace. Nor is it because he finally yielded to grace. But that anyone believes is because he has been regenerated by the sovereignly effectual, saving grace of God. The Spirit of God graciously gave faith and repentance.

That any one does not believe is because he has not been regenerated by this irresistible grace of God. The natural man does not receive the things of the Holy Spirit, "for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritu-

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ally discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

The Spirit's effectual work of grace upon someone does not destroy his person, nor any of his faculties. Rather, the Spirit works through each elect's faculties. Listen to the language of the *Canons of Dordt*.

When God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; he opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, ... infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory (stubborn, resistant), he renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good

tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" (III/IV, 11).

Later these Reformed fathers declare that the work of the Holy Spirit in the elect is truly supernatural, "not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead." Therefore, "all in whose heart God works are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe" (*Canons*, III/IV, 12).

* * * * *

The irresistible, efficacious nature of God's grace in saving the elect does not diminish the responsibility to preach the gospel in the established congregation or in the mission field. Nor does it diminish the earnest and serious proclamation of the gospel call to faith and repentance, together with the promise of salvation to all who believe. We have every reason to be encouraged in our proclamation of the gospel, because it is the means

God is pleased to use to bring sinners into His kingdom.

We can be confident that the Spirit will effectually use the gospel proclamation to bring to salvation and keep in salvation. We have no reason to wonder, doubt, or fear about God's use of that preaching which proclaims God's Word. He will use it. Our evangelism and mission work can be performed in the confidence and assurance that God can and will call unto Himself whomsoever He will, and that He will use our faithful efforts to proclaim His truth to accomplish that end.

God's salvation is not mere potential, but it is "the power of God" (Rom. 1:16). The gospel does not proclaim a Divine possibility of salvation, but it is Divine application of salvation. God will, without fail, use the means of faithful preaching to draw all of His people unto Himself. □

A Cloud Of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

The Story of Two Fredericks (1)

Introduction

One cannot study the history of the Reformation of the 16th century without being impressed with God's all-wise and gracious providence over the affairs of men and nations which made the Reformation possible. History is replete with such examples, which only the blind are unable to see. One example is God's use of earthly

magistrates to protect and advance the cause of the Reformation. Although many powerful rulers in Europe were deeply involved in the history of the Reformation, two outstanding figures illustrate how God uses men to accomplish His purpose. These two men both bore the name Frederick.

They had much in common. Both were given the same name; both were born devoted Roman Catholics; both had the title Frederick III; both ruled over part of Germany; both were deeply involved in the Lutheran Reformation; both dared to oppose the

might of Rome and to stand firm against papal threats and promises; both have received from history names which reflect the high esteem in which they were held: the first was called Frederick the Wise, and the second, Frederick the Pious; both were used by God on behalf of the Reformation so that, humanly speaking, without them the Reformation would never have succeeded.

Yet there the similarities end. One never left the Roman Catholic Church; the other became an ardent Calvinist. One remained single all his life; the other married twice and begat eleven

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children. One was quite old at the time the Reformation began; the other was involved in the terrible struggles in Germany which followed upon the Reformation. One was Elector of the poorest province in Germany; the other Elector of the wealthiest. The roles they played in the Reformation were equally crucial.

Frederick the Wise *His Early Life*

At the time of the Reformation Germany had no strong central government. It was divided into seven provinces, over each of which ruled an Elector. These Electors, when the need arose, met in a Reichstag to choose an emperor, usually not without papal interference, who would rule in the name of the Electors over the whole of Germany.

Frederick the Wise was born in 1463, twenty years before Luther. He was born of royal blood, for his father was Elector of Saxony before him, and he inherited the electoral dignity upon his father's death.

Frederick was a model ruler whose outstanding characteristics were piety (in the Roman Catholic sense) and a deep love of justice. In keeping with his piety he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1493 and purchased there many relics which he paid for out of his own purse. Carefully and lovingly he moved them to Wittenberg where they were installed in the castle chapel — the very chapel on which Luther later nailed his 95 theses.

An old catalogue of the period lists the relics, 5005 in number. They were considered so impressive that the pope granted Frederick the right to give indulgences to anyone visiting them. Each such visit shortened the stay of the visitor in purgatory by 100 years. Nor would the indulgences be soon exhausted, for the total merit of the indulgences, ordered by the pope, was no less than 1,902,202 days.

The town of Wittenberg was not a place in which one would care to live. It was a small village of about 3000 inhabitants, on the banks of the river Elbe and situated in poor, sandy

soil. Its buildings were made of rough wood plastered with mud. Its inhabitants were poor, crude, unlettered, and vulgar.

Yet it was in this village that Frederick decided to build a University, probably because a castle of the Elector was here, but also because the finances of the Elector were limited and Frederick could make use of the monks of the local Augustinian Convent to teach with little or no expense for salaries. While only about 415 students first attended this University, during Luther's day it became so popular that thousands of students were enrolled, and Melancthon said that he heard no fewer than 33 languages spoken on campus by the students. But these glory days were yet to come.

It was probably at the suggestion of Johann von Staupitz, vicar of the Augustinian Order to which Luther also belonged and chaplain of Frederick, that Frederick invited Luther to become professor there. Little did he know what events this appointment would trigger. Luther himself thought little of the town. He said it was on the extreme boundary of civilization and that a few steps away was barbarism. Repeatedly he wanted to leave it. Melancthon, who came from the fertile Palatinate, often complained that he could get nothing fit to eat in the whole village.

Frederick and the Reformation

Frederick's love for his university, coupled with the fact that Luther's presence on the faculty gave the university the prestige that Frederick wanted for it, prompted him to become the protector of the Reformation.

We believe in the truth of election and reprobation. We also believe that in God's eternal purpose reprobation must serve election. And surely this implies that the rule of earthly kings and magistrates serves the purpose of the salvation of the church. Without passing judgment on Frederick himself — God only knows whether Frederick was one of His own — the protection of the Reformation by the

State made the Reformation possible.

Frederick remained loyal to his saints and relics. In fact, by 1520, three years after the Reformation began, the number of Frederick's relics had increased to 19,013.

Yet Luther found safety under Frederick's care.

Frederick's confidence in Luther was confirmed after the Heidelberg Disputation. Less than one year after the Reformation began, Luther went to Heidelberg to defend his theses among those of his own Augustinian Order. His enemies refused to argue the issue of indulgences, but insisted simply that because the pope had approved indulgences, and because the pope was the supreme authority in Christendom, Luther had no choice but to recant. But Wolfgang, present at the Heidelberg Disputation, wrote Frederick: "Luther has shown so much skill in the disputation as greatly to contribute to the renown of the University of Wittenberg."

Shortly after Luther's theses spread throughout Europe, and the pope began to take notice of what he first thought was nothing but a monk's quarrel, Frederick was ordered to send Luther, that "child of the devil," to Rome to recant. Frederick refused this order from the pope on the grounds that Luther had not received and would not receive in Rome a fair trial. Instead, Luther went to Augsburg to defend his theses. It was only after a safe-conduct had been promised Luther that Frederick permitted him to go.

Frederick's confidence in Luther was further confirmed when Frederick asked Erasmus what he should do about Luther. Erasmus responded that Luther's only crime had been to touch the triple crown of the pope and the stomachs of the monks.

In 1520, upon the death of Maximilian, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the pope offered the crown to Frederick. But Frederick had the good sense and humility to decline, an act which Wylie, a church historian of note, described as "inexcusable timidity." Charles V from

Spain, a bitter enemy of the Reformation, became emperor instead.

Frederick never openly espoused Luther's theology, always claiming that as a layman he knew nothing of these matters. As cordial as he was to Luther personally, he refused to come publicly to the defense of the Reformation. He always insisted that Luther had to fight out his own convictions, and he would continue to protect Luther until Luther was given a fair trial which was based on principles of justice.

Yet he remained Luther's protector. He invited the theologian Melancthon to Wittenberg when Melancthon joined the Reformation. He never prevented Luther from preaching his convictions in the castle church. He continued to encourage Luther in his vast publishing ventures when the truths of the gospel were spread far and wide through the printed page. When Luther and his colleagues burned the papal bull of excommunication in the streets of Wittenberg in June of 1520, Frederick did not interfere. When Luther was summoned to the Diet of Worms, where he made his heroic stand on the basis of Scripture—"Here I stand. I can do naught else. God help me."—Frederick was there. In fact, it was Frederick who insisted that Luther be given a safe-conduct from the emperor. Frederick saw all that happened; not once did he criticize Luther for what he was doing.

But his greatest contribution to the Reformation was his "kidnap-

ping" of Luther after the Diet. He ordered Luther spirited away to his castle in Wartburg, deep in the Thuringian Forest. There, for nearly a year, he protected Luther from all his enemies who sought his life. And it was in the peace and quiet of the castle that Luther wrote some of his important works and made the first translation of the New Testament into German.

Although Luther finally left the castle without Frederick's permission because of the uprisings in Wittenberg brought on by the Anabaptist prophets, Frederick did not interfere with what Luther considered his solemn calling before God. Luther's explanation to the Elector of his return is worth quoting.

Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and my most humble service.

Most illustrious, high-born Elector, most gracious Lord! I received the letter and warning of your Electoral Grace on Friday evening, before my departure. That your Electoral Grace is moved by the best intention, needs no assurance from me. I also mean well, but this is of no account.... If I were not certain that we have the pure gospel on our side, I would despair.... Your Grace knows, if not, I make known to you, that I have the gospel, not from men, but from heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ.... I write this to apprise you that I am on my way to Wittenberg under a far higher protection than that of the Elector; and I have no intention of asking your Grace's sup-

port. Nay, I believe that I can offer your Highness better protection than your Highness can offer me. Did I think that I had to trust in the Elector, I should not come at all. The sword is powerless here. God alone must act without man's interference. He who has most faith will be the most powerful protector. As I feel your Grace's faith to be still weak, I can by no means recognize in you the man who is to protect and save me. Your Electoral Grace asks me, what you are to do under these circumstances? I answer, with all submission, Do nothing at all, but trust in God alone.... If your Grace had faith, you would behold the glory of God; but as you do not yet believe, you have not seen it. Let us love and glorify God forever. Amen.

When the peasants revolted against the Electors of Germany after suffering intolerable injustices, Frederick was the only Elector who urged his colleagues to show mercy when between 100,000 and 150,000 peasants were slaughtered.

In 1525 Frederick was dying. He urgently called Luther to come to his bedside, but Luther was so far distant that by the time he arrived the Elector had died. Before he died, he partook of the Lord's Supper in both kinds—an act which some church historians claim is evidence of his embracing of Protestantism at the moment of death.

Whether we shall see Frederick in heaven I do not know. I hope so. But that God used him in mysterious ways for the good of the Reformation is a truth which no one can deny. □

Book Reviews

The Gospel According to John, by D.A. Carson. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992. 715 pp., \$34.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

Dr. Carson's commentary on the Gospel According to John is one of the best commentaries I have read on this beautiful and important part of Scripture. I recommend it to all our readers. Ministers and teachers can find

in it a wealth of material to aid them in understanding what is a difficult book. But those with no formal education in college or Seminary can also easily read the book. It is true that it has some Greek in it here and there; but the Greek is used sparingly and the book reads easily.

All of this does not mean that I am in total agreement with all that the book contains. For one thing, D.A. Carson has some inclination to adopt various higher critical methods of biblical interpretation, particularly source

and redaction criticism. But there is very little of this type of criticism in the commentary, and when Dr. Carson does work with it, he does so in a very careful way.

There are passages of John which are misinterpreted in the commentary in an effort to leave room for some general and universal love of God. John 3:16 expresses God's love for all men, and Jesus' act of washing Judas' feet was an expression of Jesus' love for Judas. But in other places Carson comes out strongly for the

sovereignty of grace in the work of salvation. He insists that John 6:37 and 6:44, 45 refer to election. On John 10:26, 27, he writes:

What then can explain the obtuseness of so many hearers? It is that they do not belong to Jesus' sheep. It is not just that his own sheep *do* hear his voice, that he knows them, and that they follow him, ... but that those who are *not* his sheep *do not* hear his voice, that he does *not* know them, and that therefore they *do not* follow him....

Carson is somewhat contradictory in this respect. While, as I mentioned above, Carson holds that Christ expresses his love for Judas in the foot-washing, Christ was also sovereign over the choice of Judas as the betrayer. One wonders how such incompatible ideas can be held in tandem by an eminent scholar such as Carson. Yet I appreciated the unabashed defense of the truths of sovereign grace.

One of the best aspects of the commentary is Carson's honest dealing with the text. This especially is what makes the commentary so helpful. In fact this honesty with the text compels Carson, in opposition to almost all of modern scholarship, to hold to two cleansings of the temple, one at the beginning and one at the end of Christ's ministry. Carson himself explains that this position is a lonely one, but that he is compelled to take it because of the text.

We might note too that Carson rejects John 8:1ff. as being part of the original, inspired gospel, but he treats it nevertheless. And, in his discussion of the miracles, Carson does not do much with the miracles as signs—i.e., with what the miracles as signs signified.

We urge our readers who love the gospel of John to purchase and use this commentary. ■

Philippians, by Moises Silva; Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1992. 255 pp., \$19.95. [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

This book is a volume in *Baker*

Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Whether this is the first book in this new proposed set, I do not know. I have not previously heard of the set, and find no listing of other volumes in this commentary. But if the set is of the quality of this book, it will be good.

The treatment of this important epistle of Paul is, in almost all respects, excellent. Silva deals with the text itself and expounds the meaning carefully. His material is throughout helpful and, for the most part, soundly in the Reformed tradition. For example, in his treatment of 2:12, 13, a passage which Silva calls "remarkable," he emphasizes how this passage teaches the determinative character of God's work in salvation. Also in the difficult doctrinal passages (Phil. 2:5-11, e.g.) Silva does justice to the text and deals with it in the light of Scripture as a whole.

The commentary has in it quite a bit of Greek and many technical passages which make this volume of dubious use for the man in the pew. But, for the student and preacher who wants to have good material on Philippians, this commentary is a must.

If I had any significant disagreement with the exegesis at all, it would be with Silva's insistence that the problems in the church of Philippi were serious and deep, threatening to destroy the church. The epistle seems to me to be the one epistle of Paul in which he has almost no rebukes to bring to the attention of a congregation which occupied such a large place in his affections. ■

The New Charismatics, by Michael G. Moriarty. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. 384 pp. (paper), \$17.99. [Reviewed by the Editor.]

The charismatic movement is now working itself out in the most abominable heresies and strangest practices: modern apostles and prophets; new revelations; signs and wonders; a five-fold ministry; a health and wealth gospel; and viewing charismatic

Christians as "little gods." Evangelical people flock to these shenanigans in multitudes. This well-researched book exposes the wild goings-on in charismatic circles today. Among the charismatic teachers held up to examination are Earl Paulk; Bill Hamon; Kenneth Hagin, Jr.; John Wimber; Mike Bickle; Kenneth Copeland; Robert Tilton; and Paul Crouch.

Of particular interest and significance to the Reformed reader is the author's revelation of the unholy alliance between the charismatics and the leaders of the movement for Christian reconstruction, a movement that claims to be Reformed (pp. 92-95; cf. also chapter 8, "The Dominion Pursuit: Will the Church Christianize the World?"). One reconstructionist justifies the alliance by describing it as God's mixing the light of the Reformed faith with the heat of the charismatic movement. This justification is mistaken. The charismatic movement is essentially hostile to the Reformed faith, and the Reformed faith, to the charismatic movement. Every attempt to unite the two means the death of the Reformed faith and life. The Reformed faith needs no heat from the charismatic movement. It has its heat from the same source from which it derives its light: the doctrinal truth of the Reformed faith itself.

Winds of false doctrine are blowing through evangelical Protestantism with gale force. Many are being carried away. *The New Charismatics* makes this frighteningly clear. Reformed believers should know these things. They should also know the basic errors of the charismatic movement as such. The fantastic doctrines and practices of the "new charismatics" are natural developments of basic charismatic teaching. This, the author, himself sympathetic to "charismatics in general," does not recognize. Well may Reformed Christians thank God for the sound doctrine of the Reformed faith and, particularly, for the "biblical sanity" of the Reformed faith regarding eschatology (the teaching of the last things).

The author of *The New Charismatics* is a premillennialist, and this colors his analysis. ■

We Must Obey God, by Samuel E. Waldron. Arvinger, Texas: Simpson Publishing Company, 1992. 30 pp. (paper). \$3.75. [Reviewed by the Editor.]

A 30-page booklet demonstrating generally that refusal to obey wicked commands of human authorities does not imply the right of "civil disobedience" as a weapon of rebellion and demonstrating particularly that Operation Rescue against abortion is sinful in its tactics.

Available from Simpson Publishing Company, P.O. Box 100, Arvinger, Texas 75630-0100. ■

Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church, by David S.

Dockery. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 247 pp., \$14.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

The author of this book, while mainly interested in contemporary Hermeneutics, is interested in the light which ancient hermeneutical methods shed on our modern scene.

To accomplish this goal, the author investigates Jesus' use of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Hermeneutics which were used by the church fathers up to and including the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). He deals with such interesting church fathers as Clement, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine, Jerome, and Theodoret. He not only gives a brief survey of their life, but also describes the methods of biblical interpretation which they used, and tells how these methods worked out in their own

contributions to the development of the truth.

In this investigation the author finds various methods which were used: literal, typological-Christological, authoritative, allegorical. These models become the "window" through which we can see and understand modern hermeneutical issues.

While Dockery wants a "normative" Scripture (pp. 180, 181), he seems to place too much emphasis on the need for contextualization — a fairly recent "buzzword" which emphasizes the need for making Scripture relevant to our modern age. While Scripture is indeed "relevant" to all time, this relevance of Scripture is due to the fact that God wrote it through the Holy Spirit for the church of all ages.

The book is interesting and instructive to all who are concerned about the science of the interpretation of Scripture. □

News from Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Ministerial Activities

The congregation of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI invited all members of other West Michigan PR congregations to meet with them for the installation of Rev. R. Cammenga on September 23 at their church. Prof. Hanko officiated at this service.

The congregation of Loveland, CO PRC extended a call to Rev. R. VanOverloop, presently serving our churches as pastor of Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL, to serve as their pastor. Rev. VanOverloop has declined the call.

I take this opportunity, also, to clear up a misconception that I may have inadvertently created in the August issue of the *SB*, regarding the call that Rev. W. Bekkering received from First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI to serve as missionary to Jamaica. In

that news item I indicated that Rev. Bekkering was considering the call to Jamaica when Synod decided to close that field. That, at least, was what I thought. And it seemed logical to me that no field in Jamaica meant that Rev. Bekkering no longer had a call to consider. Evidently, however, it happened differently. Rev. Bekkering received the call and, in fact, he subsequently also declined it, all before this year's Synod decided to close the field in Jamaica. I apologize for any confusion I may have created.

Denominational Activities

The congregation of Lynden, WA PRC served as host to the meetings of Classis West for the first time in their history this past September. In connection with the meeting of Classis, the congregation planned a full week of events for their spiritual profit, and to enjoy and experience the communion of saints. On Monday evening before Classis met, Rev. C. Terpstra was the guest speaker for convocation exercises for Covenant Christian

School. Rev. Terpstra spoke on one's calling to apply himself diligently in the pursuit of spiritual wisdom. Tuesday there was an Officebearers' Conference on the topic of "Reformed Missions." Tuesday evening there was volleyball and basketball at the Lynden Middle School, for all families and delegates of Classis. Wednesday was Classis, followed on Thursday evening by a slide presentation on Missions in Ghana, presented by Rev. R. Dykstra, who spoke about the recent work of our churches' Foreign Mission Committee in Ghana.

On Sunday morning, September 5th, the group known informally as the Georgetown Area PR group met for the first time at the Bauer Elementary School. At that first Sunday service there were approximately 30 families represented, with about 140 individuals in attendance. Prof. R. Decker preached on the theme, "Joshua's Choice," based on the familiar text Joshua 24:15b: "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

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

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of Hudsonville, MI PRC sponsored a lecture in their church on September 14 with Rev. G. VanBaren, Hudsonville's pastor, speaking on the topic "The Zigzagging Spirit."

From news out of South Holland, IL PRC's Evangelism Committee, we quote part of a letter received from the clerk of a Protestant Chaplain in the Soledad (California) prison: "The purpose of this letter is, I would like for you to send our prison chapel some booklets. This chapel has no Reformed literature at all. I'm trying to get us as much Reformed literature as possible. My personal preference is Reformed theology. We will of

course appreciate any help you can give us."

Congregational Activities

Rev. and Mrs. Kortering stopped in California on their way back to Singapore in early September and were able to preach for the congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands. Rev. Kortering also consented to give a slide presentation and speak about his work in our sister churches in Singapore, where he is engaged as minister-on-loan from our denomination.

The Hope Heralds presented their annual fall concert after the evening service on September 12th, in the auditorium of Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

School Activities

In a newsletter from the Association for PR Secondary Education in Lansing, IL, it was reported that, since their beginning in 1981, they have been able to save enough money to make it possible to consider the possibility of purchasing property in Lansing. Presently they are looking at property adjacent to that owned by the Peace PRC.

Food for Thought

"Our whole life should be so angled towards God that whatever strikes upon us, whether sorrow or joy, should be deflected upwards at once into His presence."

J. Moyar □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE!!!

We extend our congratulations to our pastor,

REV. RICHARD G. MOORE, who, on October 8, 1993 celebrated 25 years in the ministry of God's Word for the Protestant Reformed Churches. For this we praise and thank our covenant God.

"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15).

Council of Hull
Protestant Reformed Church

LECTURE

November 5, 1993

7:45 p.m.

in the

South Holland

Protestant Reformed Church

Rev. Audred Spriensma

will speak on

"Living the Reformation"

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Hope Protestant Reformed Choral Society (Walker, MI) mourns the loss of a dear friend and longtime member,

MISS SYBIL ENGELSMA,

who passed from this veil of tears on August 20, 1993. We express Christian sympathy to the Engelsma family, and pray that we all might be comforted by the Word of the Lord in Isaiah 35:10. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Steve Lotterman, President

Karla Kamps, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 1993, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. GERALD

VAN DEN TOP,

celebrated their 35th wedding anni-

versary. We are thankful to God for giving us parents who have taught and instructed us in His ways. We pray that God will bless them and keep them in His care in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

* Barb and Randy Feenstra

Jackie, Gerald, Lauren, Craig,
Marty

* Ruth and Arlen TerAvest

Becky, Stephanie, Emily,
Gerard, Gerrit

* Bob and Carey VanDenTop

David, Shelly, Julie

* Joyce and Karl

VanOostenbrugge

Jason, Brad, Joel

* Marge and Bill Zwak

Mike, Doug, Amanda

* Ed and Cris VanDenTop

Jill, Steve, Amy

* Don and Lisa VanDenTop

* Tom VanDenTop

Grand Rapids, Michigan