



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

The advocates of children's church are actually advocates of "R-rated worship" — worship restricted to adults only. The practice of children's church, while on the surface seeming to be well-intentioned, plausible, sensible, and advisable, has been nothing less than a spiritual disaster for the church of Jesus Christ.

See "Missing Children: Is Children's Church Biblical?" — p. 114

Vol. 70, No. 5  
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### In This Issue

The rubric, "The Day of Shadows," is devoted to Old Testament history. For many years, Professor H. C. Hoeksema taught Old Testament history in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. For this course, he prepared his own extensive notes. While he was still living, the Seminary published these notes (through the book of Judges) in syllabus form. Beginning with this issue, we will be publishing these class-notes in "The Day of Shadows." Our editing of his material will consist only of eliding some sections that are more appropriate for the seminary classroom than for the general public and of minor changes in the format that make it more suitable for a magazine.

Rev. Dale H. Kuiper gives pointed instruction concerning the tithe in his column, "A Word Fitly Spoken." Here is the answer to the question that well-meaning fundamentalists sometimes ask us Reformed, "Why do you not practice tithing?" The "practical remark" with which he closes should be carefully considered by us all.

Hand your children and young people this issue of the *SB* opened to Rev. Gise J. Van Baren's article, "Dinosaurs and Other Monsters." He warns that the fascination with dinosaurs is not innocent as it might seem to be, but on the part of the world is related to the theory of evolution and even to the new age movement.

We welcome two contributors to this issue, Mr. Bruce VanSolkema and Rev. Bruce C. Davis. Both make important comment on the place and instruction of covenant children. Mr. VanSolkema, a former member of the Board of the Heritage Christian School, reminds us of our solemn calling as a covenant people to cooperate in the education of our children in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Rev. Davis, pastor of the Grand Valley Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Allendale, exposes the error of a practice that is making headway in Reformed churches, namely, holding "children's church." See the special feature, "Missing Children: Is Children's Church Biblical?"

Do not overlook the review of the recent book by noted Presbyterian theologian Dr. John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Criticizing the doctrine of a "well-meant offer of the gospel," Dr. Gerstner has written that "only the Protestant Reformed Church seems willing to hold to the whole counsel of God on this doctrine." Rare encouragement from a highly regarded defender of the Reformed faith!

It is also encouraging to discover from church news editor Ben Wigger that many of our congregations commemorated the Reformation last month with special meetings and programs. The truth and Spirit of the Reformation live in our churches by the grace of God.

— DJE



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# The Everlasting Glory Our Afflictions Work

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

II Corinthians 4:17

Do you agree with the apostle Paul?

As far as his claim (that our afflictions work glory for us) is concerned, we no doubt can agree with Paul. Surely in a physical sense that can be very true. A very serious and painful affliction in surgery, for example, can give us misery for a few weeks, and then bring us years of relief and a very pleasant life.

But in this vale of tears, does the child of God really have only a "light affliction," and one that lasts only for a moment? That word "affliction" which Paul uses is very often translated as tribulation, or even as persecution. Can we then agree with Paul and call this persecution a light affliction, which is but for a moment?

Yes, for if we delve into what our God says here through Paul, we not only agree that this verse brings to us the truth, but also that God never lies. What is more, the verse assures us of that which is tremendously comforting for the child of God. Whether a child of God dies as the result of persecution which Satan realizes through unbelievers, or whether his death is simply part of what happens

to all men because the wages of sin is death, he is going away from this sad life and into an everlasting weight of glory, as Paul here declares.

We do well, however, to change one word in our translation of this verse which Paul wrote. The word "eternal" should be changed to "everlasting." That which is eternal has no beginning or end. Our light afflictions do not work for us an *eternal* weight of glory. The glory our light affliction works has a beginning in our lives. Our afflictions have a beginning because we come into this world at a divinely appointed moment of time. What is more, that affliction also begins at a certain moment of time. It has a beginning in us, because we have a beginning of life. We are not eternal as our God is. How can that which does not yet exist be eternally afflicted? Whatever has a beginning enjoys and experiences nothing that is eternal. Whatever has a beginning is not eternal. Scripture reveals the truth to us in that way. In Genesis 1:1 we read that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. These places were not eternal; and likewise men who are created on the earth are not eternal and have no eternal weight of glory. What is more, in Revelation 21:1 we read of a new heaven and a new earth, which John saw in a vision. And in the next verse we read of a new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.

Now our light affliction does work for us a far more exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. In Luke 2:14 we find the angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,

good will toward me." This they sang at Jesus' birth. And the glory of God is the shining forth of His virtues and strength. When He sent His Son into our flesh to be our Savior, He revealed His love and power; and in that way He manifested to us how glorious He is.

Through His Son our God graciously worked in us an exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. Graciously God makes us glorious by making us righteous and holy. He causes us to be born again as His elect children. He removes our guilt and keeps us safe from the punishment which we deserve. God's glory is the radiation and shining forth of that wonderful work of His grace whereby He implants in us love for Himself, even though through our father and mother, Adam and Eve, we began to hate Him. Satan brought that shame and agony upon us. But God makes His elect to be people in whom He implants a new spiritual life; and He keeps Satan from taking that spiritual life away from them.

The affliction which we have, as children of God, is light compared with what Christ suffered as our Head and representative. And that affliction is the work of God's grace. It is not that which we earn, namely, that exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. What must be stressed in the church-world today is that we do not earn the smallest part of our salvation. Every bit of it, including our desire for it, is the gift of God's grace. That desire for salvation is not the condition which we have to fulfill in order to have that salvation with its

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blessedness. The Arminian philosophy of Christ offering salvation to us, waiting to see whether we will ask Him to begin it in us, is Satan's devilish philosophy. Nowhere can we in Scripture find Christ — or for that matter the Triune God — asking us to let Him begin salvation in us.

Look up Psalm 139:14. There we read, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Likewise in John 13:7 Christ Jesus presents to us the awesome truth: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Look then also at verse 18, namely, "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen." We do not get salvation because we decided to ask for it. We can and do ask for it only after God has implanted that desire in us. And when Christ Jesus was on the edge of dying on His cross, to earn for us that exceeding and everlasting weight of glory, He said, as recorded in John 17:9: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are thine."

Likewise in John 10:15 we read, "I lay down my life for the sheep." That refers to a specific number of sheep. Satan also has sheep; but not one of them will be saved. God — who is not moved and does not have His mind and will changed by what men do — chose a definite number of sheep for whom Christ would die and bring salvation. Consider also that Christ's church is called His body. We read, for example, in Ephesians 5:30, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh and bones."

Now our afflictions, of which Paul speaks here, are designed and decreed by God to bring us to a particular place in the body of Christ, which body God designed and builds perfectly. Our afflictions are not what

God sends upon us in His holy wrath. Our afflictions are sent in God's love. We do well to bear in mind that each one of those whom God eternally chose to be a member of the body of

Christ belongs to the church which He designed. And God designed a particular place for every single one of His elect, with a particular work to perform as the member of Christ's body, and with a particular work to perform in a particular place in that body of Christ.

Our hands do different work than our feet, and are in different places in the body. And as God is shaping the church, that body of

Christ, the elect members of that body not only have a specific place designed by God, but have a particular work which they will perform. We do not now see why this one dies in this way, and that one in that way. We cannot now explain why these members of Christ's body die at the same time and by the same "accident," or sickness. But we do well to bear in mind and appreciate the fact that our light afflictions are designed by God, and are used by Him. Do we not read in I Corinthians 12:12 this astounding truth, namely, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"? And then in verse 27 we read, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Look then at your afflictions in the light of what God says of it, not what men will say about it. Compared with the exceeding and everlasting weight of glory, this affliction is light. In fact, look at the light affliction as a shining light upon your pathway and experiences. The unbeliever, looking at his afflictions, may grumble and complain. He may even commit suicide, thinking that death will end it for him, and then find a

very painful and everlasting weight of God's wrath in hell! But the child of God, when the Antichrist comes with affliction upon the members of the body of Christ, must hold on to this comforting truth that such affliction is light in comparison with what God is preparing.

Thank God for all the afflictions which He sends, and say with Him what He says through Paul in Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Now, to see that more exceeding and everlasting weight of glory we, as the next verse tells us, must look by faith at that which our fleshly eye cannot see. By faith we can see the tremendous significance of Christ's cross. By faith we can see Him enjoying that exceeding and everlasting weight of glory. We can see Him there as the Head; and we can see ourselves as the members of His body, each in a particular place.

Seeing these wonderful and blessed things, we can and will call our afflictions light, and of only short duration. Seeing these blessed things, we have the God-given proof that our exceeding and everlasting weight of glory is being prepared for us, and that through our afflictions God is preparing us to receive them.

Do not then for one second question God's love and wisdom in what He sends upon us. Instead sing with your soul the truth which we find in Psalm 98 and *Psalter* number 261:2, namely:

Truth and mercy tow'rd His people  
He hath ever kept in mind,  
And His full and free salvation  
He hath shown to all mankind.  
Sing, O earth, sing to Jehovah,  
Praises to Jehovah sing;  
With the swelling notes of music  
Shout before the Lord, the King.

□



# The Problem of Evil

Evil is a problem for the child of God. The problem is practical, spiritual, and urgent. Such is the problem that God's child is tempted, *strongly* tempted, either to despair of God's goodness or to rebel against His sovereignty. He struggles with discouragement and bitterness.

Evil is the occasion of this struggle. Evil here is not sin, although it may be caused by sin, but great trouble. It is the devastating sickness or debilitating injury. It is disappointment at work. It is the death of one whom you love. It is the lonely life of one who desires marriage and family. It is abandonment by a faithless husband and father; life with a miserable husband or wife or father or mother; the withholding of children in marriage; a wayward child.

The trouble brings intense suffering, whether in body or in soul, or in both.

Evil in the life of the believer poses a problem.

It is emphatically evil *in the life of the believer* that is the problem.

The problem is not that there is evil in our world. We know why there is evil in the world, and must be. The sin of the human race in Adam ushered in the great evil, and mother of all evils, death (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12).

Nor is it a problem to the Christian that there are evils in the lives of the ungodly. All those who live in enmity against God, outside of Jesus Christ, are perishing under the wrath of the just God (Rom. 1:18; I Thess. 1:10). The suffering of unbelievers in the floods in the Mississippi Valley, the fires in California, the ravages of AIDS, the butchery in the Balkans, or

the "holocaust" of Nazi Germany is not a problem to anyone who believes the Scriptures. Their suffering is distressing, but it is not puzzling.

God visits the wicked with the evils that they fully deserve. Evil in the life of the reprobate unbeliever is divinely inflicted punishment. The Reformed faith confesses that God in His perfection of justice will not allow disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished. Terribly displeased with both original and actual sins, He punishes them temporally and eternally. The only deliverance is His mercy in the cross of Jesus Christ (Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 4).

The climactic evil in this life for every impenitent unbeliever is his death at the hands of an angry God. The final evil will be his everlasting torment of body and soul in the fire of hell (Rom. 2:8, 9; II Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 20:11-15).

Not even the suffering of the babies and children of the ungodly, grievous as this is, constitutes a problem for the believing mind. For one thing, the world's abuse, torture, and murder of their own offspring are a dimension, admittedly horrifying, of the depravity of fallen men and women. This is the human race apart from God. Like the pagans of old, they cruelly sacrifice their own children to Molech. All that changes is the Molech.

But in this evil burns the punishing wrath of God upon babies. Babies are not innocent. The infants of unbelievers are guilty before God from conception. We Reformed parents confess about our infants at baptism that

our children are conceived and born

in sin, and, therefore, are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself (Reformed Form of Baptism).

To unbelievers, God has made no gracious promise to save their children. He has not included their children in the redemption of the cross of the Savior. Unbaptized, without any refuge under the blood of the Lamb, the children of the ungodly suffer and die, like Egypt's firstborn, at the hands of God the Destroyer (Ex. 4:23; 11:4-6; 12:21-30).

The holy God is terrible in His just dealings with the unforgiven wicked.

The problem for the believer is not the evils suffered by the wicked, but the good things that they enjoy. This is one aspect of the problem of Psalm 73: Why do the ungodly prosper in the world? (vv. 2-12)

The solution of the Word of God to this problem is not that God is gracious to the ungodly in time. Rather, in giving them prosperity He is busy setting their feet on slippery places so that they will smoothly slide into eternal destruction (Psalm 73:18-20). The attitude that alone accounts for this activity is wrath. If comparison be made, the wrath in prosperity is more fearful than the wrath in calamities. For God's prosperity-wrath gives the ungodly a "spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear" (Rom. 11:7-10). If there would be any hope at all of the sinner's conversion and salvation, that hope would be realized through God's adversity-wrath. Adversity-wrath might be hoped to wake the sinner to the realities of a righteous God, his own sin, and the necessity of repentance. Prosperity-



wrath makes certain that he remains in his fool's-paradise.

Outside of Jesus Christ, whether in adversity or in prosperity, are only condemnation, wrath, curse, and destruction.

The prosperity of the wicked should not be a problem to anyone who has studied Psalm 73. Neither should it be a problem to anyone who takes seriously the necessity of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God to avert God's wrath "temporally and eternally" from the elect church.

The problem is evil in the life of the godly. This was the other aspect of the problem of Psalm 73: "For all the day long have I been plagued" (v. 14).

This is the problem, not as it idly comes up in the discussions of philosophers but as it lives in the soul of the Christian in that dark hour when evil falls: Where is the love of God for me in this evil? where, the blessing in this suffering? where, my heavenly Father as His child goes under?

The solution is not a denial of God's governing and sending the evil. This is the "solution" that prevails in the evangelical churches and that makes headway today also in Reformed circles. God is not sovereign over evil. God is not almighty.

Some solution! God is not God. For a god who is not almighty is not God. He is not the God of Scripture, who says, "I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Is. 45:6, 7). Because of my suffering, the Godhead of God should be destroyed!

Some solution! Give the troubled saint, tempted to despair, over to the tender mercies of Satan, supposedly the sovereign of evil. Or encourage him with the comfort that evil now runs amok, uncontrolled, purposeless, accidental, a force that baffles God Himself. This is not the comfort of the Reformed confession, which holds that God's power in His creation and over every creature is almighty and everywhere present, so that both good and evil come to the

believer, not by chance but by His fatherly hand (Heid. Cat., L.D. 10; cf. the Bel. Conf., Art. 13). Because my suffering is so great, the one possibility of real comfort should be denied!

It does not work. In his direst straits, the Christian traces his trouble to the hand of God. Although the calamity may have come through the agency of sinful people and by the instrumentality of Satan, the suffering child of God works his way up to a sovereign God. Quickly. Job did. So do we. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away" (Job 1:21). God has delivered me to the ungodly. God has broken me. God runs upon me like a giant (Job 16).

This is the problem for the believer in his anguish.

The problem is God.

For this God, who afflicts him, who shatters his life, who guides the evil unerringly, is the God of love toward this believer in Jesus Christ. He has promised him personally in the gospel that He will bless and do good, *only* bless and do good. All evil, all *real* evil, evil that truly destroys, has been visited upon Jesus Christ in his stead.

This is the solution to the problem of evil in the life of the believer.

The solution is the promise of God received in faith, better, the promise of God that works faith in the dark hour of the evil. Nothing else besides. There is no sight nor feeling nor explanation of the goodness of God. Only trust in the promise of God.

The solution is the promising God Himself in Jesus Christ. We view the God who sends the evil in the light of the (same) God who has promised. We recognize the God who troubles us, although He has a frown. He is our Father.

We can willingly submit to the evil. The evil is carrying out the promise. Perhaps, it corrects us for a specific sin. Or it may be the general discipline that we children desper-

ately need in view of the disorderly movements of our sinful nature. It takes our affections off this life and the present world and directs them to the life that is hid with Christ in God and the coming kingdom. It teaches even an upright Job, indeed, it taught the sinless Jesus, obedience, in that the one who fears God learns what

obedience really is when he does the will of God in pure adversity (Heb. 5:8). It empties the Christian of proud self-reliance in order that the power of Christ may rest upon him (II Cor. 12:9). The perishing of the outward man is the renewal of the inward man (II Cor. 4:16). Evil in this life works good in the

life to come, and the good is "far more exceeding" (II Cor. 4:17).

This is the solution to the problem of evil in Psalm 73: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (v. 24).

One thing is sure: The promise of the gospel is not assurance of an earthly life free from evil. The message of the evangelicals and charismatics that faith in Christ guarantees health, wealth, happiness, and success is grotesque heresy.

The promise of the gospel that God will bless for the sake of Christ is a *real* solution to the problem of evil. It enables the believer to sing about the evil. If he sings, the problem has been solved. He sings, "Affliction has been for my profit," from Psalm 119. One may begin to see this already in this life. For him, singing about evil becomes easier.

Another may see nothing at all of any profit of the evil as long as he lives. But he sings too, through his tears. He expects to see the profit in the day when God makes all things plain.

For the present, he believes.

Faith is enough. □

— DJE

*In his  
direst straits,  
the Christian  
traces  
his trouble  
to the hand  
of God.*



# Tithe

It belonged to the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament that the head of each family contribute annually one tenth of the produce of the ground and every tenth animal that passed under the staff (method of counting) to the support of the Levites (Lev. 27:30-32). The Levites gave a tenth of these tithes for the support of the high priest (Num. 18:21). This was really very simple; all the Israelite had to do was count his blessings, move the decimal one figure to the left, and give that amount unto the Lord. God's institution of tithing was in line with His treating of the Israelites as children.

The number ten in the denominator of the fraction one-tenth spoke of fullness and perfection. By willingly paying the tithe, the believing Israelite was confessing that the earth and its fullness belongs to the Lord, that He alone gave the increase, and He makes rightful claim to all that a man is and has. A refusal to pay the tithe was a denial of all this and meant that a man was really robbing God (Mal. 3:8). Apparently after the captivity some were withholding the tithe in the notion that they could not afford it. But God assured them that in the way of bringing their gifts to the storehouse, He would "open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

That tithing is abolished amongst Christians is clearly shown by the fact that the New Testament Scriptures never call upon us to practice tithing. Not once is it enjoined upon us! We read of it in a highly critical sense when Jesus castigates the scrupulous tithing of the Pharisees, including even the mint, cummin, and anise (Matt. 23:23), and in the Lord's parable of the self-righteous Pharisee who went to the temple to pray (Luke 18:12). Mention is also made in Hebrews 7 of Abraham's giving a tenth of the spoil to Melchisedec (Gen. 12). That the New Testament saint is not called to pay tithes rests upon the truth that the ceremonial laws ceased at the coming of Christ. Yet, the truth and substance of tithing remain with us: God is still the sovereign Owner of all things in the universe, our possessions, incomes, and selves. In glad acknowledgment of this we offer our gifts for the support of the gospel ministry, the relief of the poor, and other kingdom labors and causes.

How shall members of the Spirit-filled, mature church conduct themselves in regard to giving? What guidelines shall we use in this present dispensation? Well, God lets that up to you and to me! I mean, He requires of us to figure that out. And that is not always so easy, surely not as easy as dividing our incomes by ten. Under the guidance of the Spirit and Word, we are to exercise the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free! The New Testament guidelines are: as a man purposes in his heart, not grudgingly, but cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7); and, liberally, regularly, and as God has prospered (I Cor. 16:1-3). Many are the saints who testify that as they give in this way, God pours out such a blessing upon them that there is not room to receive it! The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and it is better to give than to receive.

Perhaps there is room for a practical remark here. In our small part of the universal kingdom of Christ, we are faced with many expensive building projects: seminary, churches, new schools, and expansion of our schools. In our estate planning, ought we not keep these needs in mind?

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*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



# The Story of Two Fredericks (2)

## Introduction

Two Fredericks, both magistrates in Germany, played significant and important roles in the Reformation of the 16th century. Both were called Frederick III and both were renowned for their godly character. The first Frederick was called Frederick the Wise; the second, Frederick the Pious. Although Frederick the Wise remained a Roman Catholic all his life, he was Luther's protector and made reformation in Germany possible. Frederick the Pious became a Calvinist, though not without great struggle, and is sometimes referred to as the father of our beloved Heidelberg Catechism. To the story of Frederick the Pious we now turn.

## His Early Life

Frederick was born in 1483, a few weeks after the birth of Martin Luther. He was born in Simmern Castle, for his father was Count John II, Elector of the Palatinate. His mother, Beatrix, was a very beautiful woman, pious and upright in her life, a godly mother, and one who gave lavishly to the poor. Frederick was the oldest of eleven children, of whom two became priests and five, nuns.

Frederick's father was a Renaissance man and wanted his eldest son to have the best education available. But he also opened the doors of Europe's courts and chancelleries to

Frederick. John was a close friend of Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (which some wag has dubbed as being neither holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire). Yet Charles was ruler of Spain, Germany, and the Lowlands. In the court of Charles, Frederick learned the skills of knighthood; in Europe's royal courts he learned the life of royalty.

The glitter of royalty, however, never appealed to him and he soon left to test his skills in battle. At 18 years old he fought the Turks and earned knighthood for bravery and skill in battle. An intriguing story of these early years makes one wonder whether his thoughts were not soon turned to the Reformation. While still in the court of Charles, he had a private meeting with John á Lasco, the renowned Polish Reformer, whose work meant so much to the hard-pressed Protestants in the Netherlands.

His courtship years were filled with disappointment. For two years he wooed Elenora, the sister of Charles V, but lost her to the old king of Portugal. In despair he returned to Heidelberg in the Palatinate, but when the old king died, he once again pressed his suit with Elenora, but lost her a second time to Francis I of France. He tried to persuade Maria, another sister of Charles V to marry him, but failed also in this endeavor. In 1537 he married another Maria, of royal blood, and a Lutheran.

Although of royal blood, Frederick's years were spent in fighting poverty. With his wife he lived in an old castle of Berkenfeld, where

together they had eleven children, only seven of whom reached maturity. He himself once complained: "I am like a sooty kitchen maid sitting behind the stove, concerning whom no one asked because she was so poor and dirty."

## His Commitment to Lutheranism

A bit of background is necessary to understand the important role which Frederick played in the Reformation in Heidelberg.

Germany itself was torn by war, war which, before it was over, was to leave much of Germany in ruins. The Protestant Lutheran princes had formed a league to defend themselves against Roman Catholic attempts to destroy them by the sword. Between Protestants and Roman Catholics war periodically broke out.

Calvinism, born in Switzerland, had made inroads in Germany, especially in those parts bordering on the Swiss cantons. It is not an exaggeration to say that many Lutherans hated the Calvinists as much as or even more than the Roman Catholics, and they fought bitterly to preserve Germany for Lutheranism. The Electors of Germany were under constant pressure to join one side or the other—or, perhaps, the Roman Catholic forces.

After Luther's death, Lutheranism itself was divided. Radical Lutherans out-Luthered Luther, while some Lutherans, including Melancthon, moved in the direction of the Protestant view of the Lord's Supper.

In the midst of all this confusion and distress, Heidelberg itself remained, under its Elector, solidly

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Roman Catholic. Yet the people were far ahead of their ruler and wanted the Reformation introduced into their city. While the Elector hesitated, the people themselves, in a mighty burst of enthusiasm, brought its beginnings about. On Sunday, December 20, 1545, the citizens were gathered for the worship of God in the Church of the Holy Spirit. As the priest was making preparations for the celebration of the mass, a member of the congregation began singing the Reformation hymn "*Es ist das Heil Uns Kommen Her*" ("Salvation Has Come To Us"). The first stanza goes:

Salvation unto us has come  
By God's free grace and favor;  
Good works cannot avert our doom,  
They help and save us never.  
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,  
Who did for all the world atone;  
He is our one Redeemer.

Suddenly the whole congregation joined in singing the hymn, and the Reformation began.

In the meantime, under the influence of his Lutheran wife, Frederick became wholly committed to the Lutheran faith. One incident in Frederick's life in Berkenfeld showed his steadfastness and courage. After Roman Catholic successes on the field of battle, Frederick was asked to sign the Regensburg Interim, which had as its goal the complete suppression of the Reformation. This he refused to do and wrote the Emperor: "Rather than do this, I will by God's help suffer anything; and if I am not safe in this country on account of my faith, I may be able to live at some other place with God."

In 1556, after his appointment as governor of the Upper Palatinate, Frederick made every effort to bring about reform in his province. He moved his castle to Amsberg and brought about reforms by appointing Protestant ministers, rooting out such Romish practices as masses, indulgences, and worship of images, and curbing such sins as immorality, drunkenness, ignorance, and superstition.

He and Maria also suffered great tragedies during this period. All the divisions of Protestantism were in their families: some were ardent Lutherans, some Melancthonians, some Zwinglians, and some Calvinists. One of his sons was drowned and another was killed in battle defending Protestants in the Netherlands. Two of his children turned against him as he moved away from Lutheranism towards Calvinism.

### His Adoption of Calvinism

In 1559, about four years before Calvin's death, Frederick became Elector of the entire Palatinate. From that moment on he knew not a moment of peace.

Four individual factors played their part in bringing Frederick to a Calvinistic position — in spite of the opposition of his Lutheran wife. Men who were Calvinists were appointed to offices in the church and the state. Continued reforms gradually eliminated both Romish and Lutheran practices and brought about reform in church government and worship. A flood of refugees came into the Palatinate and Heidelberg from France, England, and the Netherlands — all of them Calvinists and all of them helped by Frederick's generosity.

But the most important factor was the eruption in Heidelberg of the so-called Hesshus-Klebitz controversy over the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Hesshus was an arrogant and outspoken Lutheran; Klebitz was a Calvinist. Frederick devoted days and nights to a study of the question, searching the Scriptures to come to his own conclusions. He was pressured towards Lutheranism by his wife and some of his children. He was pressured towards Calvinism by many gifted professors in the University. When he finally made up his mind, he was convinced that the Cal-

vinistic position was in keeping with the Word of God. To its defense he now dedicated himself. We may add, by way of parenthesis, that before she died Maria also embraced Calvinism.

It was this bitter controversy, which nearly tore Heidelberg apart, that was the immediate occasion for Frederick to order the writing of a new Catechism. From the Preface to it, which Frederick himself drew up, we learn that Frederick's reasons for it were to have a document which would serve the spiritual welfare of his realm, aid in reaching doctrinal unity among the people, and serve as a guide for preaching and the instruction of the youth.

Although they were assisted in their work by others, Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, whom Frederick had rescued from a prison in Trier, bore the major responsibility for drawing it up.

From the pens of these two gifted men emerged our present glorious confession of faith which has meant so much to the church of Christ over the years.

Its beauty and worth lie especially in the fact that its motif is comfort. One cannot, I think, appreciate this motif unless he is aware of its tremendous significance in the times in which it was written. Roman Catholicism, with its doctrine of salva-

tion by meritorious works, is a comfortless doctrine — as is all Pelagianism and Arminianism which bases salvation on human works. Luther experienced that fully in his own life, until he came to the truth of justification by faith alone. The Roman Catholic Church had written, as it were, above the doors of its churches and ca-

thedrals: "Abandon all comfort, ye who enter here."

When the glorious truths of the Reformation began to be preached, the Reformers, with one voice, shouted to all the world: "We come to you

*Roman  
Catholicism,  
with its doctrine  
of  
salvation by  
meritorious  
works,  
is a comfortless  
doctrine ...*



with a gospel of *comfort*! That comfort is in the full and free grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord; justification by faith alone without works!"

No wonder that that gospel spread like wildfire through Europe, for it alone could bring peace to the troubled souls of God's people.

The Heidelberg Catechism picked up that theme.

"What is thy only comfort in life and death?

"That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Fa-

ther, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him." □

*The Day of Shadows*

*Homer C. Hoeksema*

## Introduction to Old Testament History

By way of introduction, we may point out that it is certainly impossible to have a proper conception of either history in general or sacred history apart from the idea of God's providence and God's counsel. But we hasten to add that the purely formal idea that history is the working out of God's counsel, or that all history takes place according to the sovereign government of the Most High, is not adequate. For one thing, we may never separate in our minds the providence of God from the facts of sin and grace. Closely related to this is the fact that there is no operation of God's providence next to and apart from that of grace and the curse, favor and wrath, love and hatred, election and reprobation. The merely formal fact that all history takes place according to the sovereign counsel of God, or that all history takes place as God in His providence sovereignly executes His own counsel, is of no aid as such in gaining a proper conception either of history in general or of

what is called sacred history. We will not go into detail on this score, but refer the reader to the discussion of God's providence found in Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp. 227-244. We do, however, wish to quote two significant sections from this chapter in connection with the present discussion. The first is found on pages 240, 241:

Hence, we may never separate in our minds the providence of God from the facts of sin and grace. There is no operation of God's providence next to and apart from that of grace and the curse, love and wrath, election and reprobation. The government of God is exactly of such a nature that it guides the organic whole of creation unto the final glory of the new heavens and the new earth, to the glory of God's covenant and to His eternal tabernacle which shall be with men, while through the same government of the Most High the reprobate element falls away and becomes ripe for eternal desolation. For it is God's positive purpose to unite all things in Christ as the new Head of all creation, to preserve and perfect His covenant and His everlasting kingdom. Unto this end all things in heaven and on earth are directed; and the Most High so gov-

erns all things that they must infallibly lead unto that end. All things under God's providence cooperate unto that end. All things in heaven and on earth and in hell, angels and devils, righteous and wicked, the curse, death, and all the suffering of this present time, sin and grace, fruitful and barren years, rain and drought, war and peace, sickness and pestilence—all things work together to the glorification of all things when the tabernacle of God will be with men. Of course, the devils and the ungodly cooperate unto that end in a different way from that of the angels and righteous. Hence, the former gather unto themselves treasures of wrath, while they nevertheless cooperate in the execution of God's counsel; and the latter receive the eternal reward of grace. There is no dualism; all work together unto the realization of the counsel of the Lord. God's government is motivated by electing and redeeming and glorifying grace, on the one hand, and by reprobating wrath on the other.

The second passage from the same chapter to which we would call attention is found on pages 243, 244:

A wonder belongs entirely as to its idea in the sphere of grace. In general we would circumscribe a won-

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der as that act of God whereby He raises the whole of His creation, fallen in sin and under the curse, into the glory of His eternal kingdom and everlasting covenant. As we have said, the final purpose, the final destination of all things lies in the glorification of God's everlasting covenant. Creation, which at present lies under sin and under the curse, must not merely be restored, in order to be brought back to her former state, but must be exalted into heavenly glory. That act of God whereby He raises the work of His hands through the deep way of sin and the curse from its misery into the glory of God's everlasting kingdom is the wonder, the wonder of grace. It has its centrum in the incarnation of the Word of God, the Wonder of wonders, the central wonder, from which flow all the separate miracles, or, of which they are types and shadows. It has its final realization in the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the very elements of this present world shall burn and perish, in order to prepare a new heavens and a new earth, in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men. And wherever the power of that wonder breaks through in creation, which lies under the curse, you have a wonder in the proper sense of the word. Understood in this sense, the whole of God's providential government in this world is really a wonder: for by His almighty hand He directs all things unto that end. His providence is motivated by His grace over His people in Christ Jesus. And whenever this power of grace comes to manifestation in any domain of creation, we have what Scripture calls a sign that the God of the covenant in Christ Jesus redeems His people and presently makes all things new. Wonders, therefore, are also signs that point to the complete redemption of the church. When Israel passes through the Red Sea, the great question is not whether this is a natural or supernatural act of God, still less whether in that act God works mediately or immediately; but in that act the Almighty reveals the great power of His grace, whereby He makes a path for His people through the sea and redeems them from the bondage of Egypt in order to lead them to the haven of rest. When God brings forth water from the rock, when He causes the manna

to descend upon the desert, when He breaks down the walls of Jericho, when He causes the sun and the moon to stand still, when He causes great hail to rain upon the heads of the enemies of His people, the main question is not whether or not we can interpret these events; but the chief idea is that under God's providence all things must serve to redeem and to save the people of His covenant and to lead them into the eternal inheritance. And when Immanuel comes into the world, He is the Wonder *par excellence*. He is the Lord out of heaven in our flesh, God with us, the central realization of the covenant of God with His people. When He comes into the world, He performs many wonders. He stands, as it were, in the midst of the accursed creation and shows by the wonderworks of His hand that He is the One who should come, in order to raise all things from the misery of the curse into the glory of God's eternal kingdom. He causes the deaf to hear and the blind to see. He removes all our sicknesses and pains, and He raises the dead. All these miracles were only shadows and signs of the reality, manifestations of His divine power to redeem all things. Presently He rises from the dead to enter into the glory of the heavenly life as the head of His people, ascends into the highest heavens, and sits at the right hand of God the Father, pours out His Spirit in the midst of His church, regenerates His people through the wonder of grace, calls light out of darkness, and recreates a people that is given to Him, in order that it should be an everlasting revelation of the wonder of His grace in the midst of the world. Presently He leads them through death into life and raises their bodies from the sleep of death, glorifies and unites all things in Himself, in order to cause the tabernacle of God to be with men everlastingly. Through the wonder of grace the government of God reaches its final destination, accord-

ing to His eternal counsel, to the glory of Him of whom and through whom and unto whom are all things.

When we understand this idea of the wonder, we can understand, too, the meaning and significance of history in general. Understood in this light, all of history from the *bereshith* ("beginning") of Genesis 1 to the *omega* ("goal") of the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ is one. And, in that deepest sense of the word, all of history is *sacred*. It is that organic complex of events which involves the whole of the human race and the whole of the creation whereby God leads all things, in the way of sin and grace, unto the glory of His eternal kingdom and everlasting covenant in Christ Jesus.

In this light, in the second place, we can understand the meaning and significance of sacred history. Sacred history is not a different history from the history in general. There are not two histories — a general and a sacred history. But what we designate as sacred history is that aspect of history which is directly concerned with the revelation of the wonder of grace and with the establishment, maintenance, and realization of God's eternal kingdom and everlasting covenant. In this light, too, we can understand the relation between

sacred history and Scripture. We can understand why sacred history is sometimes referred to as Bible history. For the account, the record, of that sacred history is found in the infallible and inspired Scriptures. But we must remember that there is an organic connection between sacred history and history in general. They are not essentially different. They are not to be separated, though they may be distinguished. They are organically one.

And the stream of sacred history may be said to run in the riverbed of history in general.

Then, too, we can understand the relationship between general history

*... there is a relationship of subservience between the rest of history and that particular aspect of history which is called sacred history.*



and sacred history. That relationship is fourfold. In the first place it is organic. And it is organic in such a way that what is included in sacred history constitutes the core, the centrum, the central meaning and significance of all history.

This already implies, in the second place, that there is a relationship of subservience between the rest of history and that particular aspect of history which is called sacred history. All the rest of history stands in such a relation to that which is included in sacred history that it stands in its service. Sometimes, indeed, that relationship of subservience may be difficult to discern. This is true especially when general history deals with nations and with aspects of their history which are peripheral. At other times that relationship is very clearly discernible. And there are, of course, many points in sacred history at which the history of the nations in general touches it and very plainly serves it, so that the history of the powers of this world is intertwined with that of God's people and is recorded in Scripture. But always, even when we cannot clearly discern it, that relationship is one of subservience.

In the third place, the relation between the two is antithetical. We must be careful, however, not to confuse antithesis with dualism. There are not two forces in history battling against one another in such a way that the outcome is in doubt, or even in such a way that the light finally triumphs over the darkness and in spite of the darkness. The relationship between the light and the darkness is certainly such that in the ethical sense of the word they stand diametrically opposed to one another. Yet we must understand that the light is not merely revealed over against the darkness, and life is not merely revealed over against death. But all the forces of sin and death and darkness are, according to the purpose and counsel of the Almighty, in subservience to the light. God accomplishes His purpose along the way of sin and grace, bringing light out of the darkness, the new out of the old, life out of death.

And so, finally, we can understand also that that relationship is soteriological. But again, it is soteriological, never in the sense that the world as a whole goes lost, while God the Lord manages to salvage something out of it. Rather is it soteriological in the sense that God saves the world, His world, according to His eternal counsel. It is soteriological in the sense that God saves the race, the elect race, the church. The organism is saved through the way of sin and grace, while some reprobate branches are cut off and destroyed.

### The Divisions of Sacred History

Traditionally, sacred history has been divided, first of all, into biblical history and church history. The encyclopedic place of the former, then, is in the bibliographical branches, while the encyclopedic place of the latter is in the historiographical department. This is correct, provided that we remember that church history is an integral part of sacred history, not something new and different and added. The distinction lies, of course, in the fact that church history is not recorded in Scripture as history. And it is legitimate to recognize this distinction. We must remember, however, that essentially church history is the continuation of the line of sacred history after the death of the last apostle and after the completion of the canon. And, secondly, we must bear in mind that principally church history is still concerned with the things which Jesus continued to say and to do after His exaltation. Thirdly, while it is true that church history cannot appeal to any historical record of Holy Scripture for its source, we must nevertheless bear in mind that prophetically, particularly in the Book of Revelation, all of church history is also set forth in the Scriptures. For as we know, in the Book of Revelation are written the "things which must shortly come to pass" and "the things which must be hereafter."

The division of biblical history is usually threefold: Old Testament history, the history of the intertestamentary period, and New Testament

history. Also this division may be accepted, provided we bear in mind that it is basically a division of convenience, rather than a division of principle. For we must remember that Old Testament history, that is, the history recorded in the Old Testament, does not include all of the history of the old dispensation; secondly, the history of the intertestamentary period (the history of the 400 years) is not recorded in Scripture at all; and the history recorded in the New Testament includes part of the history of the old dispensation and of the transition from the old to the new dispensation. Nevertheless, to maintain an orderly and balanced treatment of sacred history, these divisions may be observed and followed.

### The Division of Old Testament History

Most schemes of division which have been suggested with respect to Old Testament history have been characterized by the fact that they are divisions of convenience, and therefore rather arbitrary, rather than by proceeding according to a certain principle of division. Thus, for example, you can conveniently speak of the prediluvian period, the postdiluvian world, the period of the patriarchs, the period of the bondage and exodus, the period of the wilderness wanderings, the period of the conquest of Canaan, the period of the Judges, the period of the kings, the period of the captivity, and the post-captivity period. This may be convenient, and even helpful, but it does not pay attention to the *significance* of Old Testament history and of its various aspects. And to that extent it also detracts from one's conception of the unity of Old Testament history. It tends to view history in terms of bits and pieces, rather than to offer a unified conception.

We propose that all of Old Testament history may be divided into various epochs of salvation. Each of these epochs is characterized by the fact that it represents a victory of the seed of the woman, a fulfillment of the protevangel of Genesis 3:15. Yet,



in the second place, each of these epochs is characterized by the fact that the specific victory of the seed of the woman in that period is not the final victory, but a typical representation of it. It is not *the* wonder of grace, but *a* wonder of grace that is revealed in each period. And, in the third place, each of these periods is characterized by the fact that while it is in itself a typical revelation of the wonder of grace, it represents an advance over the preceding period, and an advance toward the full revelation of the wonder of grace in the fullness of time, when the Seed of the woman, our Lord Jesus Christ, accomplishes the victory over the seed of the serpent. This already implies that we wish to view all of Old Testament history in terms of the protevangel of Genesis 3:15, that is, in terms of the battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent through-

out the ages, and in terms of the victory, through the wonder of grace, of the seed of the woman over the seed of the serpent. And this, in turn, implies that the very first period of Old Testament history which we would distinguish is that which includes creation, the fall, and the announcement of the promise, the protevangel. This period is introductory to all of Old Testament history in the sense that it represents the setting of the stage for the rest of that history as it ends in the fullness of time. We may remark further that during the various main periods which may be distinguished there may also be discerned at many times various sub-periods in which the same motif noted above may be distinguished.

In this light, we would make the following divisions:

1) The introductory period of

creation, the fall, and the protevangel of Genesis 3:15.

2) From the protevangel to the victory of the seed of the woman in the Flood.

3) From the Flood, through the bondage and exodus, to the victory of the seed of the woman in the inheritance of the land of Canaan under Joshua.

4) From the inheritance of Canaan through the period of the Judges and Saul to the victory of the seed of the woman under David-Solomon.

5) From Solomon through the Babylonian captivity to the victory of the seed of the woman in the return from captivity and restoration of Jerusalem.

6) From the return to the fullness of time and the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. □

*Come, Lord Jesus*

*Rev. Gise VanBaren*

## Dinosaurs and Other Monsters

One thing that has attracted the attention of the nation in recent months is the dinosaur. Not only has the evolutionist continued his theorizing concerning the subject, but a popular movie has caught the imagination of the nation. The movie is, of course, in our estimation, out of bounds for the Christian. Yet the movie has generated much additional hype concerning dinosaurs. Little children want models of these beasts.

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Popular eating places offer mugs or other toys as enticement to come to their establishments. Cartoon characters portraying the friendly dinosaur are popular with the children. Questions are raised and discussed concerning these monsters. When did they live? What brought them to extinction? Children like to ask the question, "Were there dinosaurs in the ark?" Scientists too have been pointing to supposed reasons for the apparently sudden demise of the dinosaur. Science textbooks come with "answers" which many presume to be scientific and factual. Commonly it is claimed now that a large meteor must have struck the earth causing

such disruption that life became impossible for these large beasts. Recently the supposed spot where this meteor crashed into the earth was located off the coast of Mexico.

The question would be: what does all of this have to do with the end of the age? What bearing do fanciful imaginations have on the testimony of Scripture concerning Christ's return?

Several articles published by the Institute for Creation Research (El Cajon, CA) were brought to my attention. The author of one article, "Dinosaurmania Strikes Again," was Ken Ham; another is an article written by Henry M. Morris. Ham points



out the various misconceptions that Christians have concerning these mighty beasts. Some have denied their very existence. Others have asked whether these animals were in the ark at the time of the great flood. Ham maintains that "dinosaurs are used more than any other topic by evolutionists to brainwash our children into accepting evolutionary ideas and rejecting the Bible as God's inerrant Word." He quotes from a book, *A New Look at the Dinosaurs*, by Charig:

"...we can only confess our supreme ignorance of the real causes of dinosaur extinction and say, quite simply: 'We don't know.'"

Ham continues to explain his own viewpoint:

It is interesting to note, however, what the author says when trying to explain why the dinosaurs died out: "Every year people come up with new theories on this thorny problem. The trouble is that if we are to find just one reason to account for them all, it would have to explain the deaths, all at the same time, of animals living on land and of animals living in the sea; but, in both cases, of only some of those animals, for many of the land-dwellers and many of the sea-dwellers went on living quite happily into the following period. Alas, no such one explanation exists."

But one such explanation DOES exist! If you change the timescale to thousands of years instead of millions, and then think about the event of the Flood of Noah's day and the animals that escaped on the Ark, there is an explanation that fits with what Charig stated above.

Ham continues by pointing out that there is reason to believe that forms of the dinosaur family existed even up to modern times. He points to writings that refer to "monsters" which seem to fit the description of the dinosaurs.

Morris, in another article, also comments on the fascination with dinosaurs. He states:

This almost worshipful fascination (with dinosaurs) is nothing new, though its extent is growing explosively. One wonders how many leading modern evolutionists were drawn into evolutionism through their childhood study of dinosaurs. Stephen Jay Gould, for example, testifies that he got his start that way, and he is probably today's leading spokesman for evolution.

Morris quotes Scripture to show that these large monsters are mentioned from Genesis on. He states, "The Biblical writers, inspired by God, also wrote about dragons. The first reference to created animals, in Genesis 1:21, says that 'God created great whales,' but the Hebrew word for 'whales' is translated 'dragons' in over 20 other passages. Note especially Isaiah 27:1: 'In that day the Lord...shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.'"

One finds references to the Beast and the dragon in connection with the development of the antichristian world power. We read in Rev. 13:3,4, "All the world wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon which gave power unto the beast."

Morris, in his article, points out that what we see today is fulfillment of that Word in Revelation. The world, especially its youth, is obsessed by dinosaurs (dragons). This is seen in the appeal that movies and video games have to the youth in which monsters abound. Is it coincidence that these "dragons" are the focus of attention at the end of this age? Morris points out that "Jurassic Park," the movie attracting record-breaking audiences, is made by Hollywood's leading "New Age" producer.

One of the signs of the end of the age is that many follow after the lie. False christs and false prophets abound. God sends strong delusions that these might believe a lie (II Thess. 2:11). Perhaps as never before one sees this in our own time.

There is today the practice of witchcraft. Even some in the churches join hands with other world religions,

including witches, to establish a certain concept of morality which must govern all peoples. It is not strange, then, that a certain admiration also grows towards great "dragons." It is not the cross of Christ which is the center of attention — but the serpent and its adherents.

The world has been using this fascination to teach its theory of evolution. This has been true for the past 50 or more years. I recall distinctly the sign of "Sinclair" gasoline with its picture of the dinosaur which I saw in my childhood. Today we have not just an advertising picture, but a portrayal of the dinosaur as the prime example of the evolutionary process. This affects the youth — especially those very young. That is the intent of Satan, no doubt.

All of this points out how important it is that parents carefully supervise that which their children read, watch, and learn. We might minimize the seriousness of the attempt of the world to indoctrinate our children. But be sure that there is a goal which the world and Satan himself have in mind. That goal is to subvert the church, to contradict the Word of God, to persuade many to believe the lie. God sends strong delusion into the world. The world would want to impress this delusion also upon the church — especially its youth.

The task of the church and Christian parents is to teach children from their youth on the truths of Scripture. Genesis 1-11 is especially important. That is not a section of the Bible that is insignificant. Genesis is the first book in the Bible — but also foundational. He who questions or denies Genesis 1-11, soon loses the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God. We must, therefore, remind our children what Scripture says concerning origins and great dragons. By all means remind them of that Beast who gives power to the dragon at the end of time. The world may hold to its dragons and speculate about its dinosaurs, but we have the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. □



# Covenant Christian Education

## — Survival by Commitment to Obey our Covenant God and Fulfill the Demands of the Covenant

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

### What is the Basis for Covenant Christian Education?

The basis for covenant Christian education is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed to us in the Bible, the Word of God. The Trinity is the deepest reason why God is a covenant God and lives a covenant life within Himself, a life of friendship and fellowship. God by His covenant of grace takes us into that fellowship and friendship and establishes that covenant with us through His Son, Jesus Christ. We,

therefore, by God's grace, as members of that covenant, must fulfill certain demands of that covenant, namely, faith and obedience in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We are to do this in every sphere of life in the place in which God has put us. We are to establish Christian homes in which husband and wife reflect that glorious covenant relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33); we are to bring forth the children of God's covenant and teach them the ways of Jehovah (Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:1-8); we are to train our children in covenant schools in which the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom; we are to live holily and righteously in every part of life to the praise of the God of our salvation (*God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace*, by Prof. Herman Hanko, p. 196).

### Who is Responsible for Supporting the Cause of Christian Education?

The answer is simply that all those who are in the covenant share a part in the responsibility and privilege of the support of covenant Christian education. We call this "corporate" covenantal responsibilities. Corporate means "shared by all the members of a unified group." This means that in all spheres of life, namely the home, church, and school, there is a responsibility, as the third question in the Baptism Form asks, "whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to years of discre-

tion (whereof you are either parent or witness) instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?"

### How is this Practically Accomplished?

1. *By the home.* Fathers and mothers have the primary duty to teach their children. In Psalm 78:5-7 we read: "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Parents are to see to it that their children are taught and instructed in the doctrines contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith which are the true and complete doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ our Savior. They are to see to it that they are taught in the Christian schools where "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). They should also make every effort possible to afford this education by not making luxuries of life become necessities to which they cling. Unmarried young people, those couples who do not have children, and all

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older people and grandparents share in this responsibility to support this cause by their prayers and by their gifts. This also means that we should desire to become members of the area school societies and to participate in those society meetings. We should also remember that the calling to fulfill these demands continues as long as we live, for the covenant continues from generation to generation until Christ returns.

2. *By the church.* The church institute has an important part in "Covenant Christian Education" for she must be faithful in instructing her members about our covenant and triune God and in the demands that He places with those in that covenant of grace. The minister as the mouthpiece and servant of Jesus Christ must show the congregation the pathway to faith and obedience in Christ as they fulfill those demands. Article 21 of the Church Order states that "the Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian Schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." This means that our

Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian day schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our churches to use these schools for the education of their God-entrusted children.

3. *By the school.* The parent-run school has the privilege to participate actually and physically in the educational process in the instruction of the covenant children. We must realize that these schools are an extension of the home and, therefore, ought to be controlled and run by covenant parents. These schools must hire competent teachers who are totally devoted to instructing covenant children in the fear of the LORD in every area of the curriculum taught in the school. The school board must make Christian education affordable to all those who desire it for their children, so that some are not forced to look at

home schooling as an option. This means that certain sacrifices have to be made by all of us in order to accomplish this. Let us remember that money, by itself, does not make quality education, but stewardship of that money and commitment does.

Do you want to have "covenant" Christian education for our children today and tomorrow? Are we robbing God when we do not support the cause of Christian education required in the demands of the covenant? Let us all meditate on Malachi

3:10, where God commands us, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." □

*Are we  
robbing God  
when we do not  
support  
the cause  
of Christian  
education  
required  
in the demands  
of the covenant?*

*Search the Scriptures*

*Rev. George Lubbers*

# The Spirit-Foretold Apostatizing in Latter Days

## Lesson 10

*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith....*

I Timothy 4:1-5

### Some Introductory Observations

First, we notice that the verses 1-5 delineate some particulars concerning this departing of some from the faith. We are told that such apostatizing is the particular earmark of the

latter days. It is the first manifestation of the spirit of anti-christian teaching. It is the first view of the proud boasting of many who shall come saying, "I am Christ." These shall deceive many (Matt. 24:4, 5). We must not be deceived!

Secondly, the false teaching will be another form of what Jesus called "the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matt. 16:6-11). It will be a teaching which is

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inspired by Satan, the liar from the beginning. "...seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy" (I Tim. 4:2).

Thirdly, such who "depart from the faith" never were of the number of those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (I John 2:15-29; 4:1-5; II John 7).

The Scriptures teach that Christ is a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (I Pet. 2:8).

### "Some Shall Depart From the Faith" — verse 1

The text does not say "some of you will depart from the faith." This "departing" of some does not merely refer to some "individuals," but also to some *in their generation*. Yes, outwardly they were organically included in the visible church. However, they were not ingrafted into Christ by a true and living faith. These are the branches who never were fruit-bearing. These stumbled at the word of the Cross. These are the heretics which must needs appear, that they who are approved may come to manifestation. Did not Christ come to make division? (Matt. 10:31-39).

### The Great "departing from the faith" Clearly Set Forth

— verses 16-30

1. We should notice the grammar. Paul writes one rather lengthy sentence here, the entire section made up of verses 1-5. It is really a sentence in which we see the spiritual-psychological downfall of a heretic. Paul says of such that their conscience is as it were cauterized, made unfeeling. No, their conscience is such that these really do not need to be warned more than twice. The reason? These hypocrites are to be rejected. We must know that such are subverted, and that they sin, being condemned of themselves (Titus 3:10, 11).

Notice the steps in the doctrinal "departing from the true gospel."

a) This pictures a "giving heed" to seducing spirits. These spirits are

not human spirits, but they are demonic spirits which entered into their thinking. These induce them to reject the "truth of the gospel, the true faith, the great mystery." God is manifest in the flesh, the truth of the Logos-Incarnate (John 1:14). Those who depart are ever being seduced inwardly in their spirit.

b) And thus with the tongues of the seduced they preach Satan's doctrines. They preach a false gospel which has its source in the liar from the beginning. They do not preach the one, true gospel of forgiveness in the atoning blood of the Son of God. Their doctrine is that man is become God. The true "faith" is that God is "manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1ff.). From this faith they who departed apostatized, never to return in repentance (Heb. 6:1-8; 10:25-31).

This is a New Testament phenomenon in history. It was approximately A.D. 200, when the church had spread abroad over three continents, that this horrendous lie not only came to manifestation in small dimension, but the gates of hell did their utmost to prevail against the confession of the entire catholic church to subvert the truth in manifold "doctrines." This lie needed to be rejected in confessional form. The basic question was and ever will be: Who do you say that I the Son of Man am? (Matt. 16:15-19). Look in the back of your *Psalter* and read the Ecumenical Creeds, three in number: the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. In this "departure of some" there was a total departure from the "faith." Christ indeed came to make "division on the earth." The sword of the Spirit must therefore be wielded (Matt. 10:34; Eph. 6:14-17).

c) Someone will say: What a fuss and ado over such a minute, harmless matter as "forbidding to marry" and "to abstain from meats." But let us see! Not so, in the mind of the Spirit who speaks so very "ex-

pressly." Here is not a muttering and peeping, but a return to the "old paths" spoken of in Jeremiah 6:16, 17. For notice that in I Timothy 4:1-5 the basic truth is at stake: What did God say in Genesis 1:1-31 and 2:15-25? Jesus' approach in Matthew 19:4-6 is "have ye not read?" It is not a matter concerning the sanctity of marriage, as we read in Deuteronomy 14:1ff., but concerning how things were when they were created by God "in the beginning." The Holy Spirit writes in I Timothy 4:3b, "...which (both marriage and meat) God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good ... for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." These matters are mysteries of salvation. They are not mere trifles!

Let us now analyze these clear assertions from the sacred record as it was uttered by the very mouth of God and recorded in the *Theopneustic Scriptures* (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

2. The holy ordinance of Genesis 2:23, 24 was believed by our first parents before their lamentable Fall. It was so holy a union that we read "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." Now no man is ashamed of his own flesh in private, but men can in good conscience be ashamed publicly. Our first parents were "both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed." There is no shame in holiness. And again, only those who believe and know the truth can and may receive this holy bond of marriage with thanksgiving. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The sacred trust of marriage is a pearl of great price; it was purchased by the blood of the Bridegroom Jesus. It is the mystery of Christ and the church. This is not understood by a world characterized by adultery and sodomy.

"Meat" also is ours as a good (fitting) gift. We do not allow Satan and all his cohorts, demons and men,



to beguile us of our reward in a voluntary humility such as consists in insisting on keeping mere human ordinances, summed up briefly in the triad "touch not, taste not, handle not" (Col. 2:13-23). We will live by the rule which is the great truth expressed in Matthew 15:10, 11, and which Jesus further explicates in Matthew 15:16-20!

#### Some Suggested Questions for Further Discussions

1. How could a matter of "forbidding to marry" and "to abstain from meats" have such great meaning that it implied a total apostatizing from the faith?
2. Did this "departing from the faith" have such serious implications that it called for the Spirit of Christ to reveal this New Testament development as taking place in "the latter times"? Was this a matter which called for Timothy to receive special instructions to study this matter, to be "a good minister of Christ Jesus"? Compare Paul's instruction to the church of Ephesus recorded in Acts 20:28-32.
3. Do we have in I Timothy 4:3, 4 a good example of biblically

grounded refutation of the error of a work-religion attempting to replace the gospel of grace without works of the law?

4. Does the "forbidding of the saints to marry" in one stroke affect the entire "pattern of sound doctrine" to which the church has been delivered (Rom. 4:15-18)? Notice how often Paul speaks of the "pattern of sound doctrine," particularly in I Timothy 4:1, 6, 13, 16, 17; 5:17; 6:1, 3. The implication in the Greek term is the "substance" of what is taught.

5. The "creature" is made "good." Does the good creature need sanctification? For a good example notice that God "blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (Gen. 2:2, 3)!

6. Can the theory of common grace be placed in the category of what is good and hallowed by believers? How would you interpret Matthew 5:45 in the light of I Timothy 4:3, 4?

7. Both the teaching and ethics of Gnosticism (finding God by means of a certain special, mystical knowledge [gnosis]) and the teaching of Ebionism (a Jewish perversion of the fear of God) are in church history part and parcel of the teaching that all

knowledge and wisdom of God is in Christ, in whom is the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

For those who are interested in these two 2nd century errors called Gnosticism and Ebionism we recommend *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (vol. 2, pp. 1240-1248). The author of the piece is Dr. Rutherford. This gives helpful information on the entire scope of Gnostic teaching in its attempt to overthrow the Christian faith. The attempt of the "synagogue of Satan" to prevail against the truth that Jesus is the Son of the living God needs refutation. Read *ISBE* on the subject called "Ebionism" (vol. 2, pp. 890-894). See also the article on the "Gospel of the Ebionites" in *ISBE*, (vol. 1, p. 196). It is given under the heading, "Heretical Gospels."

For good measure, ministers and professors could read the very instructive word study on the verb *gnoosis* in vol. 1, pp. 706ff. Anyone interested in the fatal fruit of departing from the faith will be able to trace the dogma-historical development of the "leaven of the Pharisees." □

Special Feature

Rev. Bruce Davis

## Missing Children: Is Children's Church Biblical?

Rev. Davis is pastor of the Grand Valley Orthodox Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

#### Saved to Worship

Christians are saved from their sins to become worshipers of God. The Father seeks true worshipers (John 4:23). His seeking is saving. He seeks sinners to save them that they might become true worshipers of God Most High, and the Father finds the fulfill-

ment of His seeking lost sinners to make them worshipers in the Son of man's coming to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). Christian worship is an issue of salvation in Jesus Christ. God's elect are redeemed in order to worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).



## The Regulative Principle of Worship

Foundational to the proper worship of God is what is commonly known as the regulative principle of worship. This principle, so skillfully described by our Reformed confessions, means that God regulates His own worship by His Word. God prescribes and governs His own worship; He alone appoints what is acceptable to Him, and all else is to be excluded. Only those elements which are derived from Scripture are pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. The Westminster Confession (1:6; 21:1) and the Belgic Confession (Art. 32) are one in setting forth this standard for the worship of God. The biblical basis for the statements made by the confessions is seen in such verses as Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:30-32 and Exodus 20:4-6. The second commandment historically has been understood by Reformed Christians to be part of the biblical basis for the regulative principle of worship. The Heidelberg Catechism (Q&A 96) and the Westminster Larger (Q&A 109) and Shorter (Q&A 50, 51) Catechisms articulate this.

Everything in the worship of God that is not sanctioned, taught, commanded, or prescribed by His Word is, in the words of Leviticus 10:1, "strange fire which the Lord commanded not." That there is much "strange fire" being offered to God in many evangelical and Reformed churches today is beyond dispute. A growing and glaring example of this is the phenomenon of children's church.

### Missing Children

Children's church is a major problem today. Children from Christian homes are missing. Where have all the children gone? They certainly are not in the worship services of local churches. They are in children's church (meaning junior church, children's worship, children's activity center, etc.) which is run at the same time as the worship services.

To have or not to have children in the worship services of the church is

a big question today, although it should not be a question at all. The practice of children's church is to be decisively and completely rejected. Historically it has not been a practice accepted by the church. There is no biblical basis for it, and it is not in any way based on Reformed theology or Reformed methodology. It is a new-fangled modern invention not rooted in the historic Christian faith and practice of the church. While there are many arguments brought forth in favor of children's church, the arguments represent the voice of pragmatism and not the voice of the Word of God. The advocates of children's church are actually advocates of "R-rated worship" — worship restricted to adults only. The practice of children's church, while on the surface seeming to be well-intentioned, plausible, sensible, and advisable, has been nothing less than a spiritual disaster for the church of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most, if not the most, damaging and destructive forms of Christian education ever devised by man. It would never have come into vogue if the church had not abandoned the regulative principle of worship. Our Reformed forefathers would have considered children's church unthinkable and intolerable.

### Children's Church — Its Definition and Origin

Children's church is that practice which has the children and young people of local churches (even through high school in some cases) miss all or part of the worship services, including and especially the preaching of God's Word, in order to be in their own age-segregated setting for "age-appropriate" singing, instruction, and other activities. Advocates of children's church consider traditional Reformed worship services to be hard on children and not "child-friendly"; thus they consider children's church a creative, proper, and legitimate al-

ternative to keeping children in the worship services. They believe that regular worship services have little or no meaning to children and young people; therefore a separate service is necessary to meet their needs.

How did children's church ever start? Where has it come from? It has not come from the Bible, but from the world of modern, secular, and humanistic psychology. It is not the fruit of some fresh insight from Scripture that our forefathers did not have. It has crept into the church from the world in the guise of pragmatic meth-

odology according to the latest psychological and educational theories of child development. Advocates of children's church appeal not to Christian theology but to modern psychological and educational theories to state and make their case; and in light of the Word of God they come up empty every time.

One thing that all advocates of children's church have in common is a lack of respect for and adherence to the regulative principle of worship.

### The Biblical Basis for the Reformed Position

The Bible regulates the public worship of God by calling for the whole covenant community, young and old alike, to be present during the worship services. This is the consistent and exclusive teaching of God's Holy Word (Ex. 10:8; 12:24-26; Deut. 29:9-13; 31:10-13; Josh. 8:34-35; II Chron. 20:5, 13; Ezra 10:1; Neh. 8:1-3, 5, 6; 12:43; Joel 2:15; Matt. 21:15, 16; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20).

There is nothing in all of God's Word that even remotely resembles children's church. There is express biblical warrant for the inclusion of children in the public worship services of the church of Jesus Christ; and because there is biblical warrant for including children, the church is prohibited from excluding them. Thus no Reformed confession, when ad-

*Our Reformed forefathers would have considered children's church unthinkable and intolerable.*



addressing the proper elements of worship according to the Word of God, includes children's church among them.

The objections against the biblical and Reformed position raised by children's church advocates, like their arguments for their position, are based on expediency and pragmatism, rather than on biblical authority. All the objections represent man's wisdom protesting against the wisdom of God.

So, for the question, "Where should the children be during public worship services?" the answer is clear and unambiguous. They, along with the adults, are to be in the gathered congregation, actively participating according to their abilities in the worship of Jehovah. Why has God, in His perfect and infinite wisdom, ordained this to be so? I will now give two major reasons.

#### **The Biblical View of Children from Christian Homes**

The Reformed practice of including children in the worship services is consistent with the biblical view of children from Christian homes. The Bible teaches that children of believers are included in the covenant of God's grace according to His covenant promise. They are members of the church and are to be incorporated into the life of the church (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). That children are included in the covenant of God's grace and are members of the church is articulated by the Heidelberg Catechism (Q&A 74), the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q&A 62), and the Westminster Confession (25:2); thus children from Christian homes are really and truly expected and welcome in the services, not as spectators or silent observers but as active participants. God requires the presence of the covenant children in the worship services. They not only have a right to be there; they ought to be there. God establishes His covenant

with families and perpetuates a believing remnant along the lines of continued generations; thus covenant families are to be present to worship the Lord of the covenant.

The essential unity of the congregation is broken by children's church. It makes a division in the covenant community at the very point where it should be one, in the public worship of Jehovah. Children are not second-class members of the covenant and of the church of Jesus Christ; they are to be included in the life of the church and especially in the

highlight of the life of the church, the public worship of God. That families should worship together has been the historic position of Reformed churches. Children should increasingly enter into the worship of the congregation. The services are for them also, and the Lord of the church who dwells with the church blesses His elect members, young and old alike.

In the life of the church, the chief means by which Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, gathers and builds up His people is by the preaching of His Word. The primary place of preaching in the life of the church is another major reason why children ought to be present in the worship services.

#### **Preaching and Children from Christian Homes**

Advocates of children's church also show an unbiblical view of the preaching of God's Word. They show at least by their actions, if not by their words, that they do not believe in the primacy and centrality of preaching in the lives of God's people. Practically speaking, they have the same view of preaching that others show

they have as they replace preaching with such things as films, concerts, drama, testimonies, missionary presentations, and elaborate services that leave little or no time for preaching. Those favoring children's church declare that the instruction of children's church amounts to the equivalent of the Word of God preached in the power of the Holy Spirit by men called and gifted by God. What a serious and tragic mistake! What a low view of preaching and of the public means of growing in grace.

Reformed confessions, in harmony with the whole counsel of God, teach with one voice the biblical view of preaching (Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 154, 155; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54, 65, 83, 84, 98; Belgic Confession, Art. 13, 29, 30; Canons of Dordt II:5/III/IV:17). Reformed Christianity maintains that preaching is the chief means by which God shows Himself gracious to His elect in Christ in establishing and confirming them in everlasting life and glory. The preaching of God's Word is of first and primary importance in the life of the church. The Lord Jesus Christ is made known to people of all ages in the preaching of His Word. It is the chief means whereby He, by His Spirit, communicates to us the benefits of His redemption (I Cor. 1:18,

21, 23, 24; Rom. 10:12-17; John 10:4, 14, 16, 27, 28). The Bible teaches that preaching is the means of grace for the ingathering and upbuilding of God's elect of all ages. All age groups are commanded to respond to the preaching of God's Word by acknowledging Jehovah as the God of their salvation and by living according to the requirements of the covenant in true faith, repentance, and obedience.

To suppose that children might be more profitably occupied during the time of the sermon by being given another form of instruction is a seri-

*The essential unity of the congregation is broken by children's church.*

*Is there anything better for covenant children than the living presence of Jesus Christ mediated by His Spirit through His Word?*



ous error. It is taking the children away from the very place where they ought to learn of the power, importance, authority, necessity, centrality, and efficacy of the preached Word of God. It takes them away from the chief means by which Christ is made known to His people.

Children's church practitioners are like the disciples in Mark 10:13-16 who sought to prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from blessing the children who were brought to Him by denying them the presence of their Master. Children's church arouses the holy indignation of the Lord even as that notion of the disciples did. Is there anything better for covenant children than the living presence of Jesus Christ mediated by His Spirit through His

Word? Is there any legitimate substitute for this? God forbid! Rather, heads of families should lead in such a way that they confess in the words of Cornelius in Acts 10:33, "Now therefore are we all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

### Conclusion

Families, stay together on Sundays. Worship the Lord together. Seek the grace of God to develop a solid and biblical view of the Reformed practice of including children in the public worship services despite the great pressure today to compromise this practice. The church should be the pillar and ground of the truth

without compromise (I Tim. 3:15).

Parents, God's covenant promise is to you and to your children; for together you are embraced in God's covenant and are members of His church. The worship of God is for you, and for your children as well. May God give you grace to appreciate our Reformed heritage in this area, and may He as well enable you to resist the practice of children's church by a positive cleaving to the regulative principle of worship, based on His holy Word, for His Name's sake. "Both young men and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven" (Ps. 148:12, 13). □

## Book Reviews

*Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism*, by John H. Gerstner. Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991. 274 pages. \$15.95 (hardcover). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

Dispensationalism will never be the same. Presbyterian theologian John H. Gerstner has written the definitive, Reformed critique of this popular heresy. It is devastating. The recent (19th century) product of disreputable origins (John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren), centering on the bizarre notion of a "pre-millennial, pretribulation rapture," dispensationalism is "spurious Calvinism," "dubious evangelicalism," and "deviation from essential historical Christianity" (p. 68). Gerstner demonstrates that "dispensationalism is a cult and not a branch of the Christian church" (p. 150). His conclusion is that "dispensationalism is another gospel" (p. 259).

The book is timely. Popular radio evangelist John MacArthur, Jr.'s book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, has occasioned the "Lordship controversy." MacArthur condemned dispensationalism's teaching that one can

have Jesus as Savior without having Him as Lord of his life. Leading dispensationalists have responded, defending this Nicolaitan doctrine and striking out at the truth that the faith that justifies is always a working faith as "legalism." Also, at the present time men are working to reconcile dispensational theology and covenant theology. Leading Presbyterian theologians leave the impression that covenant theology can make peace with dispensationalism, if dispensationalism will only modify its theology. Contemporary dispensational theologians are, in fact, furiously backing away from positions once proclaimed as basic to dispensational theology (cf. *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992). Nevertheless, no peace is possible between genuine covenant theology and dispensationalism. Dispensationalism must not merely modify its expressions and positions. It must confess that dispensational theology is false doctrine, and convert to covenant theology. This, Gerstner insists on and demonstrates.

*Wrongly Dividing* consists of

three main parts. The first is an informative account of dispensationalism's origins and development. Of particular interest is Gerstner's tracing of the influence of dispensationalism within the Reformed churches from the late 19th century on. One instance was the dissemination of dispensational doctrines within the Christian Reformed Church by Harry Bultema.

In the second main section, Dr. Gerstner examines dispensationalism's vaunted hermeneutics of literalism. He convincingly demonstrates, as others have done before him, that dispensationalism does not carry through its program of a strictly literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. But he argues also that, contrary to its boast that its (literalist) hermeneutic determines its theology, the theology of dispensationalism determines its hermeneutic.

The third section on the theology of dispensationalism is by far the largest, as it is also the most important. In it Gerstner does what has rarely, if ever, been attempted: he examines the theology of dispensationalism according to the standard of the Reformed faith. Gerstner's main concern is to expose dispensational theology as heretical by virtue of its



antinomism. Dispensationalism denies that the law of God, that is, the decalogue, is the rule of life for New Testament believers. It opposes this doctrine as Jewish legalism. As the present "Lordship controversy" has brought to light, dispensationalism teaches that one can be saved through faith in Jesus, even though he goes on living in flagrant, impenitent disobedience to the law to the very end of his life. Gerstner is correct when he describes this teaching, basic to dispensationalism, as not only un-Reformed but also "another gospel."

Antinomism is an aspect of dispensationalism's central and non-negotiable doctrine of the essential difference between Israel and the church. The law is for Israel, not for the church. The other side of this heresy is that the gospel is for the church, not for Israel. Inherent in dispensationalism's denial of the unity of Israel and the church is the teaching that Old Testament Israel was saved in some other way than by faith in Jesus Christ. Gerstner presses this charge against dispensationalism, showing that even those contemporary theologians who try to distance themselves from Scofield's teaching that the Jews were to be saved by the law deny that the object of faith in the Old Testament was Jesus Christ.

But dispensationalism withholds the gospel even from the New Testament church. For in spite of the protestations of some dispensationalists that they are "four-point Calvinists" (they openly admit to denying the doctrine of limited atonement), dispensational theology is "five-point Arminianism" (p. 149). It rejects and opposes every one of the five points of Calvinism, that is, the gospel of salvation by free, sovereign grace. The only one of the five points of Calvinism that dispensationalism makes any substantial pretense of holding is the fifth, the perseverance of saints. But this is thoroughly corrupted by dispensationalism's antinomian doctrine of the "eternal security" of those who live impenitently in wickedness. Gerstner demonstrates that dispensationalism is "five-

point Arminianism" in the hard-hitting, critically important chapter entitled, "Spurious Calvinism" (pp. 105-147). The gravity of this criticism of dispensational theology, Gerstner indicates when he remarks that "Calvinism is just another name for Christianity" (p. 107).

The chapter, "Spurious Calvinism," is of special interest to the Protestant Reformed since in it Gerstner condemns the doctrine of the "well-meant offer of the gospel." Because of Gerstner's stature as a Reformed theologian and in view of the almost universal acceptance of the "well-meant offer" by Calvinistic churches, this repudiation of the "well-meant offer" as un-Reformed has sent a tremor throughout the Reformed world. The passage deserves to be quoted in its entirety. In the context of his treatment of dispensationalism's denial of limited atonement, Gerstner notes that also some Reformed theologians display weakness regarding this doctrine. He then takes up the issue of the "well-meant offer of the gospel":

We must also sadly admit that the majority of Reformed theologians today seriously err concerning the nature of the love of God for reprobates. We mention this here only because this defect in contemporary Reformed theology makes it all the easier for the dispensationalists to continue in their abysmal error.

Most Reformed theologians also include, as a by-product of the Atonement, the well-meant offer of the gospel by which all men can be saved. Some Reformed theologians take a further step still and say that God even intends that they should be saved by this Atonement which nevertheless was made only for the elect. For example, John Murray and Ned Stonehouse write: "Our Lord... says expressly that he willed the bestowal of his saving and protecting grace upon those whom neither the Father nor he decreed thus to save and protect." One may sadly say that Westminster Theological Seminary stands for this misunderstanding of the Reformed doctrine since not only John Murray and Ned Stonehouse but also Cornelius Van Til, R.B. Kuiper, John Frame, and, so far as

we know, all of the faculty, have favored it. The Christian Reformed Church had already in 1920 taken this sad step away from Reformed orthodoxy and has been declining ever since. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. had even earlier, though somewhat ambiguously, departed and the present mainline Presbyterian church affirms that "The risen Christ is the savior for all men."

The Presbyterian Church in the United States (now part of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.) is not far behind, and the separatist Presbyterians such as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America are following in this train. Only the Protestant Reformed Church seems willing to hold to the whole counsel of God on this doctrine (pp. 127, 128).

*Wrongly Dividing* takes its place with O.T. Allis's *Prophecy and the Church* as outstanding Reformed critiques of dispensationalism and outstanding defenses of covenantal theology against dispensationalism.

The book will serve one very practical purpose: Put it into the hands of the man or woman who professes to be Reformed but who is contemplating leaving the Reformed church for a dispensational church. ■

(Editor's note: A lengthier review of this book has been published in the Fall 1992 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.)

*God's Law in the Modern World: The Continuing Relevance of Old Testament Law*, by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1993. 81 pages, \$4.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. is a "theonomist." He tells us that the purpose of the book is "briefly to introduce the reader in a nontechnical way to the case for the modern use of God's Law in ethics." According to Gentry, "the ethic that is rigorously based on God's Law is known as *theonomic ethics*" (p. xi).

Much of the very short book is basic Reformed teaching on the place of the law in the life of the redeemed



Christian. The law has the important functions of making us to know our misery and of guiding our thankful life. The law does not justify. What Gentry has to say on these matters, every Reformed person raised on the Heidelberg Catechism has known from his childhood.

The characteristic theonomic views are for the most part merely asserted, and not proved, e.g., that Old Testament Israel's civil laws are

still binding in the New Testament; that the state today is called to enforce the Mosaic law, including the civil code; and that church and state were separate institutions in Israel. What little is said about these notions appears in five pages in chapter six.

Who has decided that the ethics rigorously based on God's Law shall now be called "theonomic ethics"? If one rejects theonomy because of its peculiar tenets, can he no longer main-

tain an ethics "rigorously based on God's Law"? If a Reformed or Presbyterian believer holds what the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Larger Catechism teaches about the Law, does he have an ethics "rigorously based on God's Law"?

For such a big subject, the book is exceedingly brief. There are barely 70 pages of text, and the text is interspersed with large areas of blank space. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Reformation Day Activities

It was only a few short weeks ago that we joined with God's people throughout the world to celebrate the Reformation of the 16th century. Many of our congregations took the time to commemorate this event by sponsoring a Reformation lecture around the end of October.

The congregation of the Trinity PRC in Houston, TX sponsored a two-day Reformation program entitled "The Reformation of the 16th Century Lives On Today." On Friday evening, October 29, Pastor Jai Mahtani, Trinity's pastor, gave a message on "The Gospel of the Reformation." This was followed on Saturday morning, October 30, by a slide presentation on "The Spread of the Reformed Faith to Singapore and India." In preparation for this two-day program, Pastor Mahtani hoped to visit with some of the many Chinese and Indian peoples in and around the Houston Area.

The Byron Center, MI PRC once again sponsored a Reformation lecture at South Christian High School. Rev. Barry Gritters, Byron's pastor, spoke on the topic, "Virtuous Women: Valuable Above Rubies." Two follow-up Bible classes were also held at Byron's church with Rev. C. Terpstra leading a discussion on "The High Calling of Motherhood," followed the

next week by Rev. A. Spriensma speaking on the topic, "The Woman's Role in the Church."

Rev. Ron VanOverloop was the featured speaker at a Reformation Day rally sponsored by the Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB, Canada. Pastor VanOverloop spoke on October 29.

While on a visit to the congregation of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ to conduct church visitation with Rev. G. VanBaren, Rev. Dale Kuiper was able also to speak on Millennialism at a lecture sponsored by Covenant's congregation.

The Pella, IA PRC sponsored a Reformation lecture by Rev. C. Terpstra, who spoke on "The Beauty and Benefit of the Reformed Confessions."

"Soli Deo Gloria" was the topic that Rev. W. Bruinsma chose to use at a lecture on October 28 sponsored by the Bethel PRC of Elk Grove Village, IL.

Rev. C. Haak spoke on "To God Alone the Glory," for a lecture sponsored by his congregation, the Lynden, WA PRC.

Prof. R. Decker chose as the theme for his Reformation Day lecture the topic, "The Foolishness of the Preaching." He gave this lecture for the congregation and friends of the Hull, IA PRC.

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC invited Rev. A. Spriensma to speak at their annual lecture. He spoke on November 5 on "Living the Reformation."

And finally, Prof. D. Engelsma

was the featured speaker for a Reformation Weekend sponsored by the congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA.

### Congregational Highlights

The congregation of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has recently organized a Men's Bible Study Society. What makes this society a little out of the ordinary, at least to my knowledge, is that they meet for Bible Study at 7:00 A.M. That's right, 7:00 A.M. All men are welcome. Coffee and donuts are also provided.

Rev. C. Terpstra, South Holland, IL PRC's pastor, is leading a new class for adult members of the congregation. This class was set up to treat various ethical and spiritual topics relating to practical Christian living. Their first topic was to be drama.

Pastor M. Dick of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada has also started a Reformed Doctrine Class for all members of his congregation. Plans called for the group to cover such subjects as the church, and the end times.

Three members of the Building Committee of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL recently met with Lansing Village officials to solve some problems concerning annexation. The actual construction of the church building is not likely to happen until next spring because of uncertainty about obtaining all the needed permits and getting bids from contractors.

### Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC has begun a

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



new venture entitled the "Reformed Book Shelf." This is the name they have given to a "book store" they have set up in their church basement. This book shelf contains good solid Reformed books on sale for South Holland's own members and for visitors or friends and relatives. These books are available for purchase Monday through Saturday. Every book has a card in it which must be filled out and left behind. The purchaser will then be billed for the book(s). There are no immediate cash purchases.

#### **Mission Activities**

On October 28 two elders, along with their wives, from the Hudsonville, MI PRC left by plane to spend ten days with the Covenant Reformed Fellowship of Ballymena, Northern Ireland. The Council of Hudsonville had decided some time back that such a visit with the Hankos, as well as the families of the Fellowship, would be a good way to evaluate the mission field in Northern Ireland. By all accounts the visit was very worthwhile for all parties involved. And from the schedule of

events that Rev. Hanco had arranged for the elders while in Ireland, there appeared to be very little free time. It must have been a very busy 10 days for all involved.

□

#### *Food For Thought*

*"Better is it to go with a few to heaven than with a multitude to hell, and be damned for the sake of company."*

Parr

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

The Lord willing, on December 13, 1993, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. ROBERT J.  
HUIZINGA,**

will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We thank God for giving us these covenant parents who have raised us in the fear of His name. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them in their life together.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

- \* Robert and Lynne Huizinga  
Trevor
- \* Keaton and Kathy Stearns
- \* Jeremy Huizinga

Grandville, Michigan

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to fellow members, Al and Marie DeYoung, in the passing away of their step father and step father-in-law,

**MR. HENRY WEEMHOFF.**

May they find comfort in the words of I Thessalonians 4:14, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Don Doezeema, President  
Florence Key, Secretary

#### **NOTICE!!**

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 12, 1994, at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by December 13, 1993.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

#### **WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

With gratitude to God, on November 26, 1993, our parents,

**PETER ROY and JOHANNA WESTRA,**  
celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them on this occasion. Their faithful instruction, guidance, and loving example have been a blessing for us through the years. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless and keep them in all their ways.

"So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations" (Psalm 79:13).

- \* Arthur and Karen Flier  
Duane, Laura, Kara, Jon
- \* Peter and Janet Westra  
Peter, Kevin, Jason, Brian, Kristin
- \* Marlin and Sandra Westra  
Aaron, Robyne, Sara, Philip, Katelyn
- \* Edwin and Verna Westra  
Eric, Valerie, Joel, Evan
- \* Gary and Jeralyn Westra  
Jeff, Glenda, Steven, Brett, Kyle, Janelle
- \* Bruce Westra
- \* Bartel and Janice Zandstra  
Brianna, Brent, Justin

Hull, Iowa